



The essential brief on the Irish churches

There is no room for anti-Semitism in our lexicon of hatred

How much anti-Semitism is there in Northern Ireland? The shattering of the windows of the Belfast synagogue (described by the PSNI as a religious hate crime) would suggest there's at least a bit of it about.



Belfast Synagogue

Lyndy McDowell writes in Belfast Telegraph - But we are constantly reassured that actually hatred of the Jews has absolutely nothing whatsoever to do with hatred of Israel? Or, to use the currently fashionable terms, hatred of the "Zionists".

The timing of the [assault on the synagogue](#) would seem to suggest, however, that there is some sort of link.

Like all attacks on places of religion – the [Star of the Sea Catholic Church in Newtownabbey was also attacked](#) at the weekend (again), and Belfast's Islamic Centre has recently been targeted too – this needs to be condemned utterly.

We already know the enormity of the problems we face in Northern Ireland with sectarianism, racism and homophobia. But maybe our biggest problem is with denial.

Hate crime, to give it its official label, is rarely unconnected with hate speech, hate mindset and ... well ... just plain, old hate.

Most of us immediately see a connection between the wild, despicable language of the pastor and racism directed at Muslim people.



Rabbi David Singer of Belfast

Where anti-Semitic – sorry, anti-Zionist – clamour is concerned, however, there seems to be an entirely different logic at work.

Let me make something clear here. I'm not saying nobody should ever be allowed to criticise Israel, its government or its actions. (Lots of Israelis criticise their own government. Unusually for the Middle East, they are free to do so. They are citizens of that region's only real democracy. They can vote for who they want, speak out when they choose. Women have an equal place in society. Gay people are not murdered on account of their sexuality. The media in Israel is free.)

What is indicative of anti-Semitism is the sheer scale of the very cleverly manipulated global campaign against Israel. Tens of thousands die in Syria, Libya, Iraq, the Sudan and while this makes headlines there is nothing, nothing on a par with the outcry against Israel.

That nation moves to defend itself against the terror regime relentlessly pounding its cities, its towns and villages with hundreds of rockets and once again it is the world's Great Satan singled out for particular censure.

Why? Israel is the world's only Jewish state.

We are assured, though, there is absolutely no connection between these two things.

A recent massive survey of global attitudes towards Jews (not Israelis, not Zionists) found that anti-Semitism was rampant in the Middle East but also shockingly common in parts of Europe. Respondents were asked did they agree with statements such as "people hate Jews because of the way Jews

behave", "Jews think they are better than other people", and "Jews still talk too much about what happened in the Holocaust".

While the UK was rated at around 8%, Ireland was rated at a shameful 20%. (Older males were among the worst.)

So, where does that leave us in Northern Ireland? While we're included in the UK figure there is no breakdown by region. The suspicion has to be that we're more anti-Semitic (or anti-Zionist if you prefer) than we think.

And whatever the anti-Zionists argue, the especial ordure directed at Israel is a reflection of that.

The conflict in the Middle East is massively, tragically complex. It isn't something that can be summed up or sorted in a glib 140 character tweet. Or round a dinner table with a nice little Sancerre in BT9.

Of course those pictures of suffering civilians would tear the heart out of you. I imagine the Israelis grieve for the innocent victims every bit as much as the rest of us. Israelis are not, despite how their enemies portray them, inhuman.

But what is Israel supposed to do under Hamas attack? Just sit back and take constant, unceasing bombardment with only the Iron Dome anti-missile system and pure luck sparing countless lives?

We wouldn't here. No other nation on earth would.

See also today's News Letter - Excellent two page faith focus feature on Belfast's Jewish community. And -

<https://www.belfastjewishcommunity.org.uk/>

Methodist Church condemns attacks on Synagogue and church

The recent attacks on the Jewish Synagogue and the Star of the Sea, Roman Catholic Church has been condemned by the Methodist Church in Ireland.

Speaking on behalf of the Church and the President, the church's General Secretary, the Rev Donald Ker has said:

"Such attacks on places of worship are to be condemned. They do not reflect the mind or mood of the those living in these areas. While some may try to justify the attack on the Synagogue by looking to the current situation between Israel and Palestine this in no way can be used as justification. The Jewish community has always played a leading role in Belfast not only in the world of commerce but also in the field of education. They have provided many amenities for the general public in this City and beyond.

As we as a Church along with others supported the Muslim community at a time when they felt themselves under attack so we would want our Jewish community here in Belfast to know that we share with them the disappointment of this recent attack.

Our prayer for them and for those at Star of Sea that they would experience Shalom.

Newry educated Former UK ambassador to Holy See criticises Number 10 as Christians driven out of Mosul

Western leaders are staying silent as Islamists wipe out Christianity in Iraq in scenes recalling 1930s Germany or the ethnic cleansing

seen during the Balkans in the early 1990s, a former British ambassador to the Holy See has said.



Catholic Herald - Francis Campbell, who served in Rome from 2005 to 2011, said he was deeply disturbed by the West's indifference as Christians were driven out the Iraqi city of Mosul after Islamists gave them an ultimatum to "convert, pay or die" by noon on July 19.

He said: "The Mosul imagery is so arresting. It's reminiscent of what we saw in Europe in the build-up to the Second World War or the ethnic cleansing witnessed during the Balkans in the early 1990s, where there is an attempt to systematically wipe out an entire civilisation and culture. It's as if the world is asleep and doesn't care. I'm surprised there hasn't been condemnation and calls for solidarity."

In a campaign of violence and intimidation, members of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) marked the homes of Christian families throughout the city with the Arabic letter “N”, standing for “Nazarene”.



The Sunni militants have burned an 1,800-year-old church to the ground and ordered church bells to be silent. Last Sunday, Mass was not celebrated in the city for the first time in 1,600 years.

Mr Campbell noted that UN secretary-general Ban Ki-moon had said the purge of Christians in Iraq’s second largest city was “likely a crime against humanity”. But days after the ISIS ultimatum deadline had passed, neither Number 10 nor the European Union had spoken out.

He said: “We are one of the biggest aid donors in the world. Are we going to offer these Christians refuge? This is religious persecution. This is what a whole series of conventions are there for. Have we used our diplomatic clout to stop this and highlight this human rights violation?”

An estimated 10,000 Christians fled Mosul after ISIS released a statement through the city’s mosques threatening them with “death by the sword” unless they converted to Islam or paid an exorbitant tax.

In his Angelus address on Sunday, Pope Francis expressed solidarity with Mosul’s Christians. He said: “Today our brothers are persecuted – they are banished from their homes and forced to flee without even being able to take their belongings. My dear brothers and sisters who are persecuted, I know how much you suffer. I know that you are deprived of all. I am with you in faith in He who conquered evil. May the God of peace arouse in all an authentic desire for dialogue and reconciliation. Violence cannot be overcome with violence. Violence is overcome with peace!”

Meanwhile, Patriarch Louis Sako, the Chaldean Archbishop of Baghdad, has released an open letter to “all men of good will and those who care for the Iraqi nation”.

He wrote: “Who knows what is holding in the coming days as the laws of the Islamic State are based on what they claim to be the Sharia law, including the redefinition of identities on the basis of religion and sectarianism. These requirements offend Muslims and the reputation of Islam, which says ‘you

have your religion and we have ours' and 'there is no compulsion in religion', and it is in contradiction of 1,400 years of history and a lifetime of the Islamic world, and coexistence with different religions and different peoples, east and west, respecting their beliefs and living in fraternity.

“The Christians and in particular in our East, and since the advent of Islam, have shared together sweet and bitter memories, their bloods were mixed in defence of their rights and their land, and together they built, cities, civilisation and heritage. It is shameful that Christians are being rejected, expelled and diminished.

“It is obvious that this would have disastrous consequences on the coexistence between the majority and the minorities, even among Muslims themselves, in the near and long term. Hence, Iraq is heading to a humanitarian and historical disaster.

“Therefore we call unto them, a warm, brotherly, urgent and serious call, and we appeal to our fellow Iraqis who support them to reconsider their strategy, and respect the unarmed innocent people, of all ethnicities, religions and sects. The Koran commands respect to the innocent, and does not call to seize the property of people forcibly, it calls on helping the widow, the orphan, the destitute and the defenceless.”

This Saturday a demonstration will take place outside Parliament. Participants will pray the Angelus at noon for the Middle Eastern faithful.

USA Council of Churches opposes Israeli invasion of Gaza

The President and General Secretary of the [National Council of Churches USA](#) expressed deep disappointment and sadness Friday over the invasion of Gaza by Israeli Defense Forces.

The Israeli government said it is “hitting Hamas hard” following the Palestinian faction’s refusal to accept a peace plan brokered by Egypt.

NCC President and General Secretary Jim Winkler said, “The overwhelming military superiority possessed by Israel, exhibited by days of air strikes against Gaza and the consequent deaths of hundreds of Palestinians and the wounding of thousands more, guarantees the besieged and impoverished people who live there will suffer much more.”

Nearly 300 persons have been killed in Gaza during recent hostilities between Israel and Hamas, and 1800 persons have been injured.

“The deaths of 18 members of one Palestinian family, and of four little boys playing on the beach, as a result of Israeli attacks are just a few of the heartbreaking results of the conflict,” Winkler said.

“Just as we express opposition to Israel’s invasion, so too do we oppose the firing of thousands of rockets from Gaza into Israel,” Winkler said. “We grieve at the news of the death of an Israeli as a result of a rocket attack.”

“One thing is certain,” Winkler said. “Israel’s invasion of Gaza will not bring a peaceful resolution to the conflict between Israel and Palestine nor will rocket fire from Gaza bring peace. The long cycle of violence must be broken. It appears neither side possesses the courage, faith, or imagination necessary to alter the dynamics of the situation in a positive direction. Too many Palestinians and Israelis are held captive by the self-defeating notion that violence must be met by violence to bring about a secure future. I will continue to pray that God’s word is heeded in the land we consider holy, and that God’s peace will ultimately prevail.”

The current round of fighting between Hamas and Israel was triggered by the kidnapping and murder of three Israeli teenagers, allegedly by Palestinians, and the kidnapping and murder of a Palestinian youth, allegedly by Israelis.

The National Council of Churches supports a viable two-state solution, which takes into account the right to self-determination of, and security for, both Israelis and Palestinians; an end to Israel’s Occupation of Palestinian land, and resolution of issues such as refugees, the Separation Barrier, checkpoints settlements, water resources, and the status of a shared Jerusalem.

Public wants legal threat to bakery over gay marriage cake dropped, says poll

A majority of the British public believe that the Equality Commission’s legal threat to an Ulster bakery which refused to make a pro-gay marriage cake should be dropped, according to a poll.

Sam McBride in News Letter - The ComRes poll found that 60 per cent of the public agreed that the action against Ashers Baking Company in Newtownabbey was “disproportionately heavy-handed”, with just 14 per cent

disagreeing with that statement.

A quarter of the 2,000 people surveyed said that they did not know whether or not it was disproportionate action.

However, the poll, which was conducted last week, shows a radical difference of opinion across different ages.



The image the bakery was asked to produce

Among those who are over 65, eight in ten people opposed the action against the bakery.

But just over four in ten people aged under 44 believed that the case against the bakery was heavy-handed.

The poll also found that a majority — 54 per cent — said that the case showed David Cameron was wrong when he reassured Parliament that introducing gay marriage would not cause discrimination against those who believe it is wrong.

The poll was commissioned by the Christian Institute, which is raising funds to support the bakery's legal defence.

It has until this week to respond to the Equality Commission, which last month told the bakery that if it did not put forward "proposals to remedy your unlawful discrimination" within seven days, it would face court action.

The commission has now agreed to a request from Ashers which extends that deadline until this week

The gay rights activist who ordered the cake has made clear that he did not target Ashers Bakery as a Christian business but simply walked into its Belfast city centre outlet unaware of the company owners' beliefs.

However, the ComRes poll found that on the wider issue of gay activists 'targeting' Christian businesses, a large section of the public believe that such actions are taking place.

When the statement 'Christian-run businesses appear to be being singled out unfairly by gay activists in order to make an example of them' was put to those polled, 45 per cent agreed, with 22 per cent disagreeing.

Asher's lawyers have estimated that the case could cost taxpayers £30,000 if the Equality Commission brings the company to a county court.

However, if that was to happen and any verdict was to be appealed to higher courts, the costs would soar.

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/business/public-wants-legal-threat-to-bakery-over-gay-marriage-cake-dropped-says-poll-1-6195425>

See also - Daily Mail

Church leaders invite to "Tour De Foyle" Charity Cycle Event

The leaders of the Churches in Derry/Londonderry invite people to 'get on their bikes' and come together to participate in the 'Tour de Foyle' Charity Cycle Event on Saturday 23rd August, setting off from St Columb's Park from 7.30am.



Bishop Donal McKeown (Bishop of Derry), Rev Peter Murray (President of the Methodist Church), Liam Milligan (NW Methodist Mission), Phelim McBrearty (Volunteer), Bishop Ken Good (Bishop of Derry & Raphoe), Rev Lindsay Blair (Faughanvale Presbyterian Church) & Fr Michael Canny (Chair of Churches Trust)

This is a fun event planned by the North

West Methodist Mission and the Churches Trust and it is supported by the Irish Churches Peace Project which is funded by the European Union's PEACE III Programme managed by the Special EU Programmes Body.

Cyclists are encouraged to undertake a scenic lap of Lough Foyle (50 miles approximately). Leaving St Columb's Park, participants will cycle to Magilligan and after a brief 'pit stop' will then board the Ferry across to Greencastle. The route will then take them back to the City crossing the Peace Bridge before arriving at the finish in St Columb's Park.

Building on the excitement generated by the Giro de Italia earlier this year and the growing trend towards getting fit & healthy living, the idea is simply to bring people together from all of the communities across our City and beyond in a united effort to raise some funding for two very worthy local causes. The event is open to everyone from the beginner to the more experienced cyclist alike, with the main emphasis on taking part.

Family Fun Cycle and Picnic in the Park

To encourage wider participation from all ages, there will also be a 'Family Fun Cycle' within St Columb's Park and this will begin at 11am. Families are encouraged to bring a picnic and, when they have finished their cycle, enjoy having this together whilst awaiting the arrival back into the Park of those participating in the bigger 'Tour De Foyle'.

By taking part in the 'Tour de Foyle' or the 'Family Fun Cycle and Picnic in the Park' you will be helping people in your own community who are experiencing difficult times in their lives and who are working with the help of our charities to get things back on track. So please help us by getting on your bike on Saturday 23rd August 2014 and taking part.

Register now at www.tourdefoyle.co.uk and for further details check <https://www.facebook.com/tourdefoyle>

For more information on ICPP please visit www.icpp.info

CEO of NI victims' service stands down from post **The head of the Victims and Survivors Service has left her post.**

News Letter - It emerged yesterday that Anne Dorbie stood down from her post as chief executive on Friday.

It was set up in 2012, and handles things like funding for victims' groups and payments to individuals who have been left hurt and traumatised by the Troubles.

The service has come under strong criticism in the past, with one committee last October hearing that it was not "fit for purpose".

Victims' campaigner Raymond McCord said "victims won't shed tears" over this latest development.

A statement from a PR woman acting for the service said: "Anne Dorbie has recently left her position as CEO of VSS. Margaret Bateson has now been appointed as Acting CEO and VSS work continues as normal. VSS would like to take this opportunity to thank Anne for her service and wish her the very best for the future".

Acting CEO Ms Bateson was VSS' Head of Programmes and Corporate Services.

The spokeswoman said Ms Dorbie's departure had been by "mutual agreement".

Asked the reason behind the departure, the spokeswoman said she could not go beyond the statement which had been issued.

It followed the standing down of chairman Peter Gay in recent weeks for personal reasons.

In October last year, DUP MLA Jimmy Spratt had excoriated the service for not returning victims' phone calls during a Stormont committee hearing.

Ms Dorbie said at the time they had been "overwhelmed" for a period of three months, but said that the service was indeed "fit for purpose".

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/ceo-of-victims-service-stands-down-from-post-1-6196858>

Francis Invites the Anglicans In

Francis would like Anglicans to become Catholics, writes David Mills on Patheos -

With English Anglicans having yet more reason to become Catholics, now that the Church of England has voted to create women bishops, the Ordinariate Benedict formed as a way into the Catholic Church has organized an "exploration day," and the Holy Father has conveyed "his good



wishes and prayers for a successful and inspiring event. The Holy Father cordially imparts his Apostolic Blessing upon all those persons who are participating in this significant event and working in any way for the promotion and presentation of the Catholic Faith and the Gospel in Great Britain.”

From the [Ordinariate's report](#) (Mennini is the Apostolic Nuncio to Great Britain):

Pope Francis' blessing on the exploration day and Archbishop Mennini's words of support for it follow a statement of welcome for the initiative from Cardinal Vincent Nichols. In his capacity as President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, the Cardinal said: “the Ordinariate both enriches the Catholic Church with Catholic aspects of the beautiful heritage and culture of Anglican patrimony and advances the cause of unity which must be the ultimate aim of all ecumenical activity. . . I wish you every success with this initiative. I hope it will attract many interested enquirers”.

Understated invitations, both of them, but clear in their intent.

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/davidmills/2014/07/francis-invites-the-anglicans-in/>

Press Review - women bishops, living wage, plight of Iraqi Christians, obit

Report that Church of England selection boards will be encouraged to use a form of positive discrimination to appoint woman bishops, MPs and peers have been told. It states William Fittall told a parliamentary committee that in vacant sees where a male and female cleric considered equally well qualified are going head to head for the same post, those making appointments will be advised to choose the female candidate. He said that although the Church is exempt from equality laws, bishops' selection boards will be instructed to follow the same principles in order to boost the number of women in the episcopate.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/10984385/Church-of-England-to-use-positive-discrimination-to-boost-women-bishops.html>

Guard

Report that cleaners with Citizens UK have worked to uncover the true extent of low pay within Whitehall government departments. On Monday they published the Whitehall Low Pay League Table - shining a light on the best

and worst. It states Archbishop John Sentamu, who recently chaired a commission into the living wage, calls it an affront to human dignity that public sector bodies treats its employees in this way.

<http://www.theguardian.com/public-leaders-network/2014/jul/22/london-living-wage-whitehall-cleaners-league-table>

Times

Columnist David Alton says the world must respond to the cry of Iraq's Christians and the faithful in Iraq who still pray in Aramic, the language of Jesus.

<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/opinion/columnists/article4154877.ece>

Guard

Report that all state-funded schools will be allowed to prioritise places for children from the poorest backgrounds under a new draft admissions code. The proposal, which is still subject to consultation, would apply to children who are eligible for the pupil premium - a subsidy system that gives schools an extra annual payment of £1,300 for each primary pupil and £935 for each secondary pupil who receives free school meals. While free schools and academies are already allowed to discriminate in favour of children on free school meals, other state schools - including grammar schools - must apply for dispensation from the Department for Education (DfE).

<http://www.theguardian.com/education/2014/jul/22/state-schools-prioritise-disadvantaged-pupils-admissions-reform>

Mail

Report that a majority of the country thinks the persecution of a bakery for refusing to make a cake advertising gay marriage is wrong, a poll found yesterday. It states six out of 10 think that it is 'disproportionately heavy-handed' to drag a bakery company to court because its Christian owners declined an order for the cake with a message.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2702229/Public-backs-bakery-gay-cake-row-says-poll-Six-ten-believe-proposed-court-action-owners-refusal-bake-cake-wrong.html#ixzz38GVCrQiO>

BBC/Mail

Reports that police are appealing for information after a churchwarden found a human skull outside the door of Lady St Mary's Church, Wareham. It had been carefully wrapped in tissue paper and placed in a bag. Police believe it may have been dug up in a garden as some houses near to church were built on parts of the old cemetery nearly 100 years ago.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-dorset-28417534>

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/pa/article-2701168/OLD-HUMAN-SKULL-LEFT-OUTSIDE-CHURCH.html>

BBC

Report on how the work of a South Yorkshire artist has been painstakingly restored at a village church. A depiction of the ascendancy of Christ by John Roddam Spencer Stanhope adorns the ceiling of St John the Evangelist church near Barnsley. The pre-Raphaelite painting was covered up for more than 50 years to protect it from damp, but has now been restored following Heritage Lottery funding.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-south-yorkshire-28425483>

Tel

Report that Theresa May has said it was "crucial" that the Government "do more" to end female genital mutilation as she announced a raft of changes to tackle the practice in Britain. It states the Home Secretary told the Girl Summit 2014 in London she had decided to set up a national prevention programme because "one girl subjected to FGM or forced to marry is one girl too many." Mentions that the former archbishop Desmond Tutu, is among those who have signed online pledges of support.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/10982323/We-must-protect-the-victims-of-FGM-says-Theresa-May.html>

Ind

Report that as Nigeria marks 100 days since more than 200 of its schoolgirls were abducted by Islamic extremists, their relatives are furious that almost nothing has changed. It states President Goodluck Jonathan met parents and survivors of the Boko Haram attack for the first time today, following intense political pressure. That the meeting took 99 days to materialise was a source of resentment among affected families.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/nigeria-schoolgirls-kidnap-after-100-days-of-hell-parents-finally-meet-nigerias-president-goodluck-jonathan-9621969.html>

Obituary

Tel

Obituary report on the Very Reverend Dom Philip Jebb, who was a charismatic headmaster of Downside Abbey School. He later became Cathedral Prior of Bath, a titular office going back to the pre-Reformation Church. It states Jebb liked to tell new monks on retreat that they were joining the most marvellous group of men since the Twelve Apostles.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/10983655/The-Very-Reverend-Dom-Philip-Jebb-obituary.html>