

**REPORT FOR
THE COMMUNITY RELATIONS COUNCIL
BY EARL STOREY**

MOVING BEYOND THE PALE

.....
**THE CHURCH AND A DECADE OF
HISTORIC COMMEMORATIONS**
.....



“WHEN AN ORGANISATION’S LEADERS ARE COHESIVE, WHEN THEY ARE UNAMBIGUOUSLY ALIGNED AGAINST A COMMON SET OF ANSWERS TO A FEW CRITICAL QUESTIONS, WHEN THEY COMMUNICATE THOSE ANSWERS AGAIN AND AGAIN AND AGAIN, AND WHEN THEY PUT EFFECTIVE PROCESSES IN PLACE TO REINFORCE THOSE ANSWERS, THEY CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH SUCCESS IS ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO PREVENT.”

PATRICK LENIONI

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
INTRODUCTION - OPPORTUNITY OR CHALLENGE?	14
THE TEMPTATIONS	20
THE CHURCH AND REFLECTION	28
VALUES IN REFLECTION	38
PRESSURES ON THE CHURCH	46
ACTION FOR THE CHURCH	56
CONCLUSION	66
BIBLIOGRAPHY	74
ONLINE SOURCES	75



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper asks:

1. Is commemorating the events of 1912 to 1922 a moment of opportunity or risk?
2. What values should underpin historical reflection of this period?
3. Does the Church have anything useful to bring to such a process of reflection?
4. What challenges and advantages does the Church face in engaging with historical reflection?
5. What practical actions can the Church take to ensure that historical reflection on this decade is constructive rather than damaging.

Opportunity or Risk?

1. Writing history is rarely as simple as isolating and collating bare facts! Especially in any situation of conflict, the way in which 'facts' are perceived and the values that are bestowed on them can make historical analysis very much a subjective exercise.
2. *Fanning the embers*: History can be used to rally new 'troops' for the fight, either on the streets or in the polling booth.
3. *The bland leading the blind*: It is possible to address a contentious issue in such a manner that it may fulfill the demands of accuracy but miss the opportunity to grapple with deep underlying issues.
4. *Desert island commemoration*: Entirely separate commemoration means we only speak to ourselves and to our own community. It avoids the discomfort, need or commitment to understand what was going on in the minds and hearts of the 'other' community during historic events.
5. *I fight therefore I am*: Given our contentious history a sense of identity is usually forged as something defined by being in opposition to those we share this island with. This is dangerous when there is no greater question in any society than the state of relationships within it.
6. *Sophistry - words without intrinsic meaning*: Words can be used in such a way as to give an air of impartiality to what are actually politically driven motivations. Sophistry can not only drain words of all intrinsic meaning, it has the ability to do the same for historical reflection.
7. *Comfort blanket history*: The temptation is heightened when there is a fear of dealing with any aspect of the past in a way that involves critical thinking of one's own side, or a challenge of taking moral responsibility for something. It is a useful tool if leadership does not necessarily want to own up to its own people that what it fought for either by the gun, from the podium or pulpit has not been achieved.
8. *Dog whistle history*: Political advancement through dog-whistle politics is built on a willingness to press the buttons of fear, victimhood and sectarianism in one's own community. The appeal to history, both recent and distant, has always provided that rich quarry of stones to fire against one's opponent in the present.
9. *Distraction and disinterest*: Disengagement does not just arise from a lack of interest in history but with people having more immediate priorities created by recession.
10. Historical commemoration is a minefield that some can exploit and many choose to ignore.

“... how passions are stirred by claims of exclusive loyalty to one’s own kin, one’s own clan, one’s own country, and one’s own church. These ties that bind are vital to our communities and our lives, but they can also be twisted into a noose.”¹

Does the Church have a contribution?

1. The Church is a statistically significant presence in Ireland.
2. There is statistically significant willingness within the Church to address peace building and reconciliations issues.²
3. The Church is a significant influence in society and community life.³
4. Churches are part of the mess of damaged relationships on this island.
5. Leaders and events of that decade drew heavily on a foundational Church belief – the concept of blood sacrifice:
6. Religion has been a tribal marker in Ireland.
7. A theological imperative - at the very heart of Christian theology is the theme of reconciliation.
8. In our highly politicised society one of the things the Church has got going for it is that it does not need votes. Despite the challenges of the changing place of the Church in society it still has confidence and accessibility to significant networks. Added to this is the fact that many denominations are all-Ireland networks.
9. The Church has a network of influence and access to expertise. It can not only lobby but also empower its people at ground level to reflect on history in a constructive manner.
10. When a denomination gives its sanction to an issue it “gives permission” to address a difficult issue – not literally but in the sense of making it safe to do so.
11. Words are at the core of reflecting on history. Words are the tools of the trade for the Church. That is not to say that communication by the Church has always been truthful, bold, clear, effective or indeed engaging. Nevertheless it still has the intrinsic capacity to be an articulate body within Ireland.
12. Speaking into the public space: When it takes the trouble to say something incisive about relevant issues it still has the ability to make its voice heard.
13. The Church is a dealer in hope. The goal is to give people the confidence to talk about and face issues without being scared. It is easy to call on the Church to be prophetic. To be truly prophetic is to carefully help our community to address issues together. Not only that but also to embody the hope that the cycle of historic division can be broken.
14. The real work of leadership is not to provide ‘easy answer’ solutions but to mobilise people to work on the deep issues that go to the core of our relationships and sense of identity. Leaders may not know all the right answers but they need to know the right questions. A careful reflection on iconic moments in our history truly needs that skill.
15. The divisions in Ireland are ones that the Church has participated in. What the Church needs to embody is “Religion that is wiser than the realism of this world and braver than the heroism of the truculent”.⁴ Churches need to do this not only for the common good, but also for their credibility ... before God.

¹ Bill Moyers Speech at Pentecost 2004 (Sojourners Website August 2nd)

² P6 21st Century Faith – Results of the Survey of Faith Leaders. By Dr Gladys Ganiel, Irish School of Ecumenics, Trinity College Dublin (2009)

³ 2011: Commissioned by the Community Faiths Forum, Belfast, 2011

⁴ p107 Facing Terrorism: responding As Christians. Long E L

Values to bring to Reflection

1. As the Church contemplates engagement it needs to do so with a recognition that a great deal of valuable work is already being done in this area. There is also a need for a measure of institutional humility as the various parts of the Church recognise that in Irish history they have at times acted as “chaplains in confrontation”.⁵
2. The events of that decade did not take place in isolation.
3. It is the mix of personalities, motives and events that create history, and our subsequent interpretation of it.
4. Different events in the decade will resonate differently for each community on this island.
5. History is not a weapon of mass condemnation of other communities. Dr Johnson McMaster terms it as “walking through contested histories together”.⁶
6. Avoiding “the tendency of human beings to attribute the negative and frustrating behaviours of their colleagues to their intentions and personalities, while attributing their own negative or frustrating behaviours to environmental factors ... whilst giving ourselves the benefit of the doubt”.⁷
7. We cannot change the past but we can affect the present and the future.
8. Aspiring for more than “Its over”: What are we aspiring to when we reflect on the past?
9. Merely adding a commentating voice to what has already gone before rather than shaping what lies in the years ahead is a wholly inadequate contribution.
10. Those who want to examine or celebrate history in Ireland need to be sure they do so with the

desire to create a new DNA in relationships, rather than as a tool for anything else.

11. The most effective process is one that is inclusive of the ‘other’.

What specific values can the Church bring to any process? Where do the key theological themes of the Church apply?

1. Christianity is fundamentally a faith built on relationship and restoration of broken relationship.
2. Love for God - calling people back to a higher allegiance.
3. Love for neighbour – injury, doctrine, race or history do not determine who our neighbour is.
4. A commitment to critical self-reflection without which our perception of ourselves as well as the ‘other’ is always skewed. To be open to such self-reflection is truly counter-cultural but unmistakably Christian.
5. Language, as a tool of human communication, should have intrinsic truth to its meaning, rather than being a tool to obscure meaning for ultimately selfish purposes.
6. Forgiveness and Grace.
7. Repentance - a willingness to take moral responsibility for our actions, to express our contrition and to desire forgiveness.
8. We need to be very certain of our ‘righteousness’ before demanding judgment on another. The implications for historical reflection, as well as the more mundane aspects of human life are clear.
9. Hope - the belief in the possibility of a positive outcome, that we are not prisoners of historical inevitability.

⁵ Bishop Donal McKeown: Speech at launch of Irish Churches Peace Project, Belfast, 27.09.13.

⁶ Dr Johnson McMaster

⁷ Page 32 Lencioni, P, *The Advantage*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 2012

10. There is good will at all levels of the Church to ask itself searching questions. Just as importantly there is good will to act.

Pressures on the Church

1. Organisational Culture has a crucial influence on effectiveness.
2. For any institution there is a temptation to an overriding 'steady as she goes' approach. Infused in this is a belief – that what is *most* important is that the 'boat' of that institution should not be rocked, where it becomes *the thing* rather than its mission.
3. 'Whatever you say ... say nothing': Smoothing over becomes more important than honest frank discussion. The end result is an organisation that is good at subtlety but not boldness.
4. Competing expectations: The Church on this island exists in the particular context of communal friction. Against this backdrop those both within and outside the Church have competing expectations of it.
5. Busy to the point of distraction: Churches are increasingly busy places. The energy required to maintain ordinary Church life may not leave much for addressing issues that are potentially contentious or troublesome.
6. "We see leadership too rarely exercised from high office, and the constraints that come with authority go far to explain why. In public life, people generally look to their authorities to solve problems with a minimum of pain, and where pain must be endured, they often expect their officials to find somebody else to bear the costs ... When we do elect activists, we want them to change the thinking and behaviour of other people, rarely our own. We can hardly

blame our public officials for giving us what we ask for." ⁸

7. Reflection on the events of a century ago in Ireland does not take place in a vacuum. It will happen with the weight of generations of Irish history as well as the more recent emotionally charged memories of *The Troubles*.

Actions for the Church

1. To champion reconciliation: Core to the Church's value system is a belief in relationship. The *Good News* of the Christian faith is the possibility of restoration of broken relationships.
2. To offer a new language, a different tone and way of speaking about difficult issues.
3. To mobilise its people to do difficult work: The real work of a leader is somehow to mobilise your people to work on understanding the complex challenge and to find their own solutions. This is all the more true when there are no quick fix solutions to challenges and finding a solution may require people to re-evaluate their values, actions and aspirations.
4. To give courageous but wise leadership in a delicate journey: Leaders need to have the courage and the skills to know the right questions to put before their people.
5. To take a joint approach, across the denominations, in facilitating a process of historical reflection.
6. To ensure that a reflection process includes all of the key events that took place between 1912 and 1922. This will ensure that each community has a commitment to hear the voices of other communities.
7. To articulate an understandable joint statement of values for addressing the Decade of Commemorations.

⁸ Heifetz, R *Leadership Without Easy Answers* p183

8. To design a healthy reflective process that takes advantage of the Church's access not only to its own networks but also those of relevant expertise.
9. To design a reflective process that uses the full range of ways in which people engage with issues, going beyond a one-dimensional approach.
10. To commission and sanction the skills of projects already engaged in meaningful reflection on this decade.⁹
11. To pilot a simple reflective process, predicated on agreed values, in three dioceses / Presbyteries / Districts, on both sides of the border.
12. To facilitate both discreet and public discussion between key stakeholders and community leaders.
13. To develop partnerships with other organizations within the community to facilitate reflection.
14. To pilot joint reflection processes for each of the key dates during the decade.
15. To use their access to 'public square' to encourage ethical historical reflection.
16. To create important symbolic moments for the community. Recent years have seen significant symbolic moments that encouraged healing and reconciliation.
17. To reaffirm and publicly champion that a process of reconciliation is not only a key value for the Church but that it is also a necessity and possibility in our society.
18. To bring "an ecumenical exploration of the scriptures"¹⁰ or a serious theological engagement with the deepest issues found

in the way communities relate to one another in these islands.

19. To establish a new covenant or proclamation for relationships on these islands - how to relate to and live with one another ethically.
20. Church is meant to be a politically neutral body. It needs to bring something different to the table in addition to the politicians, sociologists and historians, all of which bring vital things.

Conclusion

1. Leadership at its most noble empowers people and works for the common good. Yet there will always be the temptation to either use your own people or to be scared of them. "Tackling tough problems – problems that often require an evolution of values – is the end of leadership; getting that work done is its essence".¹¹
2. Seeking the truth in history is for building relationships as well as the integrity of finding facts. The nature of politics is that at times it seems reduced to winning, or perhaps more accurately, not losing.
3. Where there has been a history of conflict then division is too easily fuelled by the story that one community tells about itself, as well as the 'other'. The story we tell ourselves on these islands is powerfully influenced by the historical events that took place between 1912 and 1922.
4. The story that communities on these islands tell about themselves and the 'other' go to the heart of their self-identity, their relationships with each other as well as any hopes for the future. Somehow we need to find a way of reflecting on our history that changes the dynamic both in ourselves but also in our relationships.

⁹ Examples include *Ethical and Shared Remembering / Healing Through Remembering*

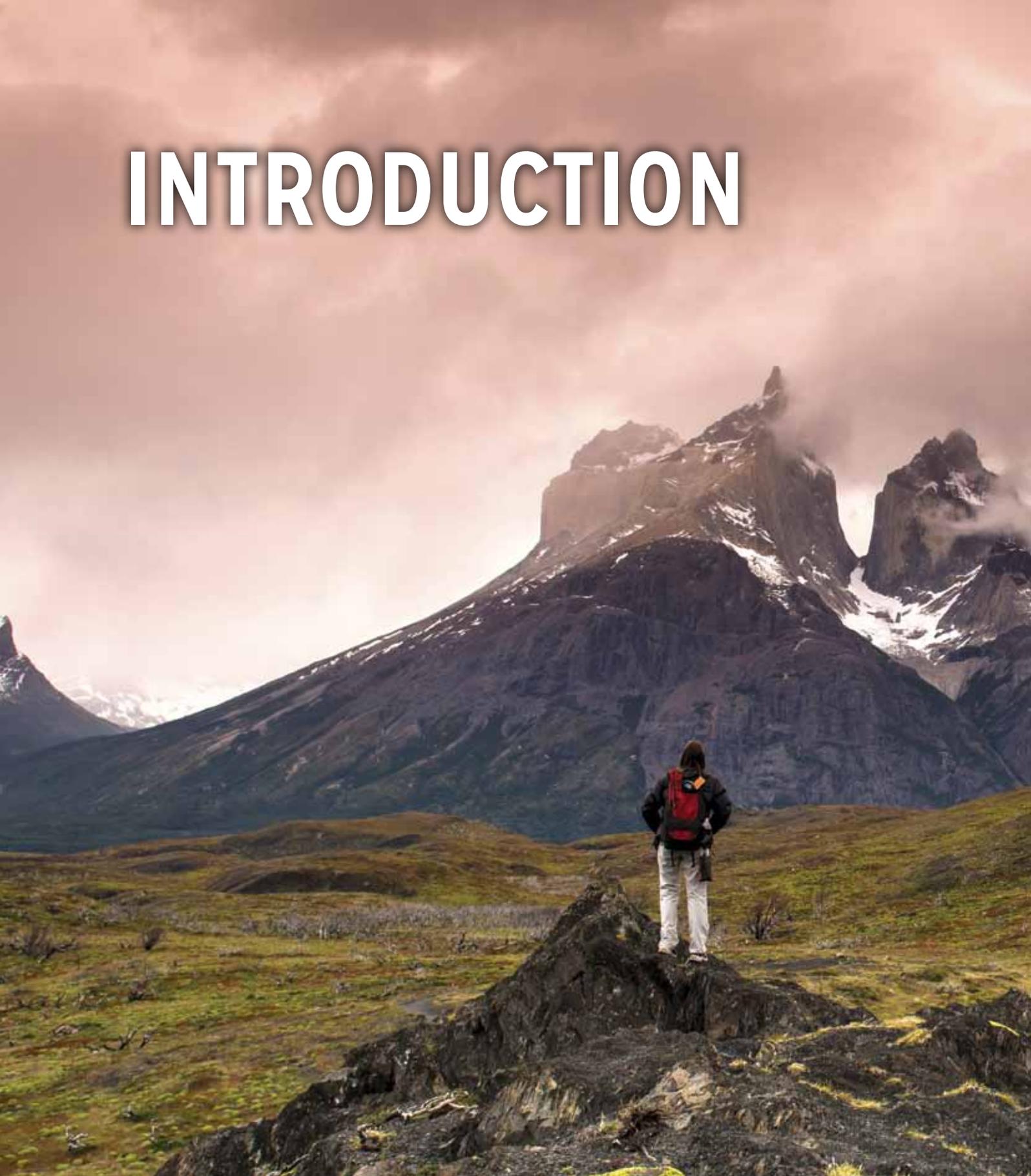
¹⁰ Interview: 21.12.05.

¹¹ *Leadership Without Easy Answers* p26

5. Peace building is a risky business and the Church in Ireland is a risk averse body. It has also retreated from the public square.
6. Will we deal with this decade in a way that heals? If there is one word at the core of the Christian message it is the word reconciliation - the bringing together into relationship of those whose relationship has been broken. If there is one hope that gives shape and power to the message the Church has to proclaim it is the possibility of reconciliation.
7. The Church needs to provide wise leadership along with the courage to do more than state the obvious.



INTRODUCTION



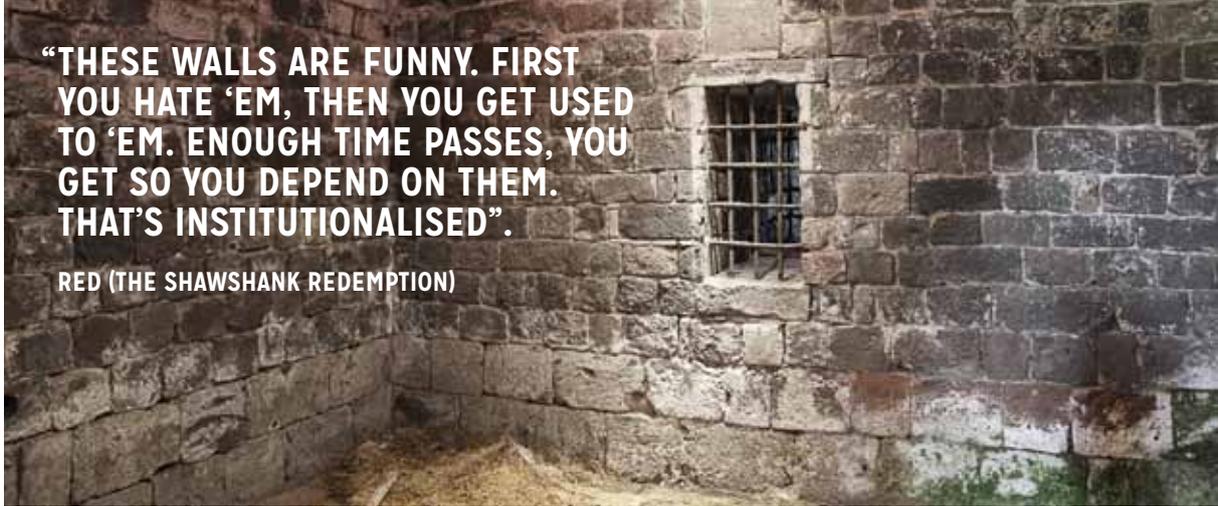
**OPPORTUNITY
OR CHALLENGE?**



INTRODUCTION

“THESE WALLS ARE FUNNY. FIRST YOU HATE ‘EM, THEN YOU GET USED TO ‘EM. ENOUGH TIME PASSES, YOU GET SO YOU DEPEND ON THEM. THAT’S INSTITUTIONALISED”.

RED (THE SHAWSHANK REDEMPTION)



‘The Pale’ describes an area that is enclosed and safe. To go be ‘beyond the pale’ is to be outside the area accepted as ‘home’, a place of uncertainty and potential danger. History on these islands seems like a safe well-trodden place. But can reflecting on it bring us ‘beyond the pale’, into uncertain and dangerous territory?

The years 1912 to 1922 saw seminal historical events on these islands, the memory of which has burrowed deep into our sense of identity and psyche. Whether we are talking about the fault line of civil war politics, the resonances of the Easter Rising for nationalists or the sacrifices of The Somme for unionism the effects are still felt today.

We are presented with a series of centenary moments, a time when we will, whether willingly or unwillingly, remember events from 1912 to 1922. Each part of these islands will remember some events with more enthusiasm or empathy than others. Each of these events affected different communities in a variety of ways that impact up to this present day.

¹² Interview 11.04.13.

What we all have in common is that this period put something in the DNA of our psyches, sense of identity and how we relate to one another in the here and now. History has done much to shape and pattern relationships on these islands. All the more so as there is rarely an agreed narrative. The difficulty with anything to do with the past in Ireland is that in our process of relationships we have what Bishop John McDowell calls “parallel stories”¹².

Noting the contemporary context led some interviewees for this research to believe that healthy historical reflection is important.

Structures are there but the hatreds are still there.

The fire is still there - not just the embers!

There is a core of angry people.

Every day of relative peace creates new opportunities. But you can see things slide in the opposite direction.

Dealing with the history of these islands, with its

relationships, is profoundly difficult. It is a call to ponder the enormous cost of our failure to live peaceably together. There is no mystery to the roots of our fear of examining Irish history. A.T.Q. Stewart captures the essence when he describes the past as “a convenient quarry which provides ammunition to use against enemies in the present”¹³.

Is there bad history? Yes, if it is written from a partisan point of view or to make a polemical point, or to ignore evidence that one doesn't like. The end result of such a version has the potential to be unsavoury and poisonous. This suggests reflection on history that is not so much about exploring objective evidence but a more subjective telling of a narrative.

The subjective retelling of history generates a sense of meaning for a community. But a constant public retelling of a historically flawed version of history can allow one community to celebrate its innocence and / or victimhood in the face of another. History is then not only a way of telling a story of the past, it is about interpreting the present and shaping the future.

In Ireland we are not immune. Our sense of identity has been deeply shaped by the stories we tell about ourselves from our history. The stories we tell about our neighbours – the other community – are just as important in the process. The playwright Dave Duggan observes, “Maybe that story is about the values that underpin who and what we are”¹⁴.

Duggan talks about the possibility of stories “... not being about winning or losing. We need to find a new common story to tell about ourselves”. All of this is rooted in a sense of identity – who we are and who the ‘other’ is in relationship to us. Shape to identity is given by the layers of history, not least the events of 1912 to 1922. As Tony Macaulay

comments “It is not about one hundred years ago but about today”¹⁵.

So what is a sense of identity? It is to know who one is, where one has come from, and how one is placed in the world. It is not only individuals who need a sense of identity. Communities have similar needs! Identity is something that is shaped not just by the present, but also by the past. It is a human trait that a sense of identity is aided by some sense of the road that has already been travelled. This is why history is such a vital part of the life of any community.

Professor David Hayton describes history as “how we got to where we are now”¹⁶. But writing history is rarely as simple as isolating and collating bare facts! Especially in any situation of conflict, the way in which ‘facts’ are perceived and the values that are bestowed on them can make historical analysis very much a subjective exercise.

When communities recount their past it is often not so much a case of an appropriately critical retelling of objective historical ‘truths’ as interpreting events in a way that reinforces the story of that particular community. History is not just a record of what happened in the past. It also provides metaphors to describe the present and the future. History is a potent force in the life of any community. It shapes their psychology and provides patterns of reaction and perception to the present day. In this Ireland is certainly no exception.

The historian A.T.Q. Stewart reflects on history in the Irish psyche when he says:

...the Irish are not only capable of forgetting the past, but quite deliberately expunging from their minds whole areas of it. Like other nations they have woven for themselves a garment of myth

¹³ Page 16 Stewart, A.T.Q. *The Narrow Ground, Gregg Revivals, Aldershot 1989*

¹⁴ Interview: 31.05.13.

¹⁵ Interview: 09.05.13.

¹⁶ Interview: 09.05.13.

*and legend which they call Irish history. Having designed it themselves, they have taken great care to make it as comfortable as possible.*¹⁷

The Irish are not unique in that history, metaphor and myth are part of the story of any community. Any community finds it difficult to tell a history that is not at times selective, incomplete and inaccurate. But when history mutates into myth it easily ends up obscuring reality.

History that shapes the psyche of any fractured community is often the result of a selective view of the past. The way in which history can give way to something that approaches myth will be no less tempting when reflecting on such an iconic decade as 1912 to 1922 in Irish history.

Trying to deal with the present can be a difficult task when the lines between history and myth are always porous. The stories we tell about others and ourselves can either create a sense of threat and confrontation rather than compromise and peaceful coexistence.

The events of that decade resonate deeply in the hearts and minds of the different sections of our community. However this is not the same as saying that the intricacies of those events are always paid heed to. The events are often portrayed as a simple fight between good and evil! Who is good and who is evil will depend on who is telling the story and why.

The temptation in Ireland involves the telling and retelling of a history that is not only for the sake of remembrance but to fuel us for present day struggles.

Jogging our collective memory by constant retelling of the story helps create a sense not only of identity but also of meaning for a community. Stories of struggles at key times in our history become inspiration for the present. However, as Ruth

Dudley-Edwards points out,

*To the opposing tribes of Ireland, Irish history is but a tool in the fashioning of identity and a weapon in the long war.*¹⁸

The identity created by a historically flawed version of history allows communities to celebrate their victory, innocence or victimhood in the face of the other. History and myth is not just about the past but also about fuelling the present.

It is all too easy to see the potentially destructive effects of a prolonged examination of our history. Bruce Clarke sums it up effectively when he notes the dangers of “fanning into flame smoldering embers of grievance, enmity and hatred that exist between communities in Northern Ireland and across the island”.¹⁹ Ed Cairns puts it another way when he says, “... how one understands the factors that sustain the conflict will in turn influence where one searches for ways to dampen its ardour”.²⁰

The existence of such “smoldering embers’ is evidenced by the continued threat of a dissident republican campaign and the recent Flags protests in Belfast. Both illustrate the fragility of our peace in Northern Ireland.

A generation on this island is growing up that has had no experience of violent conflict. This is something to celebrate, but also to be wary of. It leaves a generation open to the romantic myth of violence - myths that are easily reinforced by calling up the ghosts of a decade long past.

The inability to deal with our more recent past leaves many with the question of whether our peace process is robust enough to withstand reflection on the past, in any shape or form. Hence, a collective nervousness about examining yet more history.

¹⁷ Page 16 Stewart, A.T.Q. *The Narrow Ground, Gregg Revivals, Aldershot, 1989*

¹⁸ Page 128 Dudley-Edwards R, *The Faithful Tribe, Harper Collins, London 1999*

¹⁹ Interview: 02.05.13.

²⁰ Page 15 Cairns E, *A Wellng Up of Deep Unconscious Forces, Psychology and the Conflict in Northern Ireland, University of Ulster, Coleraine 1994*

The truth is that many people on each side of the community hold but a sketchy understanding of our history. This is fertile ground for use in narrow political purposes that can harm community relations and our long-term journey to a settled peace.

Like it or not we have begun to live through a decade when momentous events of one hundred years ago shaped our sense of self and relationships on these islands. Is it an opportunity for something good and constructive? It is if we choose it to be. But, an opportunity for what?

In the post-conflict atmosphere on this island there is a weariness and wariness about looking into our history. Whilst understandable it is also dangerous. Wounds have been inflicted and suffered by every community on these islands, during our history. In the physical body if a wound is not treated there is the danger of it festering. The same potential lies within our collective psyche and relationships.

As time passes and people face the more immediate problems of recession there is less energy to address issues that affect relationships on these islands. It could easily be seen as a luxury or an esoteric exercise. Yet this decade presents a practical and time limited period to calmly reflect on a crucial period in our history. The opportunity is to ask a question – did that period of history create or ingrain something into the DNA of relationships on these islands? Not only that but are these dynamics repeated in a continuum to this present day?

Taking the time to reflect on momentous events of one hundred years ago allows us to focus attention on unresolved issues in a way that does not simply make things worse. With the benefit of the time lapse there is at least the possibility of beginning to reflect on complex and divisive issues.

The fact that events of one hundred years ago will inevitably be commemorated presents a window of opportunity:

- To find a way to commemorate significant history that increases our knowledge and understanding rather than proving to be divisive.
- To find a way of engaging people with history in a way that increases their knowledge and that leaves them less vulnerable to having their passions inflamed.
- To gain an understanding of why previous generations acted or reacted in particular ways, whether we agree with them or not.
- To increase our knowledge of history so that we can find new ways of looking at very old problems.
- To create a shared conversation about a deeply contentious period of our history that will promote the difficult path towards reconciliation instead of increased division.

Frank Power notes that this decade of “... centenaries is one time when you can grab people’s attention”.²¹ This decade may quite literally be our last opportunity to find an audience, beyond the ‘usual suspects’ interested enough to engage with events of 100 years ago, or that is gripped by the relevance of doing so. By using this time-limited period to examine the past it allows us to identify what we need to do in order that history is not repeated.

History is important, perhaps all the more so when we are weary of it. Reflecting on the decade presents us with an opportunity to focus our attention on major inter-community relationships and ask how we have arrived at where we are. Hayton’s previously quoted words make all the more sense, “History is how we got to where we are now”.²² The opportunity

²¹ Interview: 28.05.13.

²² Interview: 09.05.13.



and the challenge is to be willing to move beyond a way of relating that is rooted in warring identities, fuelling the endless replaying of tired battles through various appeals to history.

To that end this paper asks:

1. Is commemorating the events of 1912 to 1922 a moment of opportunity or risk?
2. What values should underpin historical reflection of this period?
3. Does the Church have anything useful to bring to such a process of reflection?
4. What challenges and advantages does the Church face in engaging with historical reflection?
5. What practical actions can the Church take to ensure that historical reflection on this decade is constructive rather than damaging.

The research methodology was as follows:

1. 19 individual interviews. The interviewees reflected a range of geographical, political and religious opinion. Interviewees were asked:
 - a. What do you believe to be the opportunity, challenge and risk in reflecting on the

historic events, affecting these island, between 1912 and 1922?

- b. Do you believe the Church has any particular contribution to make in this reflection?
 - c. What strengths and weaknesses does the Church with regard to involvement in reflection on this decade?
2. 4 Focus Groups, reflecting a variety of opinion both inside and outside the Church were asked:
 - a. What do you believe to be the opportunity, challenge and risk in reflecting on the historic events, affecting these island, between 1912 and 1922?
 - b. Do you believe the Church has any particular contribution to make in this reflection?
 - c. What strengths and weaknesses does the Church with regard to involvement in reflection on this decade?
 3. Desk research.





THE TEMPTATIONS



THE TEMPTATIONS



Temptation can be described as the coaxing or inducing of a person into committing such an act, by manipulation or otherwise of curiosity, desire or fear of loss.

Collins Dictionary defines temptation as:

- To attempt to persuade or entice to do something, especially something morally wrong or unwise
- To allure, invite, or attract
- To give rise to a desire in (someone) to do something
- To risk provoking²⁴

So what does temptation look like as we reflect on a crucial decade in our history? Interviewees identified some of the issues (Comments are from interviewees unless specified as being from a Focus Group).

The issue is not on the radar, not much more than a passing interest.

People are not asking questions because they are trying to keep body and soul together. (Focus Group)

People need to see the need.

I hope people are not put off engaging because of fear of sensitivities.

The danger is sentiment is stirred up that will be used to increase the level of digging. (Focus Group)

Digging up issues fuels community tensions.

Flames can die down and people can forget they are still there.

The danger or reviving animosities and tribalism.

²³ Bruce Clarke, Interview 02.05.13.

²⁴ <http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/tempt>

When bad things happen in localities and civil war it is more dangerous ... embers are there to be dug up.

Some of the issues were identified as being specific to different communities, as reflected by the following comments:

No state should apologise for its own birth.

A sacrifice made at the Somme that Britain could never repay. Britain has an infinite debt to us.

There was an apology for violence in the sacred founding texts. The founding documents of the state proclaimed armed uprising.

Some Protestants didn't have the same grudge against Britain as Roman Catholics looking back to the Penal Laws.

The Treaty put faultlines ...

Interviewees also expressed a measure of frustration as reflected:

Commemoration, but avoiding the here and now.

There is no leadership from government.

The danger of using commemorations as a way of perpetuating conflict today.

Events hijacked and used in cynical way ... all provokes a reaction.

Some people had a vested interest in making it a Catholic / Catholic issue. (Focus Group)

We weren't taught the other person's history.

However, historical reflection as a positive activity was also noted:

Use history to lift ourselves out of where we are, to see the wood from the trees.

Enable people who want to see things in grey and complexities.

(The flags issue) was a sign of how fragile things are. It reminds us not to assume anything.

In what guise might temptation come?

1. **Fanning the embers:** The Altare della Patria is a national war memorial situated on an imposing site in the centre of Rome. In a corner of one of its galleries is a small print. It depicts the body of a soldier, obviously killed in battle. The garlanded soldier is being borne into the heavens, welcomed by an angel figure. The image provided a potent recruiting tool - inspiring young men about the 'glories' of war and the ethereal reward for those who lost their lives fighting it.

"People interpret the past in the light of the present," says Prof David Hayton.²⁵ If this is so then exploiting memories by recounting stories of victim-hood or using commemoration as a blame game - an opportunity to condemn others - is a temptation when reflecting on history. The lines between history and myth can then become pragmatically blurred. For those who wish to use commemoration in this way it is easier to portray history in crude 'good and evil' terms rather than engaging with their complexities. The end result will be more deeply fractured community relations.

Comments from one Focus Group illustrates the fears, "The danger is of sentiment being stirred up ... is the future just going to be more of the past".²⁶

Reflecting on stories of victory or victimhood can inspire passion like little else. Fanning into flame those "smouldering embers" is a recruiting tool like no other. We have a long

²⁵ Interview: 09.05.13.

²⁶ 11.04.13

track record on these islands of historical 'reflection' been used to rally new 'troops' for the fight, either on the streets or in the polling booth.

Bruce Clarke warns that in Ireland "Flames can die down and people can forget that they are still there".²⁷

2. **The bland leading the blind:** It is tempting to address commemoration in a way that is so bland that the maximum achieved is to 'get that over' without upsetting the foot soldiers. As Dave Duggan asks, "What is our ambition?"²⁸

The word bland is defined as²⁹:

- To be devoid of any distinctive or stimulating characteristics; uninteresting;
- To be gentle and agreeable;
- Mild and soothing;
- Unemotional or unmoved

To act wisely or carefully does not necessarily equate to blandness.

Blandness has many guises. On the one hand we can approach this decade of commemoration in a way akin to the actions of a quaint historical society musing on facts rather than grappling with underlying issues. Alternately there is the 'Whatever you do don't mention the war' syndrome - using many words and expressing worthy sentiments in a way that fails to grasp any nettles.

Kate Turner says we can "use history to lift ourselves out of where we are - to see the wood from the trees".³⁰ But looking at any contentious matter is never a risk-free enterprise. Professor Hayton talks of the "... danger of reviving animosities and tribalism ... (of) energising a younger generation".³¹

²⁷ Interview: 02.05.13.

²⁸ Interview: 13.05.13.

²⁹ www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/bland

³⁰ Interview: 28.05.13.

Blandness is essentially a refusal to grapple with issues due to fear of exacerbating tensions. It is a way of work avoidance when dealing with difficult issues and is often an unconscious action. As likely as not it is rooted in a fear of feeding unhealthy emotions. The reaction is to play things down.

It is possible to address a contentious issue in such an esoteric or academic manner that it may fulfill the demands of accuracy but miss the opportunity to grapple with deep underlying issues. Talking of the challenge of reflecting on difficult issues Bishop John McDowell summarises the temptation as "A good deal of neighbourliness but not talking about things".³²

3. **Desert island commemoration:** This is where each part of the community decides to commemorate separately. Kate Turner correctly identifies that "People feel they own their anniversaries".³³

Entirely separate commemoration means that as we do so we only speak to ourselves and to our own community. It avoids the discomfort, need or commitment to understand what was going on in the minds and hearts of the 'other' community during historic events. The temptation here is for each community to only have interest in 'their' iconic events and only to be concerned for how they affected them.

4. **I fight therefore I am:** Conflict has often provided a sense of meaning and purpose that is often missing in ordinary experience. Remembering and celebrating it has often given resolve for a cause deemed worth living for, dying for ... and even killing for. Given our contentious history this sense of identity is usually forged as something defined by being

³¹ Interview: 09.05.13.

³² Interview: 11.04.13.

³³ Interview: 28.05.13.

in opposition to those we share this island with. This is dangerous when there is no greater question in any society than the state of relationships within it.

5. Sophistry - words without intrinsic meaning:

Language is a curious thing. It can be used as an instrument either for expressing critical thought or for concealing and preventing it. Words can be used in such a way as to give an air of impartiality to what are actually politically driven motivations. Sophistry is a method of argument that is seemingly plausible though actually invalid and misleading.

George Orwell identifies the problem in *Words and the English Language* when he highlights communication that

... does not consist in picking out words for the sake of their meaning and inventing images in order to make the meaning clearer. It consists in gumming together long strips of words which have already been set in order by someone else, and making the results presentable by sheer humbug.³⁴

For the listener it saves the mental and emotional effort of dealing with complexity. For the speaker words can partially conceal meaning. Ready-made phrases have the ability to both think your thoughts for you and conceal your meaning. The end result is that words and meaning can part company.

Orwell is describing the 'cut and paste' of the PR room, or what we would now describe as 'spin'.

If you simplify your English, you are freed from the worst follies of orthodoxy ... when you make a stupid remark its stupidity

will be obvious, even to yourself ... Political language is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind.³⁵

Fr Tim Bartlett observes that "Moral analysis is complex and grey".³⁶ When dealing with the complexities of history it is not difficult to see how sophistry may find its way into historic commemoration. Sophistry can not only drain words of all intrinsic meaning, it has the ability to do the same for historical reflection. A truly dangerous tool when 'smouldering embers' are nearby.

6. Comfort blanket history: A comfort blanket is a blanket that a young child becomes very attached to. In an adult context it describes something that people are attached to, because it gives them a feeling of security. Using history in this way does not allow for any critical self-examination or openness to new ways of thinking.

The temptation to *comfort blanket history* is heightened when there is a fear of dealing with any aspect of the past in a way that involves critical thinking of one's own side, or a challenge of taking moral responsibility for something. It is a useful tool if leadership does not necessarily want to own up to its own people that what it fought for either by the gun, from the podium and pulpit has not been achieved.

7. Dog whistle history: Dog whistles are built in such a way that their high-frequency whistle is heard by dogs, but is inaudible to humans. From this comes the concept of Dog-whistle politics - political messaging employing coded language that appears to mean one thing to the

³⁴ http://www.orwell.ru/library/essays/politics/english/e_polit Orwell G, *Politics and the English Language*, Horizon, London, 1946

³⁵ http://www.orwell.ru/library/essays/politics/english/e_polit Orwell G, *Politics and the English Language*, Horizon, London, 1946

³⁶ Interview: 05.06.13.

general population but that has an additional, different or more specific resonance for a targeted subgroup. Commemoration will always be vulnerable to dog-whistle politics.

The phrase is only ever used in a negative way because of the inherently deceptive nature of the practice and because the dog-whistle messages may resonate with one's constituency but not play out well in the cold light of day. The dishonesty lies with the person whose messages hide his or her own private definition, but allows the hearer to think they mean something quite different.

If we accept that the historical story we tell of ourselves and the 'other' impacts the present and the future then it becomes very important how we remember an iconic decade.

Large-scale violence has gone from our streets over the last fifteen years. However the relationships in our community have not been healed. The sharp edge still present in our politics suggest wounds that have not gone away either.

Has this DNA in our politics changed, or has it just become more subtle and cutely calibrated? In one sense the conduct of our politics has become more sophisticated and professional. But the danger is the use of history can disguise a continual politics of struggle and

standoff through a careful calibration of communal division.

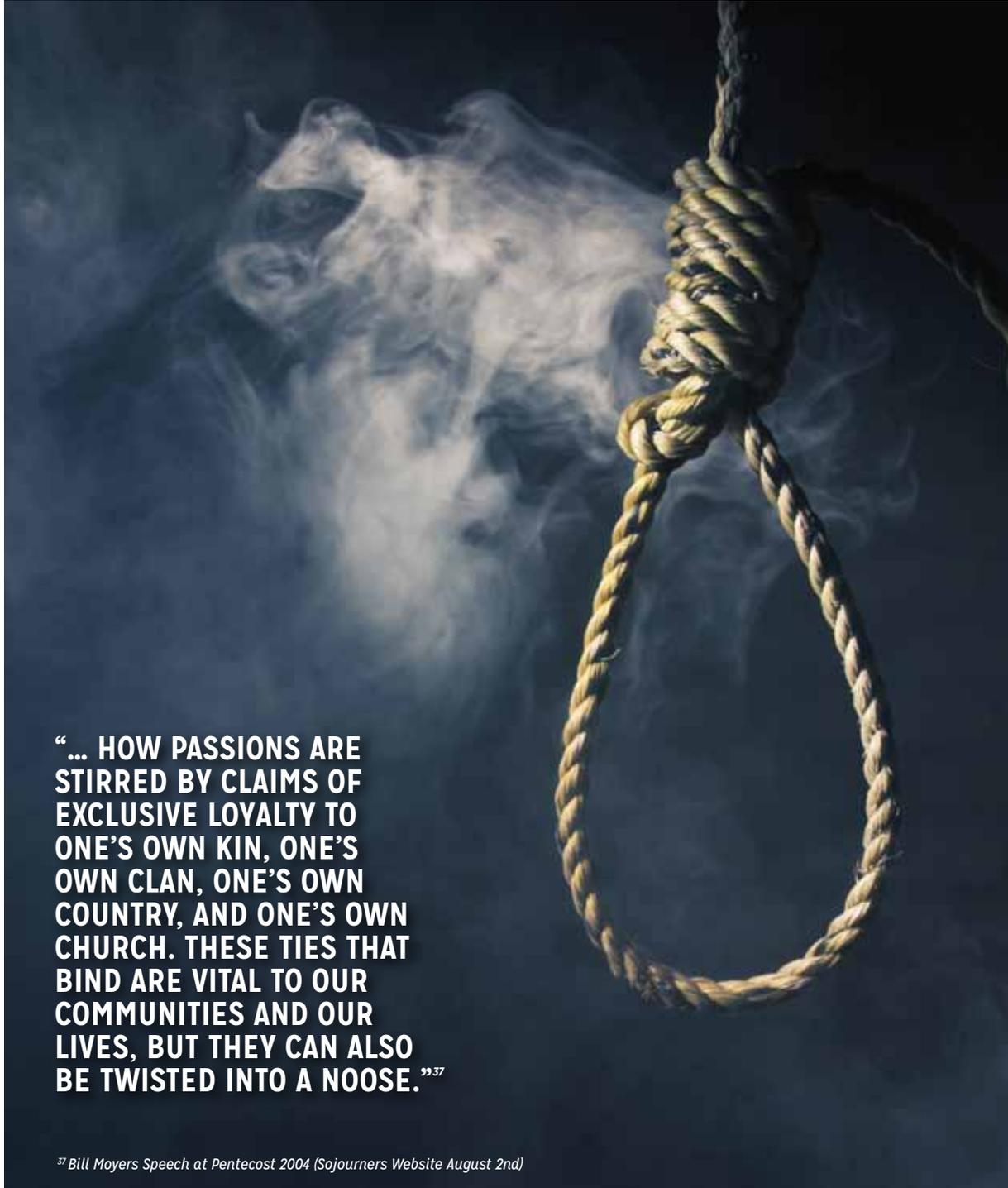
Political advancement through dog-whistle politics is built on a willingness to press the buttons of fear, victimhood and sectarianism in one's own community. The appeal to history, both recent and distant, has always provided that rich quarry of stones to fire against one's opponent in the present.

- 8. Distraction and disinterest:** Perhaps the greatest temptation of all is simple disinterest in the populace. Disengagement does not just arise from a lack of interest in history. It is more to do with people having more immediate priorities created by recession. Weariness has also seeped in due to the nature of our political process.

Whether the danger is inflamed passion or missing a unique opportunity to address issues raised by the decade of commemorations the result can be the same - communities that do not understand each other, are vulnerable to those who want the keep embers of conflict just warm enough, or are embittered for the fight again.

All this suggests that historical commemoration is a minefield that some can exploit and many choose to ignore. So, how do we find a way of looking at what we do not want to look at? More particularly what role can the Church find in this reflection?

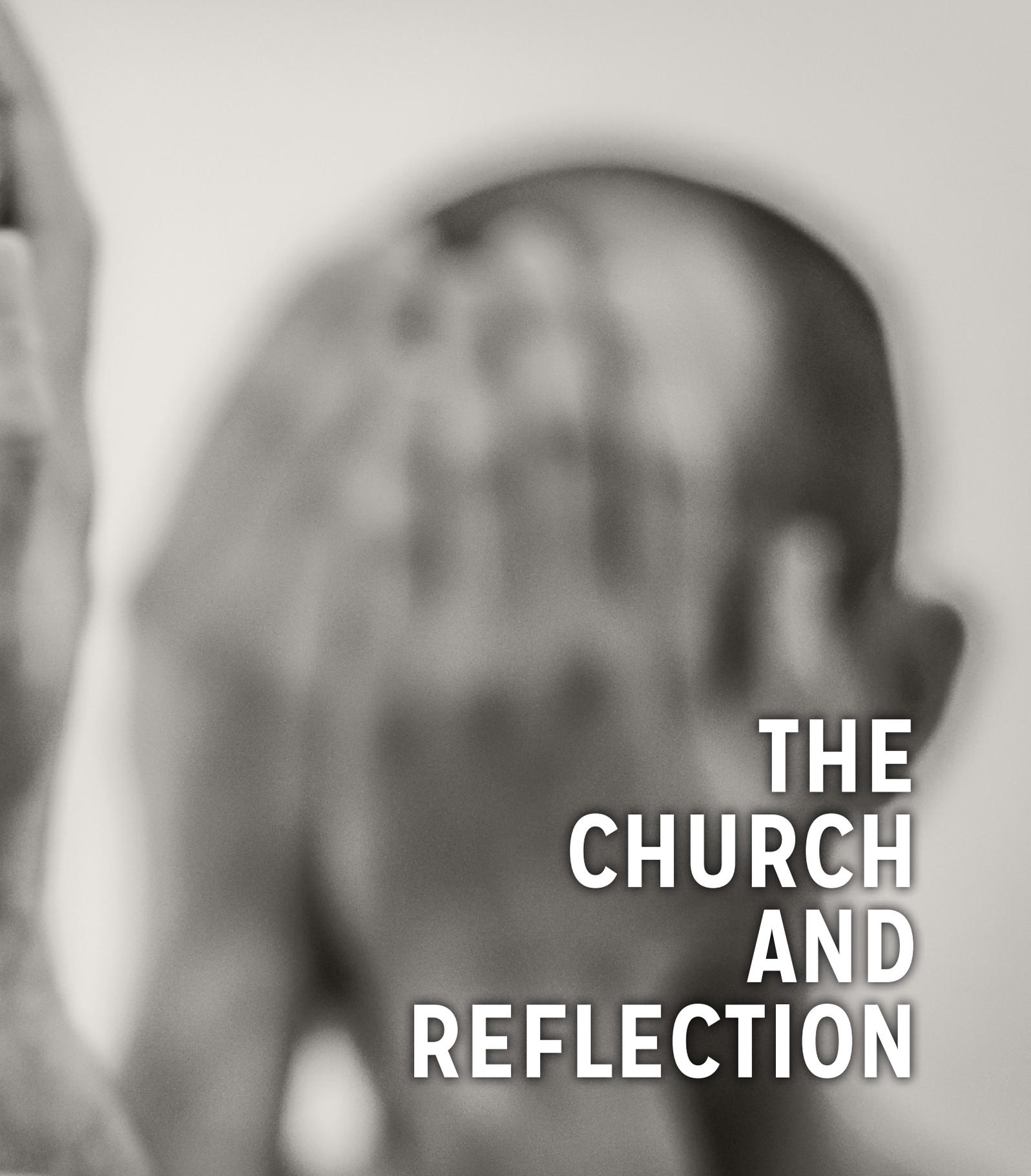




“ ... HOW PASSIONS ARE STIRRED BY CLAIMS OF EXCLUSIVE LOYALTY TO ONE’S OWN KIN, ONE’S OWN CLAN, ONE’S OWN COUNTRY, AND ONE’S OWN CHURCH. THESE TIES THAT BIND ARE VITAL TO OUR COMMUNITIES AND OUR LIVES, BUT THEY CAN ALSO BE TWISTED INTO A NOOSE.”³⁷

³⁷ Bill Moyers Speech at Pentecost 2004 (Sojourners Website August 2nd)





**THE
CHURCH
AND
REFLECTION**

THE CHURCH AND REFLECTION

“CHURCH IS NOT ABOUT FIGHTING TO STAY IMPORTANT”.³⁸



The religious landscape in Ireland has significantly changed in recent years. This is not only with regard to the place of Church in our society. It also refers to the make-up of the Church itself. However, evidence suggests that the Church can still be regarded as having a significant role in historical reflection.

Interviewees acknowledged both an imperative as well as useful contributions the Church could make (Comments are by interviewees unless specified as being from a Focus Group).

Where was Archbishop Tutu? Right in the middle of it!

With sectarianism and racism there are structures there to deal with them. The big threat is poverty ... there is a class issue in the church.

Church has an audience - how that can be engaged is something else. Politicians still

use sectarian division If our communities are reconciled that changes politics. Once you empower people they think for themselves.

Is the Church able to provide safe space and give imprimatur to debate ... it has an outreach beyond the usual suspects and an authoritative voice.

Church can facilitate a 'climate of speech'.

The faith sector ... can be seen as an honest broker.

There is a moral voice missing.

Churches can bring in moral questions.

How does the Church officially regard its role (in commemorations)?

A belief that the Church has a contribution to make to this process of historical reflection is added to by the following evidence:

³⁸ Dr Duncan Morrow

I. The Church is a significant presence in Ireland.

The 2011 Census in the Republic of Ireland noted the following numbers for religious groupings:³⁹

- Roman Catholic: 3,861,000
- Church of Ireland: 129,000
- Muslim: 49,200
- Orthodox: 45,200
- Other christian: 41,299
- Presbyterian: 24,600
- Apostolic or Pentecostal: 14,000
- Other: 81,000
- No religion: 269,000
- Not stated: 72,900

Even though people who describe themselves as not religious are now the second largest grouping in the state Ireland remains predominantly Catholic despite large increases in other religions in recent years. Just over 84% of people – 3.86 million – define themselves as Roman Catholic, a slight decrease on the 87 per

cent who did so in the last census in 2006. The actual number of Catholics increased by almost 180,000 due to the overall population increase. Much of the increase came from non-Irish nationals with most coming from other parts of Europe.

- The next largest religious grouping is Church of Ireland with 129,000 people (2.8 % of the population)
- The biggest increase was in people describing themselves as Orthodox, which grew by 117% between 2006 and 2011. Apostolic or Pentecostal religions grew by 73% in five years to around 14,000.
- The biggest non-Christian religion in Ireland is Islam, with 49,200 people defining themselves as Muslim in the census – an increase of over 50% since 2006.

The Northern Ireland 2011 Census noted:⁴⁰

Year	1991		2001		2011	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Catholic	605,639	38.40%	678,462	40.26%	738,033	40.76%
Presbyterian	336,891	21.40%	348,742	20.69%	345,101	19.06%
Church of Ireland	279,280	17.70%	257,788	15.30%	248,821	13.74%
Methodist	59,517	3.80%	59,173	3.51%	54,253	3.00%
Baptist	19,484	1.20%	*	*	*	*
Brethren	12,446	0.80%	*	*	*	*
Congregationist	8,176	0.50%	*	*	*	*
Unitarian	3,213	0.20%	*	*	*	*
Other	79,129	5.00%	102,211 ¹	6.07%	104,380	5.76%
Other Religions	*	*	5,082 ²	0.33%	14,859	0.82%
None	59,234	3.70%	*	*	183,164	10.11%

³⁹ www.cso.ie/en/census/census2011reports/

⁴⁰ www.nisra.gov.uk/Census/2011_results_detailed_characteristics.html

2. There is significant willingness within the Church to address peace building and reconciliations issues.

A major survey by the Irish School of Ecumenics (TCD), entitled, 21st Century Faith, was distributed to more than 4,000 clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. It was part of a wider research project 'Visioning 21st Century Ecumenism: Diversity, Dialogue and Reconciliation.'⁴¹ Some of its key findings, as noted below, suggest that reconciliation is a significant priority in principle, if not always in practice.⁴²

- Clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders on the island as a whole (as well as in the Republic and Northern Ireland) think it is most important to preach and teach about reconciliation between individuals and God; and reconciliation between individuals.
- Clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders on the island as a whole and in the Republic are more likely to preach and teach about reconciliation between people of different ethnicities or nationalities than on reconciliation between Catholics and Protestants.
- 50% of clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders on the island as a whole had accessed resources on reconciliation in general. The most likely to have done so were Church of Ireland (59%) and Methodist (58%) ministers.
- Most clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders on the island as a whole (as well as in the Republic and Northern Ireland) think it is appropriate to spend 11-25% of their time per year preaching and teaching on reconciliation.

But they also report that they do not spend as much time preaching and teaching on reconciliation as they would like.

The report noted a gap between the time clergy thought it was appropriate to spend on reconciliation and the time they actually spend on reconciliation:

...most clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders indicated that the time they thought it was appropriate to spend on preaching and teaching about reconciliation, as a percentage per year, was 11-25%. This is a significant chunk, in the context of the myriad other topics and issues dealt with by churches and religious communities. But 62% of these clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders actually spent 11-25% of their time preaching and teaching on reconciliation, with 32% of those who thought it was appropriate to do so spending less than 10% of their time on it ... Strikingly, reconciliation seems to be primarily understood in quite individualistic terms. Clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders were most likely to say that reconciliation between individuals and God, and between individuals, were the most important types of reconciliation ... This raises questions about how appropriate it is for conceptions of reconciliation to focus so much on the individual. Is this done at the expense of other forms of reconciliation?⁴³

In a companion report the project surveyed the attitudes of laypeople on the island of Ireland.⁴⁴ It found that:

- 87% of people on the island as a whole responded that it was important to preach

⁴¹ 21st Century Faith - Results of the Survey of Faith Leaders. By Dr Gladys Ganiel, Irish School of Ecumenics, Trinity College Dublin (2009)

⁴² P6 21st Century Faith - Results of the Survey of Faith Leaders. By Dr Gladys Ganiel, Irish School of Ecumenics, Trinity College Dublin (2009)

⁴³ P32 21st Century Faith - Results of the Survey of Faith Leaders. By Dr Gladys Ganiel, Irish School of Ecumenics, Trinity College Dublin (2009)

⁴⁴ 21st Century Faith - Results of the Survey of Laypeople in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. By Dr Gladys Ganiel, Irish School of Ecumenics, Trinity College Dublin (2009)

and teach about reconciliation (86% in the Republic and 90% in Northern Ireland).

- In the Republic and in Northern Ireland, people were most likely to have had preaching and teaching about reconciliation between ‘individuals and God’ and ‘between individuals’ within the last 12 months.
- On the island as a whole, people thought it was very important to preach and teach about reconciliation between individuals (61%) and between individuals and God (61%). In the Republic, the third most popular category was reconciliation between different ethnicities and nationalities, while in Northern Ireland the third most popular category was reconciliation between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland.
- 28% of laypeople on the island as a whole had accessed general resources on reconciliation (25% in the Republic and 38% in Northern Ireland).
- 25% of laypeople on the island as a whole reported accessing resources on reconciliation between people of different religions.
- On the island as a whole, 36% said that their denomination or wider faith community had provided them with adequate training for promoting reconciliation (37% in the Republic and 35% in Northern Ireland). Other Christians were the most likely to say they had been provided with adequate training (60%). This contrasts sharply with the result from the survey of clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders, where 52% on the island as a whole said they had been provided with adequate training.
- When asked what was the appropriate

amount of time (as a percentage per year) to spend on preaching and teaching about reconciliation, 28% on the island as a whole were unsure. After that, the most commonly chosen category was 11-25%, with 25% on the island as a whole (25% in the Republic and 25% in Northern Ireland) choosing it. 11-25% was the most popular category chosen in the survey of clergy, pastors, ministers and faith leaders.

The Church is made up of Protestant, Orthodox, Reformed, Roman Catholic, Independent and Migrant-led churches. One sign of the change lies in the fact that The Redeemed Christian Church of God is the largest migrant-led Church in Ireland with over 15,000 members throughout Ireland and the latest Census lists over 45,000 Orthodox adherents. There has also been significant growth in independent churches. In terms of the public face of the Church the Roman Catholic, Church of Ireland, Presbyterian and Methodist denominations are the largest.

3. The Church is a significant influence in society and community life:

This is evidenced by *Faith In Community: A Report Into Faith-based Engagement With Community Issues In Northern Ireland*.⁴⁵

The Department for Social Development funded Report noted the following:⁴⁶

- “... there is a substantial level of faith based community work (and) volunteering ... in Northern Ireland.”
- “Faith communities in Northern Ireland have an important place and reach in society and their response to social need is significant in terms of people and premises”.

⁴⁵ 2011: Commissioned by the Community Faiths Forum, Belfast, 2011

⁴⁶ Page 3: *Faith in Community: A report into faith-based engagement with community issues in Northern Ireland*, Community Faiths Forum (Department for Social Development), Belfast, 2011

- “Faith based community work plays an important role in communities across Northern Ireland, by delivering a substantial level of community interventions on many different themes ...”
- “The role of faith based community work in Northern Ireland includes responding to the changing social needs in wider society, providing co-ordinated structures for engaging with the community, bringing an ethical/moral dimension to social justice and providing opportunities for volunteering.”
- “The characteristics of faith based community work are a long term presence, a high level of accessibility and availability to people in need, a distinctive approach to volunteering, the inclusion of a spiritual dimension, a strong value base, a distinctive passion and energy and a strong emphasis on hope.”
- “Faith based community work in Northern Ireland contributes to bonding, linking and bridging social capital and the social capital domains of empowerment, participation, associational activity and common purpose, supporting networks and reciprocity, collective norms and values, trust, safety and belonging.”

Given the presence of the Church in our community it is impossible to discount a potential role for it in historical reflection.

4. Churches are part of the mess of damaged relationships on this island:

Religion and politics have been enmeshed in Irish history. To go back a century the intertwining strands of Church and political power would have been impossible to miss. As the events of 1912 to 1922 unfolded religion provided key themes and influences, with the Church being heavily involved.

Two iconic events from that decade illustrate the metaphors and support provided by religion.

God was invoked as key to two ideologically opposing events, The Ulster Covenant and Easter Proclamation.

The concept of covenant is central within Christian faith. It describes a binding agreement made by God with His people, or humanity in general. The religious imagery of this concept is impossible to miss in The Ulster Covenant, even by virtue of its very name.

Protestant clergy were prominent in putting their name to the Covenant. The wording of The Ulster Covenant also very obviously invokes God.

“ ... humbly relying on the God whom our fathers in days of stress and trial confidently trusted, do hereby pledge ourselves in solemn Covenant throughout this our time of threatened calamity, to stand by one another in defending, for ourselves and our children, our cherished position of equal citizenship in the United Kingdom, and in using all means which may be found necessary to defeat the present conspiracy to set up a Home Rule Parliament in Ireland”.

God was also called upon to bless the cause of nationalism in the words of The Proclamation of the Irish Republic in 1916.

We place the cause of the Irish Republic under the protection of the Most High God, Whose blessing we invoke upon our arms, and we pray that no one who serves that cause will dishonour it by cowardice, inhumanity, or rapine. In this supreme hour the Irish nation must, by its valour and discipline and by the readiness of its children to sacrifice themselves for the common good, prove itself worthy of the august destiny to which it is called.

What one had was, as Bruce Clarke describes it, an “Apology in sacred founding texts”.⁴⁷ The calling on God in such texts enmeshed the Church.

5. Leaders and events of that decade drew heavily on a foundational Church belief – the concept of blood sacrifice:

For Irish nationalism this developed from

... Celtic myths and religious writings. He (Pearse) later fused together his nationalism and his Catholic faith. His Christian devotion had always centred on Christ's Passion and Crucifixion, and he gradually developed a consuming yearning for martyrdom, in conscious emulation of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. He wrote: 'One man can free a people, as one man redeemed the world'.⁴⁸

The theme of blood sacrifice was not exclusive to nationalism. It also reaches deep within the psyche of unionism as it remembers the events of The Battle of the Somme in 1916. The "blood sacrifice" of so many Ulstermen was seen as unionism's side of a deal in which Britain would stand by it in the struggle against Home Rule, which was sure to resume when the fighting of World War I was done.

6. Religion has been a tribal marker in Ireland:

Religion has not just been a matter of faith and practice but also a marker of identity and loyalty. Violence is often justified – being on a sacred mission and acting on God's authority in the ultimate battle between good and evil. Somehow Christian theology heavily coloured the opposing sides in the events of 1912 to 1922. God was invoked by both unionism and nationalism, and the Churches of that time took their sides. Somehow God and guns were inextricably linked and the Churches variously gave their blessing to militarised politics.

7. A theological imperative:

Apart from the historical imperative given the Church's involvement in that decade there is an altogether more pressing one - a theological / ethical one. At the very heart of Christian theology is the theme of reconciliation.

The gospel challenge to love one's neighbour is for the private and social realm. That decade contains so much of the DNA of relationships and sense of identity in Ireland. It therefore puts on the table what church should be in the business of, right relationships. If the use of history has such a profound impact on the present then reflection on it will affect how we live with each other? It also impacts on how we find a future with one another. In that case the decade needs more than a historical, political or social perspective. It also requires an ethical one.

If the ghosts of history shape us now then "God's people ought not to expect politicians alone to sort out our sectarianism or community relations problems"⁴⁹. So said former Presbyterian Moderator, Rev Norman Hamilton. These words are echoed by a Rwandan Bishop who said "The government should not have to teach us about reconciliation". It is our duty. We should do it because it is the word of God".⁵⁰

Reconciliation in the social realm means that the message of the Church is of a different vision of social cohesion. The Church needs to "point to something else apart from the obsessions arising from the conflict"⁵¹ on this island. A peace process needs to be about more than holding the ring politically. It needs to find ways of healing fractured relationships. If the Church lives up to a call to reconciliation it is well placed to be involved in this.

8. In our highly politicised society one of the things the Church has got going for it is that it does not need votes. That is not to say there are not other

⁴⁷ Interview 03.05.13.

⁴⁸ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/easterrising/insurrection/in05.shtml>

⁴⁹ Speech to Presbyterian General Assembly, Derry / Londonderry, 2013

⁵⁰ Bishop Josias Sendegeya (Anglican Bishop of Kibungo diocese, Rwanda)

⁵¹ Dr Duncan Morrow

pressures on it, which we will explore. As the author notes:

(The Church) ... has truth to bear witness to. It is not lived out in a sterile vacuum but in the messiness of real life in Northern Ireland. It must be at liberty to articulate truth that is not captive to any party political philosophy or grouping, and that is spoken without fear or favour.⁵²

Churches are (or should be) party politically neutral. They don't have a political agenda to work to so there is a possibility of them facilitating hopeful ethical reflection on a crucial decade.

In an interview with the author one Church of Ireland Bishop was asked to identify what tools the Church had at its disposal for reconciliation. "Confidence and networks" was his simple answer.⁵³ Churches have a ready-made network and can provide an audience – people who are broadly committed to its teachings. These networks are not only at denominational level but crucially also at grassroots level.

9. Despite the challenges of the changing place of the Church in society it still has confidence and accessibility to significant networks. Added to this is the fact that many of our denominations are all-Ireland networks.
10. With a network of influence and access to expertise the Church is in an excellent position to be creative. It can not only lobby but also empower its people at ground level to reflect on history in a constructive manner.
11. When a denomination gives its sanction to an issue it "gives permission" to address a difficult issue – not literally of course but in the sense of making it safe to do so. If Churches give their imprimatur to a healthy reflection on this decade of commemoration that alone creates great possibilities. In 2005 the Church of Ireland

established *The Hard Gospel Project*. The Presbyterian Church in Ireland established a similar project at the same time. In 2014 the four largest denominations and the Irish Council of Churches set up the Irish Churches Peace Project. This three-year project, based in Northern Ireland and the border counties aims to promote and enable dialogue across the different threads of the community. This includes discovering new ways of talking about difficult issues – those that affect relationships in the community.

These denominationally sanctioned initiatives place the challenge of sectarianism on the agenda of those Churches at all levels. One of the most important aspects of the projects was simply that they happened. Independent Evaluation of completed projects suggests that they have made discussion of peace building issues normative within the affected denominations.

An independent Evaluation of *The Hard Gospel Project* noted the following:⁵⁴

- Discussion of (dealing constructively with difference) has become normative within the Church of Ireland. The issues and approaches of the (project) are becoming mainstreamed into the Church and there has been a degree of culture change towards more open discussion of diversity issues. This enabled the Church to take a series of new initiatives and some of these had an impact in the wider community.

Given the networks that the Church encompasses such a project illustrates the scope of influence a Church has when it decides to prioritise an issue. However, as Fr Tim Bartlett notes "The challenges for the Church are more pragmatic than ideological".⁵⁵ In other words the challenge is resourcing or making such initiatives happen rather than ideological opposition to it.

12. Words are the Church's stock-in-trade: Words are at the core of reflecting on history. Interestingly words are the tools of the

⁵² Page 127: Storey, E *Traditional Roots* Columba Press Dublin 2002

⁵³ Interview conducted for *The Hard Gospel Project* 2005

⁵⁴ Page 29 *The Hard Gospel: What Difference Did it Make?* Macaulay Associates 2008

trade for the Church. That is not to say that communication by the Church has always been truthful, bold, clear, effective or indeed engaging. Nevertheless it still has the intrinsic capacity to be an articulate body within Ireland.

13. Speaking into the public space:
Despite the troubles of the Church in recent years it still has reasonable access to the public space. When it takes the trouble to say something incisive about relevant issues it still has the ability to make its voice heard. That is not to say that its opinions are received uncritically, yet it is articulate enough to achieve attention.
14. The Church is a dealer in hope:
The Old Testament prophets continually called the people to honour God's intentions for the wellbeing of all. The message of Christ has two very simple tenets – that God be our greatest passion and that we love our neighbour as ourselves. The trouble with what the Church believes is not that it is too complicated. Rather, it is its shocking simplicity.

It is true that different events from the decade of commemoration will be more relevant to different churches. For instance, the Ulster Covenant is more relevant to Protestant denominational churches and 1916 more so for the Roman Catholic Church. Nevertheless there is the potential for the Church to develop languages where people with different value bases can come together.

Steve Chalk, head of The Oasis Trust says, “Problems create great moments for the church to be the church”. In whatever way it uses its networks or access to the public space the church should provide a new language, a different tone and way of speaking about difficult issues, such as historical reflection.

The goal is not to apply an airbrush to meaningful engagement with our troubled history – quite the

contrary. It is rather to give people the confidence to talk about and face issues without being scared. It is easy to call on the Church to be prophetic. To be truly prophetic is to carefully help our community to address issues together. Not only that but also to embody the hope that the cycle of historic division can be broken.

The real work of leadership is not to provide ‘easy answer’ solutions but to mobilise people to work on the deep issues that may go to the core of our relationships and sense of identity. Leaders may not know all the right answers but they need to know the right questions. A careful reflection on iconic moments in our history truly needs that skill.

The lasting emotional and practical legacy of our recent Troubles is carried by people every day and profoundly affects many lives. On an island where history and politics are enmeshed and highly charged the Church may not like to hear that politics is part of ministry. A body with the message of reconciliation as its core message cannot ignore its implications in a place of broken relationships. The Church needs to help its people engage in the politics and philosophy of their country. The trick is to do so without being manipulated.

The Vice Chair of the Rwandan National Commission on Unity and reconciliation in 2004 was also a committed member of the Anglican Church of Rwanda. He said, “The ministry of reconciliation has not been given to the government, it has been given to the Church. Paul talked about the Jew and the gentile because that was the reality of his time”.⁵⁶ Duncan Morrow says that the Church “capped revenge without making new relationships possible”. Aiding a healthy reflection on our history is one way it can help make new relations possible.

The divisions in Ireland are ones that the Church has participated in. What the Church needs to embody is “Religion that is wiser than the realism of this world and braver than the heroism of the truculent”.⁵⁷ Churches need to do this not only for the common good, but also for their credibility ... before God.

⁵⁵ Interview: 05.06.13.

⁵⁶ Antoine Rutayisire: *In an interview with the author*

⁵⁷ p107 *Facing Terrorism: responding As Christians. Long E L*

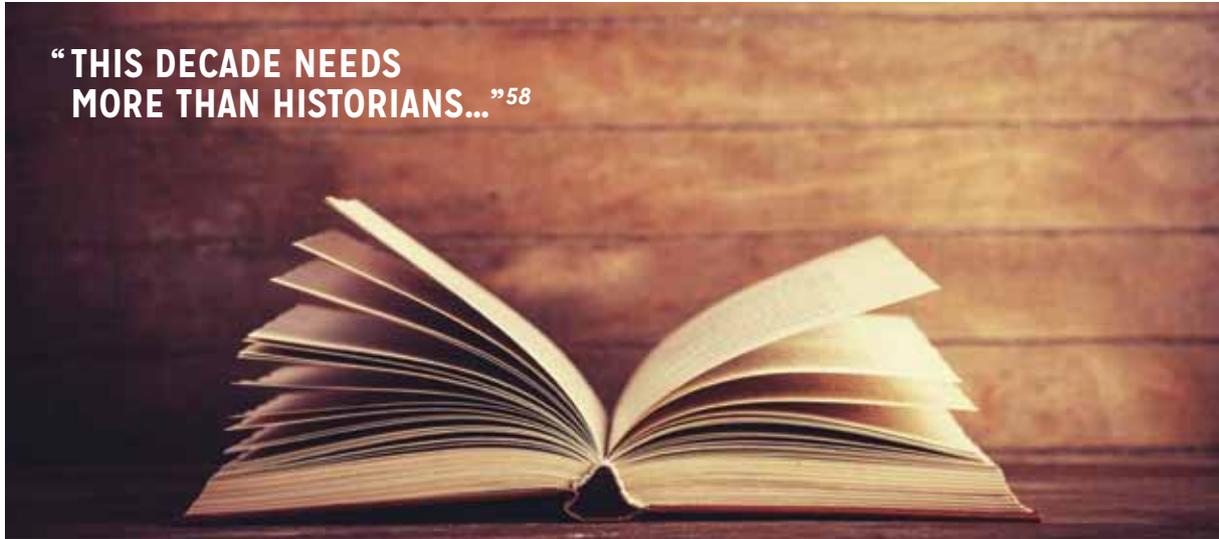


VALUES IN REFLECTION



VALUES IN REFLECTION

**“THIS DECADE NEEDS
MORE THAN HISTORIANS...”⁵⁸**



For any party in a conflict or damaged relationship there are three possible approaches:

- a. It was all their fault
- b. It was all our fault
- c. When it comes to the past there are no clean hands

If the Church is to contribute to reflecting on this historic decade what principles should guide it?

Members of one Focus Group said “This decade needs more than historians ... (it) puts on the table what the Church should be in the business of – theological and ethical issues ... what is the Church’s ethical critique of violence both then and now? What alternative vision can churches put forward now?”⁵⁹

Interviewees and Focus Groups suggested a wide range of values that should underlie a process

of historical reflection. This is illustrated by the following (Comments are from interviewees unless specified as being from a Focus Group).

Yes there is history but it’s not (about) blindly following or avoiding it.

Working in the middle may mean empathy but not necessarily agreement.

Extending our limits in terms of the views we take in.

Give validity to more than one voice or perspective.

Truth and reconciliation ... does not want to fix people in their own prejudices.

Agree a commonality of approach across the whole decade ... including funding ... money is being used as a tool. It is not a shared future but a shared out future.

⁵⁸ Group: 26.06.13.

⁵⁹ Group: 26.06.13.

We need an overview of what we want out of it. What are the good relations outcomes ... but with no strategy you have nothing to control it by.

Be responsible with the use of language. Language does have an ability to take us back several years. It is about self-control.

It is about control, keeping people on their knees.

Reconciliation starts by repentance. Where there is no repentance there is no forgiveness ... Our leaders don't understand the concept of repentance.

Lots of money and projects but no reconciliation.

A north south and east west aspect to commemoration ... the totality of relationships.

Knock on to contemporary reconciliation issues, not just sterile academic debate ... not just a dry historical look.

It is less useful if approached as separate denominations, it won't move things forward in understanding the other.

Look at inglorious elements. Avoid being particularly adversarial.

These are commemorations of political events. They will have unpleasant sides as well as noble. Commemorate that honestly.

It is not that things need unpicked, but what sort of future do we want to look at? What do we want to share ... what relationships do we want with each other?

An ethical approach is needed. The *Ethical and Shared Remembering Project* suggests that included in ethical remembering is "... providing a distinctive framework for a critical exploration of history and allowing a creative and inclusive

approach to commemoration".⁶⁰ Values inherent in an ethical approach may include:

1. **Humility:** As the Church contemplates engagement it needs to do so with a recognition that a great deal of valuable work is already being done in this area. Projects such as *Healing Through Remembering* and *Ethical and Shared Remembering* are but two examples of engagement with this issue. There is also a need for a measure of institutional humility as the various parts of the Church recognise that in Irish history they have at times acted as "chaplains in confrontation".⁶¹
2. **Context:** The events of that decade did not take place in isolation. Any approach to this decade that does not take into account what was happening beyond these shores is flawed. What was happening in the world of great-power politics and international relations at the time? What was the backdrop of wider social and religious change during the decade?

Noting just some of the international context of that time Bruce Clarke said "The First World War, Empires falling, a crisis by modernity and globalization ... hierarchical systems, organised around deference, were being challenged by universal franchise". He continues "new social institutions found it hard to catch up with economic change".⁶²
3. **History is made by individuals:** Every human being comes with all the strengths flaws and foibles that each person has. The context for reflecting on this key decade requires an understanding of the personalities of those that shaped history during these years. Personalities, politics, circumstances and international relations all create a complexity that needs to be recognized. This is even before one adds the

⁶⁰ <http://thejunction-ni.org/index.php/ethical-and-shared-remembering>

⁶¹ Bishop Donal McKeown: Speech at launch of Irish Churches Peace Project, Belfast, 27.09.13.

⁶² Interview: 02.05.13.

weight of Irish history into the mix. It is the mix of personalities, motives and events that create history, and our subsequent interpretation of it.

4. **Different events in the decade will resonate differently for each community on this island:** What will strike a deep chord with one group will not do so for another, at least not in the same ways. The temptation is always to isolate those historical events that provide the metaphors for how we see ourselves, or the other, in the present day. If the Church is to engage with this decade then which events are to be remembered? Is it only the events that speak to our own particular part of the community? Ethical reflection requires a willingness to remember all of the key events between 1912 and 1922. It is to resist the temptation to be selective with those pieces of history that we find most accommodating to our own communities sense of self.

Acknowledging that diversity of opinion, experience and community background exists and it colours how we view history is part of an ethical approach - a willingness to hear the 'other' voice.

5. **Avoiding history as a means for condemnation of other communities or perspectives:** This means meeting people as human beings. It also means being willing not only to tell the story of our community but also to listen to the other. The exercise becomes interesting as our willingness to listen to the other is challenged by what Dr Johnson McMaster terms as “walking through contested histories together”.⁶³
6. **Avoiding fundamental attribution error:** Lencioni describes as a fundamental attribution error as “the tendency of human beings to attribute the negative and frustrating behaviours of their colleagues to their intentions

and personalities, while attributing their own negative or frustrating behaviours to environmental factors ... whilst giving ourselves the benefit of the doubt”.⁶⁴

7. **History is in the present and the future:** We cannot change the past but we can affect the present and the future. How the conflicting communities in Ireland have drawn on the past help shapes the present, for good or ill. Historical reflection is best done with the understanding that the process influences the present. It will also help to create our future.
8. **Aspiring for more than “Its over”:** What are we aspiring to when we reflect on the past? Is our greatest aspiration just that our recent violent conflict is over? This suggests a hope that is no greater than managing a process that is about keeping the genie of inflamed passions contained.
9. **Going beyond the obvious:** In dealing with history, at one end of the pendulum lies the management of what Ed Cairns calls “deep unconscious forces”⁶⁵. At the other end lies esoteric or sterile historical debate. The image is of a quaint mulling over of facts that does little to address those things that influence relationships between the peoples of this island. Irish history does not lend itself to such a detached handling, particularly by those of us who inhabit this island. Nor does such an examination add much to creating a more peaceful future. Merely adding a commentating voice to what has already gone before rather than shaping what lies in the years ahead is a wholly inadequate contribution.
10. **Commitment to a new DNA in our relationships:** Those who want to examine or celebrate history in Ireland need to be sure they do so with the desire to create a new DNA in relationships, rather than as a tool for

⁶³ Dr Johnson McMaster

⁶⁴ Page 32 Lencioni, P. *The Advantage*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 2012

⁶⁵ Cairns E, *A Welling Up of Deep Unconscious Forces, Psychology and the Northern Ireland Conflict*, University of Ulster, Coleraine, 1994

anything else. This implies an awareness of whether commemoration will benefit or harm relationships. Will it advance the creation of the DNA of commitment to the common good?

- 11. Remembering history together:** To suggest historical commemoration in Ireland is hardly novel. We are all well practiced at it. What we are not so well practiced at is to commemorate or reflect together. Historical reflection suggests a question - who should be involved? Healthy historical reflection needs to be more than a process of each part of the community talking or listening to itself. The most effective process is one that is inclusive of the 'other'.

The Church can talk the language of sociology, psychology and politics. But, because it is the Church it also needs to talk theology. Bishop Richard Henderson says that the Church "... trying to do reconciliation without being aware of Christ is to do it the same as everyone else but not as professionally".⁶⁶ So, are there specific values that the Church should bring to any process? If not then the task is best left to the historians, psychologists and sociologists. Where do the key theological themes of the Church apply?

Christianity is fundamentally a faith built on relationship and restoration of broken relationship. The trouble with Christ's teaching is not that it is opaque. As often as not it usually means 'exactly what it says on the tin'. The theological values underpinning any reflection on history in a divided society are rather obvious:

- 12. Love of God and Neighbour:** In the story of *The Good Samaritan* Christ declared that the Law and the Prophets were summed up and the essence of Scripture distilled in a very few words. When an expert in the Law asked what was required to

eternal life Jesus answered: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind"; and, 'love your neighbour as yourself'.⁶⁷ He finished with the words "do this and you shall live".⁶⁸

- 13. Love for God:** Bishop John McDowell talks about the message of the Church when he says, "You have an ultimate allegiance. If in any sense it comes into conflict with other things (it is about) calling people back to their true allegiance."⁶⁹ This is a clear echo of Christ's teaching to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind".⁷⁰ Such love was something to encompass all aspects of life. It was to be more than an assent of the mind, rather a total devotion.

Love for God means that the Church and its members find their most essential identity in the person and character of Jesus Christ. This sense of identity supersedes identity found in national identity, ethnicity, gender, social or economic class. The priority for the Church and every individual Christian is to seek the Kingdom or rule of God before anything else. This encompasses every dimension of the person.

- 14. Love for neighbour:** Who is to be counted as a neighbour? As noted we find the answer the story of *The Good Samaritan*. One could look back over centuries to see how a division between Jews and Samaritans arose. The fault lines of disagreement could be traced along those of racial purity, doctrinal disputes and a long historical sense of betrayal.

Jews regarded Samaritans as people to be despised and distrusted. In the light of this reality the Parable of the Good Samaritan is startling.

⁶⁶ Interview with Earl Storey for *The Hard Gospel Project*: 21.12.15.

⁶⁷ Luke 10:27, *Holy Bible, New International Version, Colorado Springs, Biblica, 2011*

⁶⁸ Luke 10:28, *Holy Bible, New International Version, Colorado Springs, Biblica, 2011*

⁶⁹ Interview: 11.04.13.

⁷⁰ Matthew 22:37, *Holy Bible, New International Version 2011, Biblica Inc*

Core to the Scripture was the commandment to love your neighbour as yourself. As to who may be included in the category of neighbour is not left to ambiguity. Jesus declares that the Samaritan, hated enemy of the Jew, was a neighbour.

The principle of Christian faith is simple. Love for God is something that is meant to encompass every part of a person's being. Integral to wholehearted love for God is love for one's neighbour and the fact that this love is expressed in practice rather than mere words. An enemy thus becomes every bit as much a neighbour as a friend. Doctrine, race or history do not alter or produce exception to this. The contrary is rather the case.

15. **Specks and Planks:** Jesus taught "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye".⁷¹

What Jesus is advocating is a commitment to critical self-reflection. Without this our perception of ourselves as well as the 'other' is always skewed. To be open to such self-reflection requires courage. It is truly counter-cultural but unmistakably Christian.

16. **'Let your Yes be Yes':** The teaching of Christ in 'The Sermon on the Mount', found in Matthew 5, is amongst the most foundational of His ethical teaching. In Matthew 5:37 he simply states "All you need to say is simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one".⁷²

The teaching addressed the use of words to obscure intrinsic meaning and truth - sophistry. Sophistry is defined as "the clever use of arguments that seem true but are really false, in order to deceive people".⁷³

In his Commentary on this passage John Stott suggests that when we indulge in this "we devalue human language and expressions. Christians should say what they mean and mean what they say. Our unadorned word should be enough, 'yes' or 'no'".⁷⁴

Behind this teaching is that language, as a tool of human communication, should have some intrinsic truth to its meaning, rather than being a tool to obscure meaning for ultimately selfish purposes.

17. **Forgiveness and Grace:** Grace, in terms of relationship with God, is sometimes described as both receiving what we do not deserve as well as not receiving what we do deserve. The Christian concept of grace describes God's willingness to love and forgive us, despite the fact that we do not deserve it. Romans 5:8 describes it this way: "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us".⁷⁵

The Lord's Prayer draws out the implications of receiving God's forgiveness - a willingness to forgive those who have "sinned" against us. "Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who have sinned against us".⁷⁶

The Church's message is truly a radical one - that human beings can receive undeserved forgiveness from God. To receive forgiveness means a willingness to forgive others, without limits. Jesus spells it out in reply to a question

⁷¹ Matthew 7:3-5, *Holy Bible, New International Version, Colorado Springs, Biblica, 2011*

⁷² *Holy Bible, New International Version, 2011 by Biblica Inc*

⁷³ *Cambridge Advanced Learners Dictionary* <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary>

⁷⁴ Page 102: Stott J., *Christian Counter Culture: The Message of the Sermon on the Mount, Inter-Varsity Press, Leicester, 1979*

⁷⁵ Romans 5:8, *Holy Bible, New International Version, Colorado Springs, Biblica, 2011*

⁷⁶ Matthew 6:12, *Holy Bible, New International Version, Colorado Springs, Biblica, 2011*

from Peter. "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven".⁷⁷

- 18. Repentance:** The Book of Romans says, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God".⁷⁸ Sin is a falling short of God's standards. This text means that the 'other' has fallen short - it also means that we have too.

What is the appropriate response? Christ declares "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."⁷⁹ The Christian concept of repentance is a turning away from those attitudes or actions that fall short of what God requires. It means a willingness to take moral responsibility for our actions, to express our contrition and to desire forgiveness.

- 19. Casting the first stone:** John 8:7 contains some of Christ's more recognized words. *'Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.'*⁸⁰ The preceding verses describe a crowd, led by Pharisees, with a woman caught in the act of adultery. They said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. ⁵ In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?"⁸¹ ⁶ The question was a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him.

Christ's answer *'Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her'* suggests we need to be very certain of our 'righteousness' before demanding judgment on another. The implications for historical reflection, as well as the more mundane aspects of human life are clear.

What do these Christian values look like as we reflect on a crucial decade of our history? We cannot take responsibility for what we were not present to witness or be part of. Neither can we change what happened in the past. The events of the past have happened and they are over.

What we can do is to ensure that as we reflect on our history that we seek to do so in an ethical way. For the Church this is not authentic unless it includes being guided by the values of Christ's teaching.

"When there is trust, conflict becomes nothing but the pursuit of truth".⁸² Looking at the events of 1912 to 1922 presents the people of these islands with a challenge - to look beyond our own narrow identities.

Perhaps the greatest value the Church should bring to historical reflection is the concept of hope. Hope is the belief in the possibility of a positive outcome, that we are not prisoners of historical inevitability. It is to believe in the possibility that changing the DNA of a historical cycle of division is possible - that we can reflect on our history with integrity and in a way that does not condemn us to endlessly relive it.

*"Those who acknowledge their part in the creation of conflict and their part in patterns of injustice are far more willing to explore peace building as a possibility than those who view themselves as paragons of exemplary righteousness."*⁸³

⁷⁷ Matthew 18:21-22, Holy Bible, New International Version, Colorado Springs, Biblica, 2011

⁷⁸ Romans 3:23, Holy Bible, New International Version, Colorado Springs, Biblica, 2011

⁷⁹ Luke 5:32, Holy Bible, New International Version, Colorado Springs, Biblica, 2011

⁸⁰ John 8:7, Holy Bible, New International Version, Colorado Springs, Biblica, 2011

⁸¹ John 8:4-5, Holy Bible, New International Version, Colorado Springs, Biblica, 2011

⁸² Page 38, Lencioni, P. *The Advantage*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 2012

⁸³ P 57 *Facing Terrorism: Responding As Christians*, Long E, Westminster, John Knox Press, 2004





PRESSURES ON THE CHURCH

PRESSURES ON THE CHURCH



“IN SPITE OF THE RESOURCES THAT COME WITH IT, AUTHORITY IS ALSO A STRAITJACKET.”

RON HEIFETZ

As has been noted, the Church in Ireland still plays a significant part in community life, both in terms of being part of the weave of our community as well as in volunteering at local level. At community level churches are often effective agents for good. It has also been noted that a significant percentage of its membership believes that the work of reconciliation is an important priority.

But what are the greatest challenges for the Church in making a meaningful contribution to this Decade of Historic Commemorations? Is it lack of finance or expertise? The pressures on the Church will be the same as those that come on any institution or organisation that has been in existence for a long time. The pressures are often unspoken but are nonetheless powerful.

Interviewees and Focus Groups had clear opinions with regard to the pressures and opportunities faced by the Church. These are illustrated by the following comments (Comments are by

interviewees unless specified as having been made by a Focus Group):

Do churches want to be so politically correct that they don't want to offend?

The temptation is to keep the conversation under control.

We can make an issue quite dull. We need to make it marketable ... a need (for) theology to be more applied. It is too academic and hard to apply into the ordinary.

A danger of going through the motions.

Evangelical churches are by nature very activist, caught up in their own wee world.

There is caution in every institution that has been around for a long time.

The underlying issue is how to get over institutional inertia.

The capacity, confidence and competence of the Church is not high.

Church is a small community, overly scrutinized by our own people

Churches have lost the ability to speak

- *a loss of moral authority*
- *people are sceptical*
- *people are tired of the bible bashing*
- *people think of Christianity as just being overly nice*
- *people rebelling against a caricature of the church*

Our society is so saturated with the language of church we lose the sense of what words mean.

Open up theological as well as political issues.

(The theological issue) ... a call to arms and recruiting of young people to war, in a war that could be eulogized.

Churches need to speak rapidly because their numbers are falling. The Protestant Church is fractured and the Roman Catholic Church is a cohesive force but affected by scandals.

Clergy - what sort of identity do you want your people to have?

It is hard to engage the Church in it. They are so busy with their own programmes. To think outside the box ... they have not the capacity or the bottle for it.

It is hard to engage Church leaders with something outside their sphere of action.

Churches have confidence to deal with something they normally do, but this is not their mainstream core business ... there is not an awareness of how conversations happen.

It is unpalatable to critique our own side - was it right or wrong and did it contribute to what happened next.

The (Protestant) Church is nervous in case it becomes an Orange bashing session. The

bunker mentality - enough to worry about survival ... (its about) individual piety and a call to faith, not societal theology.

Would churches reflect on their own role?

Church can appear to be just another institution that likes to be powerful and brush nasty things under the carpet, which is what politics tries to do.

The Church is reluctant to get sucked into something it can't control.

The Church does not have the courage to deal with the big issues. It lets side projects happen and lets individuals do things.

Bigotry is underneath the surface in the Church.

Churches continue to be scapegoated. It was portrayed as a religious conflict but it was a political conflict.

Every church has its own political culture and collective memory.

Church is a reflection of social reality at its hardest.

So how might these pressures be identified more clearly?

1. Organisational Culture

The *Ford Motor Company* has a quote hanging in one of its offices "Culture eats strategy for breakfast". Attributed to management guru Peter Drucker it is not suggesting that strategy is unimportant. Rather it is to point out the crucial effect that organisation culture has on effectiveness.

The European Business Review has this to say about organisational culture:

Every organisation has its own unique culture; defined as the set of deeply embedded, self-reinforcing behaviours, beliefs, and mindset that determine 'the way we do things around here.' People within an organizational culture

share a tacit understanding of the way the world works, their place in it, the informal and formal dimensions of their workplace, and the value of their actions. It controls the way their people act and behave, how they talk and inter-relate, how long it takes to make decisions, how trusting they are and, most importantly, how effective they are at delivering results.⁸⁴

The European Review continues: “Culture isn’t defined by ... mission statements posted on the wall or website – it is defined by the behaviours and principles being practiced every day, from the Boardroom to the shop floor”⁸⁵.

So what are the negative aspects of organisational culture that the Church is prone to? At a national gathering for one particular denomination in Ireland a clergyperson made a speech including the following “(We are) ... an organisation waiting for nothing to happen!” When these words were uttered the laughter was not just at the wit of the speaker. It suggested that a profound and uncomfortable truth had just been spoken.

2. The boat can become the ‘thing’

For any institution there is a temptation to an overriding ‘steady as she goes’ approach. Infused in this is a belief – that what is *most* important is that the ‘boat’ of that institution should not be rocked, where it becomes *the thing* rather than its mission. Where this permeates church life what becomes crucial is not innovation or risk taking but the preservation of the ethos of the institution. Each denomination will have its own particular expression of this.

The European Business Review reflects on the dangers arising if any organisation loses the sense of its mission being its ultimate purpose.

From the leaders down, people go through the process but demonstrate little emotional connection to the success of the organisation, only to their own success and security within the organisation. Whilst not malicious in intent, it is obvious to an outsider that their agenda is more important than the overall company’s agenda. When a whole organisation works like this, we find that levels of activity are high, but levels of achievement are low.⁸⁶

3. ‘Whatever you say ... say nothing’

Alongside this unwritten value is another best summed up as ‘whatever you say ... say nothing’. Smoothing over becomes more important than honest frank discussion. It resembles the family priding itself on not arguing in public, but where the effort of keeping up appearances becomes exhausting. The outworking of these values has its effect.

When this happens in a Church it leads to a paralysis of thinking and risk taking at every level. This is likely to manifest itself in any of a number of ways, at every level of its organisational life:

- a. To be risk averse.
- b. To develop a tradition of not saying anything controversial or challenging - the “don’t rock the boat” syndrome.
- c. To obfuscate and use ‘holy language’ to give the appearance of saying something but actually saying little.
- d. To use language that does not communicate or engage with the world outside of the institution.
- e. To talk so formally that meaningful engagement with difficult or underlying issues all but ceases.

⁸⁴ <http://www.europeanbusinessreview.com/?p=6529>

⁸⁵ <http://www.europeanbusinessreview.com/?p=6529>

⁸⁶ <http://www.europeanbusinessreview.com/?p=6529>

- f. To act in such a way where structure becomes more important than the goal. Process becomes more important than effectively pursuing the mission.
- g. To focus on outward appearance. Public image matters as it enhances authority. Yet excessive concern for public image creates a culture of denial.
- h. To perceive leadership that is exercised without authorisation as a threat that has to be marginalised.
- i. To tacitly benefit from the fact that high boundaries between communities may be an effective way of maintaining influence and control.
- j. To live by the norm that the safe conventions are the ones that are protected and nurtured.
- k. To put 'good taste' before telling the truth.

The end result is an organisation that is good at subtlety but not boldness. It becomes more difficult to encourage dynamism or creativity required to command the attention of its own membership or the rest of the community.

4. Competing expectations

The Church on this island exists in the particular context of communal friction. Against this backdrop those both within and outside the Church have competing expectations of it.

At one end of the scale are those who wish to see 'their' Church act as chaplain to their own tribe. This is the belief that each denomination should see its overwhelming responsibility as being to see to the needs of its own people. These people will probably be from a similar ethnic, social, cultural, political and religious group as is the case in Ireland both north and south. The perceived needs will not be seen as exclusively spiritual but also cultural and indeed political.

⁸⁷ Storey E, *Traditional Roots*, Columba Press, Dublin, 2002 p101

⁸⁸ Galatians 3:26-28

A chaplain to one's own tribe feels a responsibility to voice the needs hopes and fears of that particular group of people. As the chaplain for one tribe engages thus so chaplains will similarly function for opposing tribes. A cycle of pressure mounts for the chaplains of each tribe not to break ranks. In such a situation the temptation is less to be about applying the teaching of the Kingdom of God without fear or favour as about meeting the pastoral needs of one's own community and representing it. The danger with such an approach is that Church becomes perceived even, or perhaps especially, by its own membership, as being more of a sociological phenomenon than a body of people from diverse backgrounds having one profound thing in common, Jesus Christ as Lord.⁸⁷

If a Church acts primarily as a chaplain to its own tribe it is likely that its identification will be based around the demarcation of ethnic, historical, social and cultural characteristics. These become the boundaries to define that particular body, and to define it in opposition to others of different background. Whilst the process is tempting and perhaps understandable it seems far removed from Paul's declaration that it is allegiance to Christ that gives Christians their most profound identity, and which joins them in relationship to others who may not share similar backgrounds.⁸⁸

Kingdom of God values can easily become lost in the temptation to define one's church in opposition to others on grounds of ethnicity, culture, and history. Culture is not something to be denied or denigrated.

Every one has a sense of their history. Yet there are no sound theological grounds for allowing these to be the key markers of any church. To do so is to embody something unrecognisable in terms of what the New Testament had in mind regarding the identity of the Body of Christ.

Within the context of any church in Ireland acting as chaplain to its own tribe there are two temptations. There is a strong temptation to strongly represent the fears and views of its own community. This is all the more so in the context of a divided community. The other attraction is for a denomination to keep its head down on divisive matters, continually kicking them into touch, and hoping that the issues will somehow go away of its own accord. Neither choice seems to be particularly in keeping with the call of a Christian church, or indeed to be counter cultural.⁸⁹

To say that a denomination is called to be something more than a chaplain to its own community does not imply that it ignores its community, minister to them in a way that is oblivious to their situation, or ultimately treat them as being in some way the enemy. To accept the principle that Churches are called to be more than chaplains of their own communities is not to suggest a refusal to pastor them. It is only possible to effectively pastor an individual or group when you identify with them and have an appreciation for their situation, whilst refusing to patronise them. Pastoral care in any given situation is an attempt to enable a person to make some sort of spiritual sense of their circumstance and to find God's presence in the middle of it all. The motivation for this is that the individual is not only sustained in their situation but also enabled to live in it with a Christian witness that has integrity.

The historical pressure on each denomination in Ireland has been to become part of the process of their own communities 'circling the wagons'. This places a major constraint - the fear of stepping outside or challenging the sacred cows of your own tribe. To do anything perceived as a critique of your own people is seen as an act of disloyalty.

The pressures on rehearsing anything other than the accepted historical story of your own people are obvious. The pressure may be as simple as fearing the anger of one's own people or of becoming a target.

Aside from the *political* pressures is the fact we often have 'traditional' expectations in relation to the Church, and the Church appears, by and large, to meet our needs. For many the Church is a place where we calm and 'gather ourselves' and retreat from the maelstrom of life - it is a place where we seek comfort and reassurance. This is not necessarily conducive to critical thinking and the temptation is towards introversion.

5. Busy to the point of distraction

Peter Drucker says "Management is doing things right; leadership is doing the right things"⁹⁰. Churches are increasingly busy places. However it is important to be busy doing the right things. One group commented, "Church is a goldfish bowl but it is not the ocean - not connected out into the ocean. Church is confined to being within the goldfish bowl".⁹¹ The energy required to maintain ordinary Church life may not leave much for addressing issues that are potentially contentious or troublesome.

6. The loneliness of the long-distance leader

In *Leadership Without Easy Answers* Ron Heifetz says:

In a crisis we tend to look for the wrong kind of leadership. We call for someone with answers, decisions, strength and a map of the future, someone who knows where we ought to be going - in short, someone who can make hard problems simple ... we should be calling for leadership that will challenge

⁸⁹ Storey E, *Traditional Roots*, Columba Press, Dublin, 2002 p102

⁹⁰ Drucker, Peter F. *The Practice of Management*. Oxford: Elsevier Ltd., 1955.

⁹¹ Group: 26.06.13.

us to face problems for which there are no simple painless solutions – problems that require us to learn new ways ... Making progress on these problems demands not just someone who provides answers from on high but changes in our attitudes, behaviour and values.⁹²

Clergy are leaders. So how does this pressure manifest itself?

Rwandan Bishop, Josias Sendegeya, identified the difficulties for clergy leading in a divided society recovering from the trauma of violence: “They have to preach the love of God. How do you tell a person who lost 10 people that God loves them.”⁹³ Speaking in the context of the Rwandan genocide the challenge of speaking Kingdom of God values to wounded people is something he understood only too well. In times of distress people don’t want questions they want answers. They want to be told that they will be protected from the pain of change.

Ronald Heifetz clearly recognises the emotional pressures on leadership.

We see leadership too rarely exercised from high office, and the constraints that come with authority go far to explain why. In public life, people generally look to their authorities to solve problems with a minimum of pain, and where pain must be endured, they often expect their officials to find somebody else to bear the costs ... When we do elect activists, we want them to change the thinking and behaviour of other people, rarely our own. We can hardly blame our public officials for giving us what we ask for.⁹⁴

Reflection on the events of a century ago in Ireland does not take place in a vacuum. It will happen with the weight of generations of Irish history as

well as the more recent memories of *The Troubles*. This provides dangers for any leadership that encourages consideration of key events that have shaped us. The danger is in the potential discomfort arising from one’s people:

- a. Being challenged to rethink entrenched norms, values and beliefs.
- b. Feeling challenged to abandon what has been handed down from previous generations.
- c. Being challenged to go beyond the boundaries of their own constituency and build common ground with others.
- d. The risk of instability, conflict and resentment arising from the above.

How can clergy lead in this? The reality is that most clergy have been trained how to be pastors but not leaders. The skill set required to pastor is quite different from that of engaging people to reflect on contentious history. To facilitate a wise reflection process, one that heals rather than damages, requires skills that include:

- a. Self-awareness: Before they lead others clergy themselves need to understand how Irish history resonates with them.
- b. Confidence to help their people, someone must help the clergy to grow in their own self-awareness – to hear how their words sound to others.
- c. Wisdom and skill to know what is going on in the mindset of one’s own people.
- d. To not be naïve / spiritually naïve.
- e. Ability to engage with deeply felt issues and the knowledge of why such engagement is important.
- f. Choreographing and right timing of reflection.

⁹² Page 2 Heifetz, R, *Leadership Without Easy Answers*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge Massachusetts, 1994

⁹³ Interview with author: 12.11.04.

⁹⁴ Heifetz, R *Leadership Without Easy Answers* p183

- g. Designing a learning processes.
- h. Leading people in a process of changing attitudes and behaviours.
- i. Managing levels of discomfort as people face the challenges of new critical reflection on things they have held dear.

The challenges of finding new skills and greater self-awareness are not the only one's facing clergy. Others include:

- a. Ministering in an increasingly secular society where the place of Church in the community is changing.
- b. Moral failures that have taken the once assumed automatic authority of clergy away.
- c. Professionalism of other sectors that leads them to doubt their own *raison d'être*.
- d. Showing your people the possibilities for the future when all they feel may be loss.
- e. Fear of being bullied if they cross a line with their people.

Are clergy sufficiently skilled or do they have the necessary personality or temperament to fulfill the expected job requirements, particularly those involving inter-personal contact with people under duress? The temptation to 'leave well alone' – to avoid addressing sensitive issues because of fear of the consequences – becomes more and more understandable. Yet, difficult as it may be, the challenge is still to provide effective leadership and witness to fundamental values of the faith.

7. We do what we value

In the Sermon on the Mount Christ states, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also".⁹⁵ He is making the point that the allegiance of the heart is identified in what we value. The Church

⁹⁵ Matthew 6:21: Holy Bible, New International Version, 2011, Biblica Inc

⁹⁶ Group: 26.06.13.

⁹⁷ Interview with author Antoine Rutayisire 16.11.04.

needs to ask itself the most fundamental question anyone can ask – where is our 'treasure'. Put in another way – what do we *really* value? What are we *most* passionate about? An important question ... because where the treasure is, there also is the heart. This above all else will shape the feel and effectiveness of the Church.

The opportunity in historical reflection is to do so in a way that breaks a cycle of enmity and violence, rather than just providing a breathing space until the next round. As the Church in Ireland seeks to make an effective contribution it will be faced with challenges of its own:

- a. Who do we say we are – what is our deepest sense of identity and greatest passion as a Church?
- b. How do we do what we do – is there a relationship between the activity we engage in and what we have been called to?
- c. What is the culture of the Church – do we believe that openly addressing difficult issues is always better than 'whatever you say ... say nothing'?

One group had this to say, "Churches – institutions or the people of God? It is the institutions that have run into the sand ... But there are the faithful on the ground – there are enough out there but they are disillusioned by the lack of intellectual and moral courage".⁹⁶

There is hunger and appetite at all levels of the Church to ask itself searching questions. Just as importantly there is good will to act. This willingness may rock the boat alarmingly but it brings the possibility of a release of energy. This is an uncomfortable place to be but "Christ will always push us out of the upper room into the street".⁹⁷

*"Leadership – people who start to do it".
Duncan Morrow*



ACTIONS FOR THE CHURCH

The background of the image consists of numerous horizontal, slightly curved streaks of light in various shades of blue, ranging from dark navy to bright cyan. These streaks create a sense of motion and depth, similar to light trails from a long-exposure photograph or a digital data visualization. The overall effect is dynamic and futuristic.



ACTIONS FOR THE CHURCH



Civil disturbance in our community, suggests an undertow of dissent and grievance that can still be manipulated. How does the Church unpick itself from partisan politics yet speak into our relationships with a radical witness? The answer is surely to be rooted in the person of Christ and His teachings.

But what is the Church to do in helping us deal with a decade of commemorations in a healthy way? This requires an answer that is both philosophical and practical, as suggested by opinions expressed by interviewees and Focus Groups (Comments are by interviewees unless specified as being from Focus Groups):

Church can facilitate a 'climate of speech'.

How do you facilitate that discussion? Social contact, friendship and then talk about stuff.

Small acts of reaching out, making the abnormal normal ... create space for others.

There is no point in saying bland unintelligent things.

There is no alternative discourse. The wheels came off and we just put them back on and fixed the punctures.

What we shouldn't do is add to the general cynicism.

The vocation of the Church is to bring together things that have been broken.

You see the enemy, God sees 'loved with an everlasting love'.

Church is good at bringing people together but to what end?

Need passionate leaders who believe in what they are doing. They need a tough skin to withstand the hostility.

Acknowledge that issues of religious identity were a dimension of historical

events ... churches could contribute to a language for those commemorations.

There are simmering conversations going on in each of the four largest denominations but no mechanism ... there is no significant challenge regarding the churches getting involved. The four largest denominations are in good relationship.

Philosophically the Church can find its contribution by:

1. Championing reconciliation

Core to the Church's value system is a belief in relationship. In fact the *Good News* of the Christian faith is the possibility of restoration of broken relationships. This is expressed by Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:16-21:⁹⁸

So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

If the Church is to be true to its core belief of reconciliation it needs to be in the work of making new relationships possible - no mean feat on an island with division and violence running through its history.

2. Offer a new language

Words can easily be the "... convenient quarry which provides ammunition to use against enemies in the present"⁹⁹. One of the most effective things the Church can do is assist the community to discover a new language, a different tone and way of speaking about difficult issues.

Language has at times been used for something other than logically informing, but rather to inflame passion and deepen division. Language about our history has at times been used as a tool to rally the tribe, stir division, herd the voter and inflame the 'troops' for war.

The first goal of the Church is to give people the confidence to talk about and face history, and the issues it may manifest, without being scared. This is work best done in wise and achievable steps. It has taken hundreds of years to shape us on these islands so it is a task best not rushed or done carelessly.

Finding a new language to look at history is made more difficult by our most recent history, the forty years of The Troubles. The actual experiences and the lasting legacies - emotional and practical - that people carry with them everyday are profoundly affecting and close to the surface.

3. Mobilise its people to do difficult work

In times of passion, distress or challenge people look for leaders that will provide ready-made answers to complex issues. Leadership that is prepared to use its own people will find this desire easy to pander to. However the real work of a leader is not to provide pat solutions. It is to somehow to mobilise your people to work on understanding the complex challenge and to find their own solutions. This is all the more true when there are no quick fix solutions to challenges and finding a solution may

⁹⁸ Holy Bible, New International Version, 2011, Biblica Inc

⁹⁹ Stewart, A.T.Q., *The Narrow Ground, Gregg Revivals, Aldershot 1989, p16*

require people to re-evaluate their values, actions and aspirations. Truly delicate work for any leader!

4. Courageous but wise leadership in a delicate journey

Subtlety is not always wrong and boldness is not always the wisest course of action. The pressure for leadership is always to give at least the appearance of knowing all the right answers. In times of challenge or uncertainty people don't want questions they want answers. They want to be told that they will be protected from the pain of change. Heifetz says, "To the breaking point, we place our hopes and frustrations upon those who's presumed knowledge, wisdom and skill show the promise of fulfillment. Authorities serve as repositories for our worries and aspirations."¹⁰⁰

In such circumstances leaders need to have the courage and the skills to know the right questions to put before your people. In the process of dealing with the decade of historic commemorations the churches needs to contribute to a process that recognises principles identified by Heifetz¹⁰¹:

- a. That in times of challenge we tend to look for the wrong kind of leadership. Ronald Heifetz describes it thus, "We call for someone with answers, decisions, strength and a map of the future, someone who knows where we ought to be going - in short, someone who can make hard problems simple"¹⁰².
- b. That the best type of leadership is one which challenges us to face situations where there are no simple painless solutions. Successfully facing such challenges instead requires us to learn new ways.
- c. That leadership does not provide pat answers from on high but is willing to walk with its

people when changes in attitudes, behaviour and values are posed.

- d. That leadership with the greatest integrity is demonstrated when it is not about influencing the community to follow the leader's vision but rather leadership that influences the community to face its challenges. Dependence on authority discourages people from engaging with problems, which they must ... Instead of generating creativity and responsibility; charismatic authority can generate a mindless following.
- e. That there is a need to mobilise people to tackle tough and complex issues, that if remain unaddressed leave potential seeds for future damage.

If Prof David Hayton is right when he says that "History is about how we got to where we are now" then the challenge is in looking at how the events of 1912 to 1922 helped shape who we are now and how we relate to one another on these islands. So, how can the Church fashion and use its role to mobilise healthy constructive reflection on such a critical decade?

When a leader or organisation poses deep questions rather than supplying pat easy answers to a difficult challenge, such as reflecting on contentious history, there are dangers in the process:

- a. A risk of instability, conflict and resentment amongst one's own people.
- b. People may resent a challenge to question entrenched norms, values and beliefs.
- c. People may feel they are being asked to abandon or be disloyal to what has been handed down from previous generations.
- d. The discomfort from being asked to go beyond the boundaries of your own constituency and build common ground with others.

¹⁰⁰ *Leadership Without Easy Answers* p69

¹⁰¹ *Leadership Without Easy Answers*

¹⁰² *Leadership Without Easy Answers* p2

Navigating such perils requires wisdom, skill and courage. The Church in Ireland will not be unaware of these challenges. In this instance the fact that the denominations have been in existence for a long time can actually be turned to advantage.

Key Practical Actions

1. To take a joint approach, across the denominations, in facilitating a process of historical reflection. To be truly prophetic would be to address the issues together. It would model a process of having difficult conversation, so that the various denominations do not simply talk to themselves.

Charles Coulson describes the work of a prophet, “A biblical prophet, it has been said, is not one who sees into the future, as stargazers and crystal ball readers purport to do. Rather (they are the people) who see things in the present that others are blind to, and a prophet is one who warns us of what will happen in the future if we don’t mend our ways”.¹⁰³

2. To ensure that a reflection process includes all of the key events that took place between 1912 and 1922. This will ensure that each community has a commitment to hear the voices of other communities.
3. To articulate an understandable joint statement of values for addressing the Decade of Commemorations.
4. To design a reflective process that:
 - a. Involves engagement between different parts of the community.
 - b. Enables participants to listen to the perspectives of other communities as well as to articulate their own.

- c. Identifies the challenges and issues arising.
 - d. Encourages attitudinal change.
 - e. Keeps the stress of challenging accepted historical norms within healthy parameters so that reflection does not strain people beyond what they are able to bear.
 - f. Focuses attention on “ripening issues and not on stress-reducing distractions”.¹⁰⁴
 - g. Gives work back to the people, avoiding the trap of “shifting all responsibility to the highest authority”.¹⁰⁵
 - h. Keeps pressure on those who need to take responsibility.
 - i. Protects voices of leadership without authority through encouragement, guidance and warning.
5. To design a reflective process that takes advantage of the Church’s access not only to its own networks but also those of relevant expertise. This could include:
 - a. Access to expertise of appropriately qualified historians and social commentators.
 - b. Provision of appropriate study resources that reflects a joint statement of values (see No 3).
 - c. Provision of experienced facilitators.
 - d. Provision of models of good practice re establishing discreet conversations between leaders.
 - e. Provision of models of good practice re organising public discussion forums in local areas.
 - f. Provision of models of good practice re working in partnership with other denominations or organizations.

¹⁰³ Page ix *He Is There and He Is Not Silent*, Tyndale House Publishers, Cambridge, 1972

¹⁰⁴ *Leadership Without Easy Answers* p 142

¹⁰⁵ *Leadership Without Easy Answers* p 142

6. To design a reflective process that uses the full range of ways in which people engage with issues. This needs to go beyond a one-dimensional approach of *we need to produce a study guide*. Interestingly the arts have been increasingly used to help people address painful issues. They can ease a problem into the open in a way that is less threatening, divisive or traumatic than other approaches.

There are numerous instances of successful good practice in this regard:

- a. The mass movement of the Protestant population during *The Troubles* was a traumatic period in Derry / Londonderry's history. In order to foster community dialogue in a way that did not re-ignite the embers of division a local church¹⁰⁶ commissioned a playwright in 2012 to write short drama pieces on the events of that time. These were used in forum theatre events to inspire cross-community dialogue and understanding.
 - b. *1912, A Hundred Years On* is a play written by Philip Orr and Alan McGuckian. It explores the events of that year, focussing on the political rather than maritime events. The 3rd Home Rule Bill promised Ireland a parliament of its own in Dublin, while still part of the British Empire. Unionists deeply opposed the bill and hundreds of thousands of men signed Ulster's Solemn League and Covenant, as well as a shorter declaration for women. The playwrights describe 1912 as "a tense and troubled year with violence on the streets". Yet also "a year when many people stood up for their convictions, on all sides". The play ran in venues across Northern Ireland and an estimated total of 1,340 people attended the 13 events that
- took place. It is also estimated that a total of 775 people participated in the facilitated discussions following the performances. An independent Evaluation¹⁰⁷ noted that:
- The project engaged a large number of people in positive and share conversations around a contentious period of history.
 - The project retold history in a way that was both interesting and engaging.
 - The project enabled people to gain new knowledge about this period of history.
 - The project increased understanding of why peoples' ancestors and those with whom they may have disagreed acted the way they did.
 - The project promoted reconciliation between Nationalists and Unionists at the beginning of the decade of political centenaries.
 - The project facilitated a shared understanding of a contentious period of history through well-facilitated discussions following performances of the play.
 - The project demonstrated that it is possible to represent a contentious period of history in a fair and balanced way that promotes reconciliation, rather than in a partisan manner that hampers reconciliation.
- c. Story telling: The process uses the telling of oral stories told face to face between the storyteller and listeners. Clare Coburn describes it thus,

It is an oral sharing of personal, biographical, traditional and historical

¹⁰⁶ Christ Church, Culmore, Muff & St Peter's Group of Parishes (Church of Ireland)

¹⁰⁷ 1912, A Hundred Years On: Evaluation Report, Macaulay Associates p4

stories as a way to develop greater understanding about the values, history and traditions that motivate individual and group behaviour and customs. This understanding can foster empathy and appreciation of the reasons for the divergent interpretations of events that different groups or individuals have experienced together. Intractable conflicts are marked by deeply held and guarded narratives kept by both sides that may rely on distortion or selective emphasis of aspects of the experience. With expanded understanding of the diverse perspectives involved, and with the ability to hear another's story comes the potential to explore new meanings.

Through the use of symbol, metaphor and ritual, the telling of stories may also create a means to transcend the restrictions of personal or group-bound interpretations. New stories may also be shaped from the combined telling of the stories of two or more groups or people in conflict to inspire different responses to familiar conflict experiences. Storytelling in a variety of forms can thus be an active way to support 'bottom-up' initiatives in peace building.¹⁰⁸

- d. Art and music: Art allows for expression of complex issues matters and music gives an outlet for expression. Both art and music can give tools both to communities and individuals that help give them expression.
7. To commission and sanction the skills of projects already engaged in meaningful reflection on this decade.¹⁰⁹ Whilst the Church can provide access to their networks it may not always possess specific skills and

competencies that are needed. Rather than seek to 'reinvent the wheel' it would be more effective to partner with those who have proven expertise.

8. To pilot a simple reflective process, predicated on agreed values, in three dioceses / Presbyteries / Districts, on both sides of the border.
9. To facilitate both discreet and public discussion between key stakeholders and community leaders.
10. To develop partnerships with other organizations within the community to facilitate reflection. As an example of this, in Co Fermanagh Clogher diocese (Church of Ireland) along with Enniskillen Methodist and Presbyterian churches have co-operated with Co Fermanagh Grand Orange Order to plan a process of historical reflection events over the coming decade. The process engages voices from all parts of the community. The stated values underlying this process include:
 - a. To enable members of the Roman Catholic community to understand the significance of ...(individual historic events of that decade) ... in the Protestant psyche.
 - b. To enable members of the Protestant community to understand the significance ... (individual historic events of that decade) ... in the Roman Catholic psyche.
 - c. To not only gain a greater understanding of the historical context of that time but to learn lessons for now and future generations.
 - d. To unpick false impressions and understanding of events that get passed on from one generation to another.

¹⁰⁸ *Storytelling as a Peacebuilding Method* Clare Coburn pl http://www.academia.edu/1996602/Storytelling_as_a_Peacebuilding_Method

¹⁰⁹ *Examples include Ethical and Shared Remembering / Healing Through Remembering*

- e. To build up tolerance / respect / understanding / break down misconceptions of each other.
- 11. To pilot joint reflection processes for each of the key dates during the decade.
- 12. To use their access to 'public square' to encourage ethical historical reflection.
- 13. To create important symbolic moments for the community. Recent years have seen significant symbolic moments that encouraged healing and reconciliation.
 - a. On the day after the publication of the Saville Report into the events of Bloody Sunday (Derry / Londonderry) a number of Protestant Church leaders made a public presentation to the families. This took place at The Bloody Sunday memorial. It proved to be a key moment for relationships in Derry / Londonderry.
 - b. In May 2011 Queen Elizabeth II visited Ireland and undertook a series of highly choreographed public engagements. President Mary McAleese and Queen Elizabeth laid wreaths at the Garden of Remembrance on 17th May 2011, which commemorates those who died in the pursuit of Irish freedom.
 - c. At a dinner in Dublin Castle on 18th May 2011 Queen Elizabeth stated "Our islands have experienced more than their fair share of heartache, turbulence and loss". She continued, "With the benefit of historical hindsight... we can all see things we wish could have been done differently, or not at all." She also opened her remarks with a few words of Irish, greeting the room: "A Uachtaráin agus a chairde", a remark which drew spontaneous applause.

President, Mary McAleese, acknowledged that Ireland and Britain had "shaped and altered each other" over the centuries, in a relationship that was "long, complex, [and] has often been turbulent". She also said "Inevitably, where there are colonisers and colonised, the past is the source of bitter division. Losses cannot be altered, nor grief erased."

In creating symbolic moments for the community there are a number of dangers to be aware of. If occasions are so bland and lacking in content, for fear of alienating *anybody* it is doubtful that they will have great impact. Alternately if symbolic moments seek to publicly express sentiments that are far from those privately held by the various communities they may prove to be divisive rather than reconciling events.

- 14. To reaffirm and publicly champion that a process of reconciliation is not only a key value for the Church but that it is also a necessity and possibility in our society.
- 15. To bring is "an ecumenical exploration of the scriptures"¹¹⁰ or a serious theological engagement with the deepest issues found in the way communities relate to one another in these islands. Whilst the engagement needs to be intellectually and theological rigorous it needs to have an expression that is accessible and avoid any temptation to bland statements of the obvious - something that no-one could disagree with but that says little. It is to decide on the most profound issues affecting how we view identity and the ways we relate to one another and to speak to that in an intelligible and engaging way.
- 16. To establish a new covenant or proclamation for relationships on these islands. Stephen

¹¹⁰ Interview: 21.12.05.

Adams talks of devising a new covenant.¹¹¹ Fr Tim Bartlett describes devising a Charter of Principles and Values.¹¹² A covenant is an agreement, promise or compact between people. A proclamation is a public or official announcement on a matter of great importance. But a covenant or proclamation about what?

What they are describing is a new covenant or proclamation upon which to base relationships within these islands – how to relate to and live with one another ethically. Church is meant to be a politically neutral body. It needs to bring something different to the table in addition to the politicians, sociologists and historians, all of which bring vital things.

Bruce Clarke is correct when he says that, “Every church has its own political culture

and collective memory”.¹¹³ In Ireland political leadership has often been characterised by a willingness to use one’s own people. The weakness of religious leadership has sometimes been to be afraid of them. The Church is not called to present yet more narratives (versions) of history. It is rather to be true to the teachings of its own founder when he calls us to a revolutionary way of living towards God and our neighbour.

One of Nelson Mandela’s more difficult sayings came when he stated “Real leaders must be ready to sacrifice all for the freedom of their people”. There may be sacrifice in calling people “back to their true allegiance”.¹¹⁴

The sacrifice is worth it because it is less than the cost of not doing it.

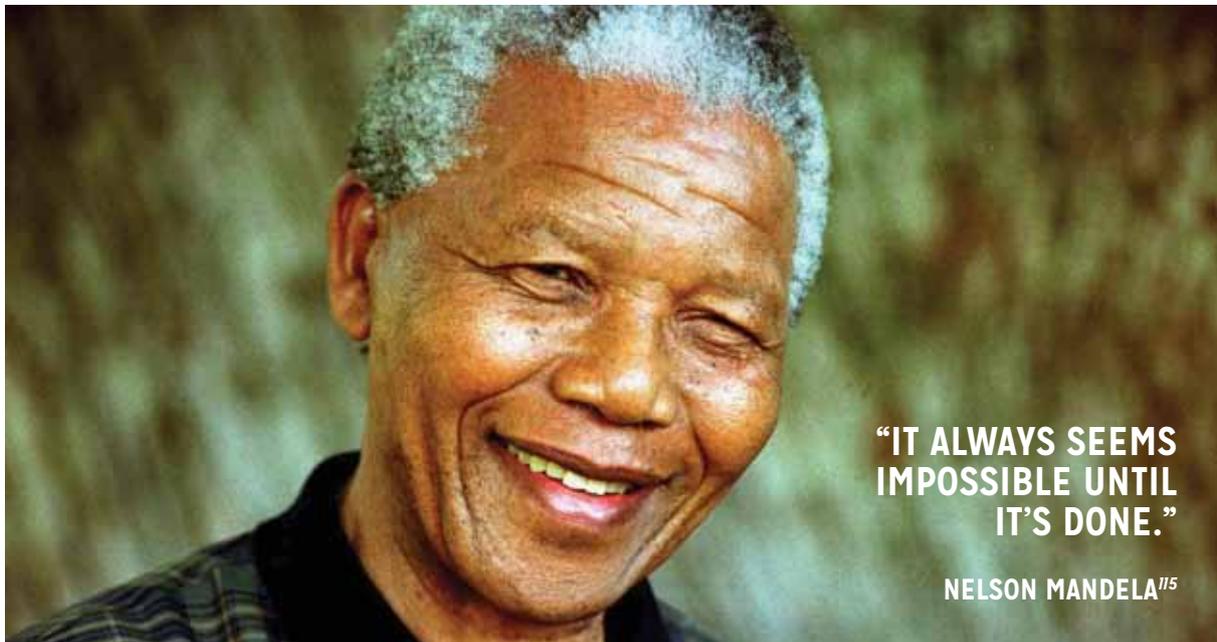
¹¹¹ 09.05.13.

¹¹² Interview: 05.06.13.

¹¹³ Interview: 02.05.13.

¹¹⁴ Interview: 11.04.13.

¹¹⁵ <http://www.forbes.com/sites/mfonobongnsehe/2013/12/06/20-inspirational-quotes-from-nelson-mandela/>



CONCLUSION





CONCLUSION

TACKLING TOUGH PROBLEMS – PROBLEMS THAT OFTEN REQUIRE AN EVOLUTION OF VALUES – IS THE END OF LEADERSHIP; GETTING THAT WORK DONE IS ITS ESSENCE.¹¹⁶



What sort of leadership do we really wish for? Ronald Heifetz says, “In a crisis we tend to look for the wrong kind of leadership. We call for someone with answers, decision, strength and a map of the future, someone who knows where we ought to be going – in short, someone who can make hard problems simple ... we should be calling for leadership that will challenge us to face problems for which there are no simple painless solutions – problems that require us to learn new ways”.¹¹⁷

This decade of commemorations is lived out in a context. We have just experienced thirty-five years of violence and civil disorder. During those years nearly four thousand people lost their lives. Countless others still bear the physical and psychological scars. The events of this period, added to the collective perspectives of centuries of history, have created an atmosphere of insecurity, distrust

and suspicion between our respective communities. That is the context in which leadership leads.

Comments from the research suggest a hope that division and conflict might end. Added to that is the wish that this decade of commemoration might contribute to just such a thing.

It is not about 100 years ago but about today, but political leaders benefit from that electorally.

Let's be more ambitious than just managing it.

Is the future just going to be more of the past? Do we just mark time?

There is an appetite for reconciliation but there is no political leadership.

What we have is 'keeping the lid on things'.

Political parties have not explained what the future might look like in any positive sense.

¹¹⁶ *Leadership Without Easy Answers* p26

¹¹⁷ *Leadership Without Easy Answers* p2

Profound reconciliation can only happen when there is an agreed end result.

(Q: Is reconciliation on the agenda?). Not politically because it would undermine the parties raison d'être.

If there is no political, Church or social willingness to end that sort of conflict there will be no reconciliation.

If churches breast beat they will alienate their own people. Acknowledge your own faults but see the broader picture.

Challenge the cycle of the way history is used.

It could be a tough 10 years or fantastic.

History ... is not the inevitable path to anything. People interpret the past in light of the present.

Can we manage to say we have moved on?

Leadership at its most noble empowers people and works for the common good. Yet there will always be the temptation to either use your own people or to be scared of them. Political and community leadership as well as the Church each face a distinct challenge as we navigate the waters of historical reflection.

a. "Why do you seek the living amongst the dead?"¹¹⁸

Seeking the truth in history is for building relationships as well as the integrity of finding facts. Ethically reflecting on history is being willing to undertake a journey and construct a process, built on ethical principles. It is a journey of the heart – a commitment to reconciliation.

The nature of politics is that at times it seems reduced to winning, or perhaps more accurately, not losing. Experience suggests that reflecting on our key historical events can provide moments of great temptation. The temptations are the greater

because whilst Northern Ireland now has a political settlement it still needs a human accommodation. Where there has been a history of conflict then division is too easily fuelled by the story that one community tells about itself, as well as the 'other'. The story we tell ourselves on these islands is powerfully influenced by the historical events that took place between 1912 and 1922.

The story that communities on these islands tell about themselves and the 'other' go to the heart of their self-identity, their relationships with each other as well as any hopes for the future. Somehow we need to find a way of reflecting on our history that changes the dynamic both in ourselves but also in our relationships. Yet church leader and author Rick Warren observes:

We all use tools, tricks of the trade, and skills in relationships that are actually counter productive. They're hurtful, they're harmful, and they don't get you what you want out of relationships. In fact, they get you the exact opposite behavior. But when we lack wisdom, we use them anyway. All you're going to do is get the exact opposite of what you expect. It doesn't work. It's foolish.¹¹⁹

Johnston McMaster suggests a healthy alternative:

Ethical commemoration does not diminish people or blame people for their past, but rather represents their actions and motivations fairly and in the context of their time ... How we commemorate leaves a legacy for better or for worse ... (This decade).... will also shape the destiny of future generations as potential 'history makers', this generation can charter new ways of being with each other. Crucial to this is inter-community dialogue and shared remembering now and into the future.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Luke 24:5 Holy Bible, New International Version, 2011, Biblica Inc

¹¹⁹ <http://rickwarren.org/series/you-make-me-crazy>

¹²⁰ McMaster, Johnston Remembering a Decade of Change and Violence in Ireland 1912 -22, The Junction - Derry / Londonderry 2012

One of the great challenges in reflecting on this decade is not in how individuals do so. In reality most people are preoccupied with the ordinary things of the here and now. No, the challenge is how politicians and key leaders lead us in our reflection. What will be the tone and ambition in these reflections?

This is an issue of leadership. Liz O'Donnell, a former Progressive Democrat TD, has had significant input into our peace process. Talking of leadership in Northern Ireland she says, "We are great advocates of our own position but we are not so good at transcendent leadership".¹²¹

What is needed is transcendent leadership that is exercised for the common good and not for lesser agendas. The necessity for such a quality is illustrated by comments in the *Healing Through Remembering Report 2002* which noted:

We firmly believe that dealing with the fears of revisiting the past, including fear of causing anger and not reconciliation, is a necessary part of the healing and remembering process. We know we cannot, just as any collective process for remembering cannot, please everyone or address all needs. However, for us, the key question has become not, *How does this paralyse us and prevent us from moving on?* (Rather) *How we can avoid further damage, seek solutions and create a better future?*¹²²

It is highly unlikely that we will have a neatly packaged and risk free process for examining the events of 1912 to 1922. Nor is every person on these islands going to become expert, even-minded and dispassionate historians of that period. It is more likely that we nudge things along to breaking the cycle ... meeting one another as human beings,

hearing and being heard. But being willing to look at *all* of our history with integrity, an agenda for the common good and being able to agree or disagree on events beyond our lifetime, may achieve more than coming to an agreed narrative.

Perhaps the most significant thing we can do is to put ourselves in the shoes of the 'other' - to imagine how their community saw and experienced particular events. This means letting go of our obsession with ourselves.

As Rick Warren says:

You only have a certain amount of emotional energy. In a conversation where you're trying to resolve conflict, you can either use that energy to fix the blame or you can use that energy to fix the problem. You don't have enough energy to do both. So you've got to ask yourself what's more important, to blame the other person or to resolve the conflict. Fix the problem, not the blame.¹²³

So does leadership empower its people in the task and work for the common good? Or does it yield to the temptation of using or being afraid of its own people? The challenge as already identified by Heifetz is for "leadership that will challenge us to face problems for which there are no simple painless solutions - problems that require us to learn new ways".¹²⁴

b. "What if this is as good as it gets?"¹²⁵

In the film *As Good As It Gets* Jack Nicholson plays the role of Melvin Udall, a successful but abrasive New York novelist. Nicholson brilliantly plays the part of a man who not only has a difficult personality, but also has a problem. His problem

¹²¹ Speech at Department for Foreign Affairs Reconciliation Forum, Dublin Castle 30.10.13.

¹²² <http://www.healingthroughremembering.org/>

¹²³ <http://purposedriven.com/blogs/dailyhope/fix-the-problem-not-the-blame/>

¹²⁴ *Leadership Without Easy Answers* p2

¹²⁵ *Melvin Udall As Good as it Gets* TriStar Pictures 1997

is that he is desperately in love with Carol, the waitress who reluctantly serves him every day in a Manhattan diner. The film plays around the theme of Udall trying to form a relationship with Carol, but being almost fatally hampered by his personality.

As the story moves towards its climax it seems as though angst-ridden Melvin is only going to succeed in driving Carol away. Desperately looking for advice he turns to Simon Bishop, a young artist neighbour with whom he has often had a stormy friendship. Not finding what he hears in any way helpful he reaches the point of exasperation. His words say it all. "If you're gonna give me hope you got to do better than you're doing. I mean if you can't be at least mildly interesting then shut the hell up! I mean I'm drowning here, and you're describing the water!"

Udall is looking for three things from the words of his young artist friend, Simon Bishop.

- He is looking for hope in the middle of his struggles.
- He is looking for Simon to say something that will actually engage him, that will somehow succeed in capturing his attention despite all the distraction caused by his angst.
- Most of all, when he is in his place of greatest need something more is required than for someone to state the obvious - describing the water to a drowning man!

Can the Church make a meaningful difference to how we live through this decade of commemorations? Does it have the competencies? It certainly has the networks. What is also true is that it has the good will to do so. Perhaps more so that at any time in our recent past there is a united sense of good will across the Church to do something positive for the healing of our divisions. It is the 'what' and the 'how' that it is not sure about.

Not only that but does the Church have a culture that allows it to engage in the quality of reflection that is needed to move beyond nice words.

So what can the Church do to infuse this decade of commemorations with an alternative dynamic? Derry / Londonderry based community activist Eamonn Deane puts it like this, "Stop sounding sanctimonious and take risks."

Peace building is a risky business and the Church in Ireland is a risk averse body. It has also retreated from the public square. As a member of one group put it "Churches have spiritualised, pietised and sacramentalised the message. There is not a theological public voice in the public space to rigorously critique the past and articulate the vision for the common good". They continued, "There is a communication deficit of public and accessible language for the public square. (The Church) doesn't know how to translate and transpose."¹²⁶ In truth it finds it more difficult to talk about God in the public space that is secular. The challenge is not so much about recovering its position in society as in recovering its voice.

Will we deal with this decade in a way that heals? If there is one word at the core of the Christian message it is the word reconciliation - the bringing together into relationship of those whose relationship has been broken. If there is one hope that gives shape and power to the message the Church has to proclaim it is the possibility of reconciliation.

There are two questions any organization should constantly ask itself. What's your business and ... how's business? Whatever else the business of the Church is it is to speak a message of reconciliation. If that is part of the core message in a divided people the next question logically follows. How's business? In other words how well are you doing what you ought to be doing, and is anything

¹²⁶ Group: 26.06.13.

stopping you from doing it better? It means recognition of what is done well. It also requires honesty in identifying what hampers, or continues to hamper, its contribution.

And so we are brought back to those exasperated words spoken so forcefully by Jack Nicholson. “If you’re gonna give me hope you got to do better than you’re doing. I mean if you can’t be at least mildly interesting then shut the hell up! I mean I’m drowning here, and you’re describing the water!”

Antoine Rutayisire was the Vice Chair of the Rwandan National Commission on Reconciliation in 2004. Reconciliation was not a theoretical exercise

for him in a country that saw up to one million people murdered in ethnic violence in the Rwanda of 1994. It is also a deeply personal challenge. His own father was murdered in ethnic violence. Rutayisire is a deeply committed Christian and now an ordained Anglican clergyperson. In an interview with the author in Kigali, capital of Rwanda, in 2004 he said this about the challenge of speaking the message of reconciliation, “Be clear, be blunt, be transparent.”¹²⁷ Or as Melvin Udall might have put it “Do more than just describe the water”.

*“Reconciliation is the only way to live together.
The only way to finish our conflict”
Archdeacon John Marara (Rwanda)¹²⁸*

¹²⁷ Interview: 16.11.04.

¹²⁸ Interview with author 12.11.04.





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