

Half Slave, Half Free: Patrick Macgill and the Catholic Church

Bernard Aspinwall

I do not sing
Of angel fair or damosel
That leans athwart a painted sky;

My little verses only tell
How human beings live and die
And labour as the years go by.

I do not sing
Of plaster saints or jealous gods,
But of little ones I know,
Who paint their cheeks or bear their hods
Because they live in doing so
Their hapless life on earth below.

Patrick Macgill
Songs of the Dead End

Patrick Macgill (1889—1962), the Donegal poet and novelist, was an articulate spokesman for a suppressed, inarticulate migrant workforce. He is also effectively an important voice of the sensitive layman in a clericalised church around the turn of the century. To give rather than to acquire is his message; to give freely and to become truly liberated is his ideal of the Church which he loved to hate: 'If a man is born to the ould ancient faith he'll never lose it', it will always be there, (1918 : 200). That tension between the authoritarian clergy and the layman runs through his work. The preoccupation with sexual morality and the only moral issue runs through his scorn for that lace-curtain respectability of his time. His class-consciousness is remarkable in early twentieth-century Catholic writing, when many churches seemed to have lost their sense of personal involvement with the poor as people rather than *objects* of charity. That, for Macgill was the ultimate pornography. Himself a navy in Scotland, he knew the bitter experience of the emigrant Irish far removed from the organisational church, from the main stream of secular life and

effective personal relationships, and so from God. The navy was the perennial outsider, the critic of the existing church and state, the reproach to the comfortable and uncomprehending. With his own subculture and its rather coarse pleasure at odds with the puritanical ethos of the contemporary order, the navy was subversive. He was in himself a revolutionary character. His existence—and the necessity of it to the entrepreneurial capitalist—posed awkward questions. Rootless and mobile, he was the essential pilgrim figure of the Church.

In the wake of Vatican II, the idea of the Pilgrim Church has become a commonplace. To most Catholics pilgrimage was previously undertaken by settled, established groups at clearly defined times to a renowned shrine. The parish or diocesan party departed at Easter or in Holy Year for Lourdes or Rome. From 1870 to about 1960 a pilgrimage was not only a spiritual occasion but a celebration of the achievements of the heavily Romanised Catholic Church of Great Britain. It was an extension of that cohesive organisation which had emerged in the early nineteenth century and had been consolidated through missions, church, school and other institutional building developments. The Church, if not loved, was respected and respectable.

Its achievement was immense. The Church had confronted the intellectual and social changes of the nineteenth century: it had absorbed the Oxford converts and the massive immigration of the Irish into the urban industrial centres. The strains placed upon the clergy and nuns in imparting and maintaining basic conceptions of the faith among the legions of poor, barely educated and unenfranchised faithful was staggering. Although there were difficulties and failings, the Church had maintained some institutional hold over more people than might reasonably have been anticipated, and with greater success than most other Christian bodies. Like most Victorian institutions, however, it failed to develop a mobile mission to that fluid element of the population: the navy. In his tramping work he epitomised those rootless, revolutionary elements which deeply disturbed the bourgeoisie, settled and comfortable, leading a highly moral life within a strictly regulated family. Into such a formal organised structured response to Christian morality the navy did not fit. He was a Christ-like figure in many ways.

Patrick Macgill, poet, novelist and navy, was born in Glenties, Donegal, on 26 December 1889, the first of a family of ten children. After his schooling, he worked in the Lagan Valley before he migrated to Scotland in 1905. Working on the potato-picking gangs, he remained in Scotland after the season and subsequently worked on farms and the railway. Both jobs were hard and demanding but nowhere near as strenuous as his job on the Kinlochleven dam for the

local aluminium works. On his return to Glasgow, he worked on the railway, became involved in the local socialist movement and started to publish his writings. His *Gleanings from a Navy's Scrapbook* (1910) attracted favourable critical reviews. Soon he was invited to London to work for the *Daily Express* and as a translator for Canon Dalton of Windsor, the father of Hugh Dalton, the later Labour chancellor. During that time he managed to spend some time in Ireland and in Glasgow while writing several works: *Songs of a Navy* (1911); *Songs of the Dead End* (1912); *Children of the Dead End* (1914) and *The Rat Pit* (1915). In that year, after volunteering for the army, he was wounded at Loos on the western front and returned to London. After writing some books about the war, he later produced *Moleskin Joe* (1923), a study of a character who had appeared in his earlier novels. Other novels followed, about Donegal, life before he went to settle in America in 1930. His wife, Margaret Gibbons, great-niece of Cardinal Gibbons of Baltimore, was also a popular novelist. They had married in the Catholic Church at Hampstead Hill in November 1915, where the bride was given away by C.E. Maurice, the son of F.D. Maurice, the great Christian Socialist. After spending some time in Hollywood, the couple went to live in Florida. But multiple sclerosis and fading popularity meant great poverty. He died in 1962.

Macgill's work has an uneven quality but the navy stories and poems have great power. They follow in the tradition of the Donegal writers, Michael MacGowan (*The Hard Road to Klondike*, 1962), and Patrick Gallagher, 'Paddy the Cope' (*My Story*, 1982), in recounting the author's hard life in the capitalist market place. Macgill also follows in the tradition of Robert Service and his *The Shooting of Dan McGrew*. The navy novels achieved popularity as labour was beginning to organise effectively in trades unions and through the infant Labour Party. They reinforced that confident social democratic tradition; as Moleskin Joe expressed it: 'There's a good time acoming though we may not live to see it'. That evolutionary optimism encouraged dreams of the inevitable triumph of justice and love. It was a progressive liberalism that encouraged hope amid the most depressing conditions, where the possibility of success was very remote. The dream was as necessary to the navy as it was to Martin Luther King in later days.

The poor of Donegal had constantly migrated to Scotland throughout the nineteenth century. Initially they came to work as seasonal agricultural workers and then gradually many remained in the slums of Glasgow and the industrial belt of central Scotland. They and their children were to form the basis of the Church in the west of Scotland. Unlike in England, Catholicism had no aristocratic base to build upon in Scotland's industrial centres. The aristocratic influence had been in the north east, the south west and in the remote islands.

Catholicism had to start afresh. It was an outsider. So too was the navy.

The canal, railway and heavy construction work relied heavily upon Irish labour. By the late nineteenth century the practice of parish missions, Catholic revivalism, had permeated Irish and Scottish expressions of the faith. In a fluid urban industrial society the priest was unable to exercise his influence in the traditional sense. New techniques of persuasion, emotional rapport and community building had to evolve. Confronted by a bigoted host society, the Church, having little manpower or resources, had to resort to methods of reaching those parts the clergy could no longer reach so easily. Parish life revolved around processions, outings, soirées and the like. Having primary schools and excellent secondary schools run by the Marists and Jesuits, the Church by 1900 had begun to lay the foundations for an educated laity in the west of Scotland. The sense of community cohesion sustained by a sense of sin was well established; eternal damnation *before God and social damnation in the neighbourhood* by the priest were twin forces. Individual and social conscience combined to produce the generation of 'The Hound of Heaven' (1890):

For, though I knew His love who followed
Yet was I sore dread

Lest having Him, I must have naught else besides.

Without surrendering Catholic identity, Irish and Glasgow Catholics adopted many attitudes of the dominant or host community. Endorsing sobriety, industry and thrift, they became somewhat more socially mobile, if not within the west of Scotland, then in a distant land of opportunity. In either case they became distant from other less adaptable, less successful or more independent-minded poor Catholics. Under the leadership of the aristocratic English archbishop of Glasgow, Charles Eyre, whose family owned considerable estates in Ireland, Catholicism itself acquired respectability. A man of learning and impeccable family background, Eyre was able to overcome the more obvious bigotry. With his social concern for temperance and the protection of children, he established limits of reform within a clearly defined area. His coadjutor and later successor, Archbishop Maguire, was to build on these foundations. Some laymen would press the logical Christian way to socialism.

Catholicism in Glasgow was a lively faith. The social Catholic ideas from the continent had some influence. They had been imported through the influence of several Belgian and Dutch priests. They laboured for many years in the Second City of the Empire, then at the height of its success, intellectual renown and municipal wisdom. The home of a flourishing heavy industry, the university of Lord Bryce, Lord Kelvin and John Buchan and a model improving municipality, Glasgow was a vibrant city. With fresh architecture by Charles Rennie

Mackintosh and a growing socialist movement, it was a questioning city.

Witin the Irish Catholic community in Glasgow there was a diversity of opinion. Irish nationalism seems to have been optimistically savoured rather than thought through. It shared the evolutionary optimism that underpinned Catholicism and socialism: its dreamlike quality was reassuring in adversity. Its early fulfilment was not expected. Although in theory dynamic, these faiths were essentially guarantees of stability. They gave identity and trust in the long term. To have eliminated religious bigotry, achieved national independence or the destruction of capitalism would have left the believers somewhat confused. The Irish nation, the Church and socialism had a providential mission to the world: they were to spread the ideal of Christian justice and peace. The navvy was the outsider, the marginal personal who embodied something of the spirit of the Gospel: he was the alternative to the existing order, the existing government, the existing property relationship. Like the Chosen People, the navvies were a homeless wandering people, belonging to no place. They were like the earlier Romantic figures of the Wandering Jew, the bandit and the noble savage. Little burdened by their material possessions, they retained an inchoate sense of personal value. They were a sign and a challenge.

These features dominate Macgill's writing in the early years. The intense emotional concern for individual worth in the most trying circumstances is a constant feature. The problem of human dignity, of the ability to make moral choices and to maintain a belief in God confronts the reader. The Christian man has

To brighten with word and action the lot of the little ones,
For the sins of our age hang heavy on defiler and defiled,
They fall on the bootless bairn and crush the helpless child.

(‘The Bootless Bairn’ in *Songs of the Dead End*.)

We read of the annihilation of the individual faced with ‘the monstrous futility of existence’ (1915 : 208) and the hardworking Nora Ryan suffering ‘the agony of a soul dwarfed by the immensity of the infinite’. (1915 : 33). A labourer finds himself unable to weep at the tenth death among his twelve children: ‘too much sentiment is foreign to the hardened sensibilities of the poor’ (1915 : 66—7). The wife finds herself preoccupied with the loss of her husband’s boat, his income—oh, and, ultimately, his death by drowning. The daughter finds herself overwhelmed by such a death in the impossible struggle for existence: ‘She went down on her knees by the bedside but could not pray. God was cruel; He had no mercy. She sobbed no longer, but with wide, tearless eye she gazed at the face of her father’ (1915 : 79). The railway worker is mangled to death and the random way of death emphasises the ‘godlessness’ of capitalism. (‘Run Down’ in *Songs of the Dead End*.) As the old Irish patriot, John Mitchell had observed sixty years

earlier, the highest aspirations are 'reduced to a mere craving for food'. Or, as James Connolly said, 'the great appear great because we are on our knees: let us rise'. The ordinary person in Macgill's tales is a victim to whom things are done, who suffers hardship and grief in almost mindless resignation. Even their education is something forced upon them rather than something promoting their self-expression. The teacher, ineffective and brutal, stressed discipline and rote rather than stimulated the imagination. Dull repetition of facts remote from the Donegal experience further deadened the soul. In turn that led the pupil to attack the intimidating teacher: violence begot violence (1914 : 15-17; 1915 : 54-9). Even the faith was communicated in a dead way: the life of the gospel was murdered:

Mere parrots, they could reel off the Three Theological Virtues, the Seven Deadly Sins, The Nine Ways in Which One Could Be Guilty Of Another Person's Sin, in a high-pitched sing-song voice. The girls at the school preferred to answer their Catechism in unison, the whole class swaying from side to side as they chanted. Now and again when stopped in their swing they would forget every word of the answer and find themselves in a fix similar to that of dancers in a six-hand reel when the fiddle strings break (1918 : 21-2).

As Macgill saw, 'in the dead end of their labours they forget your code of morals'. Life was rough and ready in such circumstances: 'Soft words may win a woman's love or soothe a maiden's fears but many hungry stomachs heed them not—the belly hasn't ears'. The respectable who had helped to create—and profited from—the society which allowed such hardship, condemned the victims they themselves created.

The authentic experience was constantly stifled among the poor. The priest, the employer and other 'do-gooders' convinced themselves they knew best what was in the best interests of the poor without even attempting to listen to or understand the poor themselves. In Macgill's novels the failure to develop personal relationships from the generous creative potential of Irish men and women is marked. Relationships invariably appear as a form of possession. In large measure, he attributes these attitudes to the peasant tradition, the desperate necessity of securing some property. That acquisitive instinct found full expression in both Church and entrepreneur. The Irish Church, and the Church in Scotland to a degree, were preoccupied with building up organisational and material structures. On both sides of the Irish Sea in the period from 1880 to the First World War, the Church consolidated her position: churches, convents, orphanages, asylums and so forth mushroomed. Although Catholics might be underrepresented among the middle and upper classes of society they were not so impoverished that they could not support a massive Church investment in such programmes.

According to some recent historians, the traditional puritanical

elements of Irish Catholicism were reinforced by several developments. The growing numbers of clergy proportionate to the population made the Church more 'clerical' in character. Furthermore, these priests were increasingly drawn from peasant stock which in the aftermath of the famine had married later and seen marriage more as an economic encounter than as a vocation. Educated in a very strict manner without newspapers or deeper cultural pursuits, they tended to develop a view of women as a deadly peril and the difficulty of temporal life (See K.H. Connell, *op. cit.* Chapter 4). That aversion to marriage was communicated to their faithful in various ways, as Macgill's novels show. 'The mortal sin of love' was a frequent expression in *The Rat Pit*. The primacy of economic factors and the necessity of acquiring money gave added impetus to the temperance crusade in the drive for respectability. It also enabled the Catholic community to save sufficient resources to aid the expansion programme. Everywhere churches were built in 'bad taste in the Italian or 'Munchois' style' (L. Paul-Dubois, *Contemporary Ireland*, London 1908, 477). Other critics were astonished at 'the excessive and extravagant church building in the heart and at the expense of the poor ... a recent notorious example of misdirected zeal'. (Horace Plunkett, *Ireland in the New Century*, London 1904, 107). A certain economic need, a form of spirituality and the ecclesiastical requirements of the 'new' clergy produced a 'quasi-monasticism' (H. Plunkett, 115). The net result was a vigorous emphasis upon rules and regulations to the detriment of an imaginative pastoral concern. An authoritarian Church glorying in the Irish monastic contribution to European civilization could hardly be otherwise (Cf. F.S.L. Lyons, 11—12: L. Paul-Dubois, 494). The emigrants went forth ill-prepared to encounter the urban industrial world.

Sent forth without any values essentially his own, the emigrant navy claimed:

To the wealth of Mother Nature we are heirs,
The skies of opal, amber, sapphire hue,
The moorland and the meadows, the sunshine and the shadows,
We love them—for we've nothing else to do!
The eager hands will never lure us back,
The plaintive eyes can never draw us home,
With heaven bending o'er us and the white road before us,
Sure the world is ours to revel in and roam.

(*'The Song of the Tramp' from Songs of the Dead End*).

Macgill, schooled in hardship and in the competitive world of Glasgow, recounted these views. Influenced by contemporary progressive thought and socialist friends in Glasgow, he presented a moving story to his Catholic audience. He was an outsider himself, having left home and then taken up a journalistic career, both of which were immediately suspect at home as essentially 'Protestant'. Like his character Doalty

Gallagher in *Glenmornan*, he was considered dangerous and attacked from the pulpit. Similar to the revelations of ‘muckraking’ journalists and reformers, Macgill’s revelations went further in that he was the authentic voice of the navy. Unlike Stephen Graham travelling steerage with poor emigrants to America or Upton Sinclair briefly sharing the horrors of *The Jungle* in Chicago, he knew the reality from life-long experience. His stories were all the more convincing.

The Ireland Macgill left behind had been beset with the problem of property. The land question involved the principle of private property: the Tenant League of the 1850s, the Land League and Henry George brought the issue to the fore. The success of Henry George in the west of Scotland laid the foundations for socialist success. There the Social Democratic Federation from 1884, the mercurial Cunningham Grahame and the municipal socialists questioned why there should be an affluent few and poor masses. Macgill was drawn into this ferment: ‘I thought I had stepped into a camp of intellectuals ... I could not help thinking that their mode of speech was not the best for recruiting socialists. I suppose I must have been a socialist always and I did not require much conversion’. His description again highlights the distance people put between themselves and reality. His own commitment was emotional rather than intellectual, a cultural heritage of the land against the crass materialism of the city:

You learn to like it—for you must..

The barter for the vital crust.

(‘A Navy’s Philosophy’ in *Songs of the Dead End*).

In Glasgow, among some 300,000 Catholics, the navy might find some solace. But within the community there was also a strong dry, puritanical streak opposed to the ‘wet’ publican interests. In the aftermath of the fall of Parnell and the ineffective Irish nationalist movement, a sense of disenchantment set in. High hopes were again crushed. Extreme elements emerged in Sinn Fein and the romantic Gaelic League, but in Glasgow the men of violence had been crushed in 1868–69 and in 1882: they had little local support. An intellectual or emotional or spiritual revolution was needed.

In Macgill’s novels, the priest appears somewhat remote and respectable, preoccupied in Ireland with buildings and money and in Scotland knowing the rules but failing to understand people. Such priests, as already suggested, were a natural result of the Romanisation of the clergy and the attempt to take the priests out of active politics. God did not seem to be in Derry nor in the west of Scotland:

A bell tolled; Micky’s Jim turned round and looked at Norah, who immediately blessed herself and commenced to say the Angelus.

‘That’s not the bell above the chapel of Greenanore, that’s the town clock’, laughed one of the women.

'There's no God in this town', said Micky's Jim.

(1915 : 108—9)

The Church and its clergy were sending people forth into the world unprepared for and insensitive to the dreadful conditions they would encounter in urban life—this was one of Macgill's constant accusations. The priests seemed obsessed with maintaining the economic status quo:

You should hear the priest make a sermon on the torments that await men who are damned because they have not paid debts due to the gombeen man. Good God! If I had my way with priests like those I'd hang everyman of them from the crosses of their own altars.

(1918 : 58)

Or again we see in these novels the priest demanding his money at most insensitive times: 'a peasant born extortionist', the priest could make a corpse blush in his coffin if the offerings were small (1918 : 130). Even in apparent prayer or services, the priest was thinking solely in cash terms: telling his rosary beads, he was 'perhaps counting by their aid the number of sovereigns required for the construction of his mansion'. (1915 : 30). Fr. Devaney, with an expensive taste for wine and cigars remembered that funeral was for a parishioner who owed him £2 which he was unlikely to secure. He then demanded offerings on the coffin and soon received £10.17 on the lid before he urged a speedy internment for the departed (1915 : 91—2). He was the priest who had paid £250 pounds for a bathroom and toilet in his Glenties house. He was allegedly 'a covetous and crafty man holding unlimited control over his flock ... the poor were his legitimate prey' (1918 : 264). In the same village the priest sustained Farley McKeown, the oppressive entrepreneur. Both had similar interests and attitudes: both benefiting from the existing relationship.

The Scottish Presbyterian ministers were even worse, being totally insensitive to suffering and death and identified with the unfeeling legal system. When a child asks about the poor navvy on the ferry boat, the gentleman hides himself from searching questions by reading *The Christian Guide*. He gets short shrift:

Then I knew what a gentleman really was. He was the monster who grabbed the money from the people, who drove them out to the roadside, who took six ears of every seven ears of corn produced by the peasantry; the man who was hated by all the people, yet saluted on the highways by most of the people when they met him... (1915 : 30).

Authentic Christian life for Macgill was within the navvy's soul. Rather than doing things to the navvy, the priest, the law and the reformers should work alongside in dialogue with the poor, understanding and granting the validity of their views. Transformation might follow.

In some ways Macgill echoed the views of William Haywood, the American militant Industrial Workers of the World leader, who visited

would be glad to bespeak the girl's hand. They were all mad after her, and now that Breed (her mother) was dead, the lucky young man would have Sheila's farm to go into on the day of his marriage to the beautiful girl.

(1918 : 270. cf. K.H. Connell, op. cit. ch. 4).

Women were to suffer uncomplainingly, like the poor knitters left standing for hours in the wet cold street by the 'good Catholic' entrepreneur, Farley McKeown (1915 : 25). The male should be free to exploit his wife without any sense of personal consideration or understanding, fathering many, 'all unnecessary in a crowded district' (p. 67). Shows of affection were outside normal experience: they were repressed in the eyes of the beholder or in reality. Even affection of the simplest most natural kind between brother and sister seemed shocking (p.45). The repression of true relations between the sexes, the priest thrashing courting couples with his blackthorn stick, the thwarting of natural dreams of love and affection, could lead to emigration, illegitimacy and death in sordid surroundings: Norah, the naive loving young woman, debauched by a Scottish farmer's bank clerk son, is a symbol of Irish Catholic girlhood destroyed. She is destroyed not by 'a black Protesan' but by the Catholic culture which sent her ignorant into the world. Pregnant, she finds herself bought off by her lover: she heroically refuses his money. Even there only money matters: personal relations, real spiritual knowledge of true love, is sadly absent.

In Glenmornan children are looked upon as good investments. When they grow up they are supposed to give all money they earn to their parents and their parents take it as their due. (1918 :194)

No matter what the difficulties, the child grew to adulthood with that idea firmly in mind. Even abroad the emigrant child remained a slave of that notion. The pregnant Norah struggles to send money home whatever the suffering. Thrust into prostitution, she encounters her sailor brother in a Glasgow brothel: 'Why did she come to Scotland? Landlord, priest and that arch-scoundrel Farley McKeown, livin' on her earnings. I suppose she'll send home money even now, and some of it'll go to the priest to buy crucifixes and pictures of the Virgin, and some of it to the landlord to buy flounces for his wife, and some will go to Farley McKeown' (1915 : 273).

Everything was defined by cash, even personal relationships. By sustaining that social order the Church was guilty of betrayal: she lived off capitalism's immoral earnings. She had sold out to material trappings in florid churches, new institutions and the like. She had evaded the subversive force of love. In spite of the rhetoric of community, her children were essentially lonely, forsaken people:

But often I pray when the
Night is gloomy,

That God would send me
In all his mercy from
Heaven to me,
One loving friend.

(‘The Slum Child’)

The living reality of the faithful was lost amid the whoring after respectability (see S.J. Connolly, *op. cit.* 157—71 and— especially on the Catholic preoccupation with respectability—F.S. Lyons 96).

The travelling man lived for the day. He was essentially subversive of the capitalist way of life. When wandering in search of work, even the ploughman scorns him as lacking in decency: *he* does not have to go in search of work (1923 : 161). The navy was concerned with the spirit of love rather than the appearance, with the feeling rather than the strict rules, for even the appearance of care could be destructive. When the Glasgow authorities demolish slums to build model tenements, they merely force the poor out into worse conditions, even to die in the streets because they cannot afford to pay higher rent than for a slum. Rather than for first aid, a plaster for an unquiet conscience, Macgill is calling for drastic surgery.

Like his characters, he was a self-educated man. His experiences gave him insights into contemporary failings of church and state. He did not enunciate any programme but rather, as a good progressive reporter, he told the story of how it was and left the reader to act. The message was clear. The Church should be concerned with people rather than appearances; with the poor rather than with property; with hope rather than restrictions. The state should be concerned with real solutions rather than cosmetic operations. It should liberate the human soul rather than imprison it. It should create numerous opportunities for greater self-fulfillment rather than massive bureaucracies which merely exacerbate the problem. Macgill may have been an emotionally committed Christian socialist but he was not a doctrinaire one. It was all very well for municipal reformers to provide tramcars, libraries, public utilities and the like; unfortunately the real poor had not the pennies to travel by tram to take up the improved opportunities. As American blacks found out in the sixties, the right to do something was useless if you did not have the economic power to put that desire into effect. The Church in particular was guilty of inhibiting new imaginative initiatives in her obsession with social conformity, in her obsession with the threat of socialism, in her obsession with appearance and image rather than substance. Nowhere was that more obvious than in the clerical opposition to the evacuation of starving Dublin slum children to England during the industrial disputes on the eve of the First World War. Significantly, Macgill was in Scotland where, in 1911, Archbishop Maguire and the socialist layman John Wheatley in their different ways seemed more aware of real social justice. They were

exceptional.

Political change and manoeuvres seemed remote from Macgill's characters. With their mobile life style, they were unlikely to be on the electoral register at that time and so unlikely to have any political voice. Too few seemed to have the support of their fellow sufferers: they had accepted the individualism of the prevailing ethos. They were divided by culture and religion from their natural friends and allies, the British Protestant workers. Maybe Catholics, by identifying with the dominant forces in contemporary society, were compensating for their own failure: a successful, ostentatious church establishment was at least a form of group success. To men like Jim Larkin, the common crusade against social injustice was everything. To other emotionally committed men other loyalties, sectarian and nationalist, had greater appeal. In Macgill's Scotland a greater sense of social solidarity seemed abroad among the trade unionists. But even they seemed somewhat esoteric; 'It is only God and the poor who help the poor' (1915 : 132). A renewal of the Church, a profound re-education of the faithful in the practical implications of the gospel, was a necessary prelude to a more equitable social order. A changed heart and an openness to all groups and classes would transform the existing structures of the Church into a dynamic living organism. Rather than a bureaucratic organisation dealing in abstract principles, the Church would be a human witness of Christ in the world. Unlike the repressive host in Derry trying to suppress dancing, the joy of God, it would recognise the fullness of that creative expression: 'I don't want your damned dancin', I can't stand it. God have mercy on me! Sure I'm wantin' to foot it meself'. Humanity was sacrificed on the altar of cash. Christ had to come again.

Books by Patrick MacGill:

1910 : *Gleanings from a Navvy's Scrap Book*

1911 : *Songs of a Navvy*

1912 : *Songs of the Dead End*

1914 : *Children of the Dead End*

1915 : *The Rat Pit*

1918 : *Glenmornan*

1923 : *Moleskin Joe*

There is no life of Macgill yet published. I have had the use of an unpublished manuscript by Brother Clare (James Handley). Joe Mulholland of R.T.E., Dublin, has been working on a life for many years. Caliban Books of London are reprinting Macgill's works.

Background:

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