

THE GRAPES ARE
WORTH IT!



BRENDAN & ANGELA MC CAULEY

MCCAULEY BOOKS

India - One Act of Kindness
Better Than Weapons of War
A Man of Ethiopia
Staying Alive!
The Grapes Are Worth It!

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Remember me not as
An old praying woman
With a well worn Bible
And snowy white hair
But as an eager young girl who
Married a handsome boy and
Had fourteen beautiful children
And that our life in Christ
Made marvellous memories
Far too wonderful to forget!

Angela McCauley

And they overcame him (Satan)
by the blood of the Lamb and
by the word of their testimony, and
they did not love their lives to the death.

Revelation 12:11

I will open my mouth with a parable;
I will utter hidden things, things from of old
things we have heard and known,
things our ancestors have told us.
We will not hide them from their descendants;
we will tell the next generation
the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord,
his power, and the wonders he has done . .
so the next generation would know them,
even the children yet to be born,
and they in turn would tell their children.
Then they would put their trust in God
and would not forget his deeds
but would keep his command.

Psalms 78:1-4, 6-7

DOUBLE, DOUBLE, TOIL AND
TROUBLE



Brendan and I and our two children travelled from Lurgan to Coleraine in August 1975 in search of our Promised Land. Our mouths were filled with laughter and our tongues with shouts of joy. A warm wind played at our backs. Brendan was going to study English at The New University of Ulster from which I'd graduated with an honours degree in Environmental Science.

Four years earlier I had the rare distinction of being one of the first students at The New University of Ulster to give birth to a live baby. I'd refused an abortion. I wouldn't listen when they told me a child would interfere with my future career.

They said it was all about choices.

I said, Abortion is not about choices. Abortion is about escaping the consequences of choices by stealing every possible choice from another human being.

Yet by the middle of 1976 I was all out of choices. Northern Ireland was in trouble. Coleraine was in trouble. A few doors down from our home in Abbey Street our local pub was in trouble and worst of all my marriage was in trouble. Double, double, toil and trouble.

Two hundred and sixty people had been killed in 1975 in our low level war called *The Troubles*. This conflict would last for thirty years and kill thousands of innocent people. Children yet unborn would pay the price.

The sectarian killings of 1975 were fairly equal, 125 Catholics and 123 Protestants. In 1976 there were 154 Catholics and 118 Protestants. In our town of Coleraine in 1975 four Protestant UVF Volunteers were killed when their bomb exploded prematurely. No one was hurt when another UVF bomb exploded in our local pub *The Oak Tavern* owned by our Catholic friend Harry McCourt.

Coleraine was fairly safe from *The Troubles* but two years earlier on a quiet June afternoon an IRA car bomb murdered six innocent Protestants who were peacefully shopping in Railway Street.

Love and unity lay slain in our streets.

My own troubles also concerned love and unity. I was twenty-five and Brendan twenty-six. Our blonde curly haired daughter Shann was five and dark haired young Brendan was three.

I'd known my husband for eight years. I first spotted him in Newcastle, Co. Down, one warm Wednesday evening in July 1968. He was sitting in a corner in flared jeans and an ex-army jacket reading a copy of Che Guevara's *Reminiscences of the Cuban Revolutionary War*. I wondered how he'd gotten into a traditional Catholic dancehall where suits and ties were the order of the day. His ex-army jacket had a road kill fox skin stitched into the collar that ran over his shoulders like a mantle.

He looked the sort of boy my mother had warned me about.

He walked up to me and the oxygen failed.

He said, Would you like to dance?

I said, Can you jive?

He glanced at my miniskirt.

He said, Can a fish swim?

The showband played the Beatles brand new song *All You Need Is Love* and he wrapped his arms around me and smooched.

I was working in a restaurant for the summer before returning to grammar school for my final year. I'd be the first in my family of ten children to attend university. My four older sisters were teachers and nurses, my older brother a farmer.

In Northern Ireland, large Catholic families were frowned upon. Less than a year after Brendan and I met, our part of Ireland would experience a revival; a revival of an eight hundred year old ethnic war. Shortly before this, Captain Terence O'Neill, our Protestant Prime Minister defined how he viewed the situation. Quoted in *The Belfast Telegraph*, on May 10th 1969 he said,

It is frightfully hard to explain to Protestants that if you give Roman Catholics a good job and a good house then they will live like Protestants because they will see neighbours with cars and television sets; they will refuse to have eighteen children. But if a Roman Catholic is jobless, and lives in the most ghastly hovel, he will rear eighteen children on National Assistance. If you treat Roman Catholics with due consideration and kindness, they will live like Protestants in spite of the authoritative nature of their Church.

In the same year Ian Paisley the Protestant firebrand preacher who'd later become Northern Ireland's First Minister, leader of the largest Unionist party and a life peer, exhibited a similar view when he publicly declared, Catholics breed like rabbits and multiply like vermin.

As a youngster I'd two prolonged bouts of rheumatic fever that left me with a weakened heart. The specialist, Dr Pantridge, said because of this I should only ever have one child so Captain Terence and Preacher Paisley didn't have to worry about me. But God had other plans.

Brendan walked me back to my accommodation. He was a good dancer and very funny. He recited a poem about a man

who made a boat to sail away and it sank. We cuddled and looked at the stars where the Mountains of Mourne sweep down to the sea. Brendan said there were billions of planets and galaxies out there, perhaps other life forms. He said there was plenty to see if we only knew how to look. He then gazed at me and gave me a long lingering kiss and turned on his heels and walked out of my life forever or so he thought. God had other plans.

YOUNG, GIFTED AND PREGNANT!



*M*y breasts were swollen and tender, my period overdue. I knew I was pregnant. Brendan would later say, Young, gifted and pregnant. I'd known him for almost three years. We were in love without intimacy for a couple of years but one very warm night the rushing river burst its fragile banks and swept us both away! Afterwards we were like a couple of heat seeking missiles.

There has always been a great grace over our love life. No matter how awful things were in our daily situation when we hit the bed all our problems disappeared. Like in *Over The Rainbow*, Where trouble melts like lemon drops, High above the chimney tops, That's where you'll find me.

In the book of Job, Satan was given limited permission to afflict Job's body but not to take Job's life. With us it seemed Satan was permitted to stir up all sorts of strife in our daily lives but he was never allowed to afflict our love life. We could go to bed fighting and waken up pregnant.

In early May of 1971 I was nineteen, in my second year of a three-year university course and I was pregnant. That what was

done in darkness would soon be revealed in the bright light of day. I didn't relish telling my parents. I was the first in our family to attend university and now I'd be the first to become pregnant outside of marriage. Yet I felt loved and secure in my relationship with Brendan. We had no money and little prospects and we lived in a time of war, but we loved each other.

Throughout Northern Ireland rioting and murder was the order of the day. In February of 1971 the first British soldier was killed and in March thousands of Protestant shipyard workers marched through Belfast demanding the introduction of internment without trial for suspected Catholic IRA members.

Now in May 1971 I was sitting in the window area of a lonely Portstewart pub watching large Atlantic waves exhausting themselves on ancient craggy rocks. I was waiting for Brendan who'd soon arrive on a bus from Coleraine on the last leg of his journey from Lurgan. I was sipping tea and shaping little hearts out of spilt sugar on my bar room table.

My thoughts travelled back to the first time I'd met Brendan. When he walked out of my life after the dance I had no way of contacting him. In fact he'd told me a lie. He'd said his name was Brendan Smith. He'd said this as a joke, Smith being the most common surname in England, Australia and America. Native Americans used to take the name Smith to appear more Anglicised and slave owners gave the name Smith to African slaves. Brendan's humour was entirely lost on me. I just took him at face value.

That next day was my morning off from the restaurant. I'd awakened early and thought about Brendan's soft voice and black curly hair. After breakfast I walked to the promenade in my mini skirt and blouse to watch the crowds and enjoy the sunshine. I'd brought my A Level Biology textbook with me. After an hour I began to feel cold when a chilly wind came off

the sea. I was in two minds as to what to do but I decided to wait another while to enjoy the sunshine. Twenty minutes later Brendan came marching along in his ex-army jacket. I ran over to him smiling. He was happy to see me. We sat on the sea wall and chatted.

Brendan said, What are you reading?

I showed him my textbook.

He flipped through the pages until he came to the chapter on reproduction. He pulled out his Che Guevara paperback and waved the two books.

He said, I'm studying revolution and you're studying reproduction.

I didn't know what to say.

Then he said, Angela you look cold.

He took off his jacket and placed it around my shoulders. It was nice and warm. I could smell the animal skin.

He said, Want to walk back to the car to see what my friend has decided? We were thinking of returning to Lurgan soon. He's parked outside Joyland Amusements.

As we strolled Brendan took my hand. At Joyland Amusements, Brendan's friend was in the driver's seat and two girls with beehive hairstyles were in the back seat. There was an awkward silence. Brendan let go of my hand and leaned in and spoke to his friend.

Then he turned to me and whispered, I much prefer your lovely long hair and your stunning smile.

He opened the car's back door and said louder, Angela, would you like to come for a walk with me in Tollymore Forest Park?

I hopped in beside the girls who glared at the fox skin and one other with wide-open eyes. We drove to Tollymore Forest Park where Brendan arranged to meet his friend later in the car park.

We had a wonderful afternoon throwing stones into the

Shimna River and watching flocks of little brown birds playing hide and seek in the trees. Later we drove back to Newcastle and let the beehive girls off at the bus station. I was then dropped off at the restaurant.

Brendan opened the car door for me, looked into my eyes and gave me another long lingering kiss. Then he drove off into the sunset. Too late I realised I'd again forgotten to ask him for his address. There was no easy access between Lurgan and Dunmore where I lived outside of Ballynahinch. No trains, no buses, no chance of bumping into one another.

A week or so before my summer job ended a waitress from the café side of our restaurant came and said, Angela there's a good looking boy on my side asking for you.

It was Brendan drinking coffee and smoking a cigarette.

He said, What about you Angela? When does your shift finish?

My shift didn't end until 8pm but I knew a waitress who'd cover for me.

I said, I'm ready when you are.

He said, Any chance of a walk on the beach?

Why not? I said. I reached into my pocket and took out my order book. May I have your address please?

Why not?

After he'd given me his address I wrote out my address on an order form and gave it to him. I included my telephone number although Brendan's widowed mother didn't have a telephone.

We walked along the beach and skimmed stones. We started playing a game that went like, How many boyfriends or girlfriends will you have? I skimmed two and Brendan's stone skimmed seven or eight. The next question was, How many A-Levels will you get. I skimmed three and Brendan's stone dunked. I laughed. He frowned.

Then we played, How many children will we each have. I

skimmed one and he skimmed over a dozen. I can still see those rapid little ripples at the end. Now it was Brendan's turn to laugh but he didn't. He noticed my expression.

He said, What's wrong Angela? It's only a game.

I told him about how I had rheumatic fever when young and how the heart specialist said I should only ever have one child.

Brendan said, Don't worry Angela. It'll be a wonderful person if it turns out anything like you. Anyway, the media says there are too many people in the world already and soon we won't be able to feed everyone on the planet. Though when I look at all the empty land between here and Lurgan it's hard to believe that.

We McCauleys ran out of land in the sixteenth century when Cromwell and his roundheads came and stole it. Once the population of Ireland halved from eight million to four million because of what the English called The Famine during the 1800s. It wasn't a famine. It was a starvation. Only the potato crop failed. Did you know the Choctaw Indians sent \$170 to help the Irish during the famine? They'd also been forced off their lands and starved on their own *Trail of Tears*.

I didn't like Brendan's political talk. I've always hated history. At home Daddy never talked about politics. Brendan on the other hand had a childhood friend called Martin Dummigan whose mother was a trade unionist and a socialist. Brendan and Martin discussed issues like this all the time. They were both into Civil Rights and spoke about the great injustices against Native Americans, the untouchables in India, black people in South Africa and women and children all over the world.

Politics was a real turn off for me, so I kept quiet.

Brendan noticed. He said, What's the matter?

I said, I don't like it when you talk like that. It seems you hate the English and Protestants.

He said, Have you ever watched cowboy films on television?

I said, What's that got to do with anything?

He said, Angela I bet you cheer for the good cowboys in the white hats and boo for the bad cowboys in the black hats. I bet you also cheer for the good cowboys and boo at the bad Indians when they attack the poor cowboys and their families in the stagecoaches.

Don't you know it was the cowboys who were the villains? They killed, murdered, raped and tried to exterminate over 500 different nations of Native Americans. That American holocaust was even worse than Hitler's massacre of six million Jews.

I said, Are you calling me stupid? It's not my fault. Don't dare talk to me like that.

My legs started to shake and my face flushed. I walked off in a huff. I expected Brendan to follow and apologise but he never did, and I wouldn't look back.

Months later a letter was lying on the kitchen table when I arrived home from school. I didn't recognise the writing but saw it was posted in Lurgan. My rheumatic heart skipped a beat. Brendan was even funnier in writing. He also wrote some stream of consciousness stuff I couldn't understand, and he included a little round badge that said *God Loves Me!*

I started wearing that badge on my school uniform. A few weeks later during a religious class Sister Jarleth read from Galatians 2:20, about how God came on earth to save us because He loved us. She said, Each one of us may rightly say the Son of God loved me.

When Sister Jarleth said this some of the girls looked over at me and smiled.

I wrote back to Brendan and thanked him and drew a sketch of a broken heart. Then one afternoon after school in Ballynahinch as I awaited my bus for home Brendan appeared and gave me a box of Milk Tray chocolates – *The Lady Loves Milk Tray*.

I happily missed the bus and we wandered to nearby

Montalto Estate where we fed the orange and strawberry chocolates to a donkey. Brendan said a donkey was the only animal with a cross on its back. He claimed this was because Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey.

He then talked about the Burntollet Bridge incident of a few weeks earlier in which a peaceful People's Democracy March comprised mostly of students was attacked by an Ulster loyalist crowd of three hundred including one hundred off duty members of the Ulster Special Constabulary police force.

This ambush was filmed and shown on television and the violent images destroyed the credibility of the mainly Protestant RUC police force. One marching student who later became Queen's University academic Professor Lord Bew described it as the spark that lit the prairie fire.

I didn't argue with Brendan when he talked about Burntollet. I too thought it was a shameful incident.

My heart was stirred again after meeting Brendan. I loved his energy and humour. We wrote the odd letter over the ensuing months but as we had no way of meeting up we soon fell out of touch again.

In August of 1969 I was back working in the Newcastle restaurant. I'd just returned from a three day prayer and fasting pilgrimage at the *Sanctuary of St Patrick* on Lough Derg Island in Donegal.

Millions of Irish Pilgrims have taken this retreat for over a thousand years. I was praying about my exam results and which university I should attend. I'd applied for Clinical Optometry in England or Environmental Studies in Northern Ireland. On the bus back to Newcastle I met a boy I'd dated once before. We arranged to meet later after my evening shift.

I was only twenty minutes back into the restaurant when Brendan breezed in and ordered a well-done T Bone steak. His talk was all about the recent sectarian violence. A few weeks earlier the International Commission of Jurists published a crit-

ical report on the British Government's policy in Northern Ireland.

This report condemned the Northern Ireland Government for police brutality, religious discrimination against Catholics and gerrymandering in politics. Brendan said things were going to get a lot worse before they got better.

I was delighted seeing him again. My other date was quickly forgotten. I mentioned I'd been to Lough Derg.

Brendan said, The Monaghan poet Patrick Kavanagh wrote a poem about Lough Derg. He also wrote a poem called *The Goat of Slieve Donard* about one of the local Mourne Mountains.

He looked at me and said, There are a couple of stanzas from Kavanagh's *A Christmas Childhood* that might suit you. He put down his knife and fork and recited,

My father played the melodeon
Outside at our gate;
There were stars in the morning east
And they danced to his music.
My father played the melodeon,
My mother milked the cows,
And I had a prayer like a white rose pinned
On the Virgin Mary's blouse.¹

I loved the way Brendan knew poems. I was always happiest when we were talking about normal things instead of politics and injustice.

My Lough Derg prayers must have been heard for I passed my exams with flying colours and was accepted into the new Environmental Science course in Coleraine. Shortly after I started university I wrote to Brendan and invited him to come up and see me sometime. I'd imagined university might be a place where I'd find a nice boy to marry, perhaps a good

Catholic with a farm of land. Instead I seemed to meet a lot of teenagers drinking too much beer.

Brendan began to visit me. He was working in the Goodyear Tyre and Rubber Factory in Lurgan and was making lots of money, which he threw around like it was going out of fashion. He held court and bought drinks and food for all my friends. He was like the elder brother many of us never had.

For the first time in my life I really felt loved and cherished. Brendan was always glad to see me. Always welcoming. From childhood I never sensed I was wanted. I always seemed to be on the outside looking in. I never felt special. I never had any close friends growing up.

One evening, when I was nine, after I'd been bed ridden with rheumatic fever, Daddy took me into town for the opening night of civic week. He bought me a 99 ice cream and we stood and watched colourful floats on lorries pass by. On the top of one float there was a little girl around my age dressed up in white like a princess. There was something sparkling in her hand. She looked so shinny and happy. I so wanted to be that girl. I'd often think of her over the years. When I was with Brendan I think I knew what that little girl felt like.

Because of my rheumatic fever I'd missed half a year's schooling. Daddy tried to help by moving me three miles away to a small country school with a better teacher. This meant I had to leave the children I knew and go amongst a whole bunch of new children from a different locality. It also meant I'd to walk three miles to and from school each day.

Mr Fitzpatrick, my new teacher favoured me. I loved his teaching and was soon top of the class. This didn't endear me to some of my fellow pupils. Worse was to come! In those days the use of the cane was a normal part of the school day usually produced for unruly boys

One day after school two boys crept back into the classroom

and stole Mr Fitzpatrick's cane and destroyed it. Next morning this misdeed was being whispered about everywhere.

After prayers there was an unusually long silence. Mr Fitzpatrick slowly looked from face to face. Eventually he asked what had happened to his cane.

Another long silence.

Then more requests for the culprits to own up.

Finally Mr Fitzpatrick said if no one was honest enough to tell him the truth we'd all be kept in after school for the rest of the week.

I feel this was unfair. I put up my hand and named the boys who were responsible. They were given two smacks each and later hailed as heroes by the rest of the school children while I was shunned and treated like a traitor to the cause.

A couple of days later Daddy asked me about this incident. Another farmer had mentioned it to him at the cattle mart. Our whole family was embarrassed over this matter. I felt confused. I thought I'd done the right thing in telling the truth.

During our religion class we were told to always be honest but now when I told the truth people didn't like it. Later when I realised the whole community knew about me informing on the boys I felt ashamed especially when going to Sunday Mass.

Yet this incident never stopped me from standing up for what I believed was right. Sometimes I'd accompany Daddy and Mammy on visits to relatives. Aunt Dora and her schoolteacher husband were always kind and welcoming. Dora's husband always shared a glass of one of his special single malt whiskies with Daddy. Aunt Margaret and Uncle Mick were also very friendly and always made a lovely meal with beautiful pastries afterwards.

There were other relatives we visited that I didn't like. The husband used to offer me the choice between the gift of a large brown penny or a small three penny piece. When I'd choose the

smaller coin he'd always ask why I wouldn't take the larger coin and he'd laugh at my embarrassment.

One time his wife made a smug comment that caused Mammy to blush. This prompted me to pipe up and tell the wife she was a hypocrite, kissing the altar rails at Mass each Sunday and not loving the people the rest of the week.

Mammy was mortified by my conduct. She said I was a very stubborn and bold girl. This was a refrain I'd often hear from her during my teenage years.

Brendan who'd been the head boy at his school tried to explain to me life wasn't always black and white. He said it could be nuanced and complicated. Sometimes when we argued Brendan would be open and flexible and listen to my strong opinions but when I kept on being stubborn and bold he'd sometimes reach a point where he'd become angry.

His childhood nickname had been Buster. He knew how to fight. His father died when Brendan was just sixteen months old. This meant Brendan had to stand on his own two feet in any of the local squabbles in the working class area where he lived in. This was both a strength and a weakness in Brendan's life.

My reverie was broken when Brendan opened the door of this lonely Portstewart pub and spotted me. I stopped drawing in the spilt sugar and embraced him for a long time. He ordered two hot whiskeys and sat opposite me. He looked at me and said, What's wrong Angela?

I said, I'm pregnant.

He glanced at the troubled ocean and stretched out his arms like he was searching for something. Then he reached across the table and took my hand. He looked into my eyes and smiled.

He said, Angela we've been giving ourselves to each other without a care in the world. Surfing the warm winds of love. Now it looks like the breeze has changed.

He took a gulp of hot whiskey. Then he lit a cigarette and sucked a long blast of carcinogenic pain relief.

He said, As Catholics it won't be easy to get a house or a decent job here in Northern Ireland. But that doesn't bother me. I don't care for men's systems of control whether Catholic or Protestant and I've no intention of becoming a willing slave in their economic schemes and I'm not leaving Ireland, but I am willing to do one thing.

He looked out at the turbulent sea and took another blast of pain relief.

He said, I'm willing to share my love and my life and all I have with you and our child. No matter what comes we'll face it together. We'll stand firm like those old rocks outside. I love you Angela and I love your big happy smile and I'll love this beautiful baby inside your womb.

He reached for my hand again.

He said, Angela if this baby has your good looks and my brains it'll be a wonderful child. But if on the other hand it has my looks and your brains it will be even better. Either way, we cannot be defeated and I know we'll never quit.

We decided to travel to my family home on Saturday 8th May 1971 to tell my parents whom Brendan had never met. He'd only been introduced to my brother Patsy and a few of my sisters.

Brendan and I met up in Belfast and took a bus to Ballynahinch. The cherry trees sparkling in the morning sun threw pink confetti as we passed Rosetta. We were huddled together in the back seat when the bus stopped at Carryduff and my sister Kathleen boarded.

Kathleen, a nurse, had been staying overnight with my married sister Maureen who lived nearby. Kathleen was on her way to our family home. She sat beside us and asked where we were going. She then gave me a look that said, Is there some-

thing wrong Angela? and then she said, Is there something wrong Angela?

I said, I'm pregnant!

Kathleen said, Jesus, Mary and Joseph!

Brendan said, Close enough!

We told Kathleen we were on our way to tell Mammy and Daddy. Kathleen said it might be easier if she'd break the news to them first. She suggested Brendan and I wait at a little bridge on the edge of Ballynahinch until Daddy arrived in his car. This would take at most an hour. It seemed like a good plan, so we agreed.

One hour passed, two hours passed, three hours passed. We grew hungry and thirsty in the warm sun. I couldn't imagine what was keeping Daddy.

Later we discovered Kathleen arrived home to find Daddy watching the FA Cup Final between Arsenal and Liverpool. Kathleen decided she'd wait until the game was over before she told him our news. The the game ended in a 0-0 draw and went into extra time. That's what caused the long wait.

When Daddy arrived, Brendan hopped into the front seat and I slipped into the back. Brendan told Daddy he was sorry to have to meet him under these circumstances. I don't remember much else about the conversation except at one point Daddy asked Brendan if he'd be able to provide for me in the manner I'd been accustomed to.

Brendan said, Not just at the moment!

It was arranged Brendan's mother and my parents should meet up and make arrangements for the wedding and Daddy would pay for the celebration. Afterwards Brendan hitched back to Lurgan and Daddy drove me home. On the way Daddy turned to me and said, I can understand what you see in Brendan. He's a good looking boy.

We were married in St Coleman's Catholic Church near my

home on Saturday morning 12th June 1971. A busload of Brendan's hard drinking Lurgan friends and a coachload of university friends joined our extended families and friends for our wedding meal and dance in *The Beechlawn House Hotel* near Belfast.

The thing I remember most about our wedding day were our vows. When I stood before my family and community and promised to be faithful to Brendan in good times and in bad times, in sickness and in health and to love and to honour him all the days of my life, I meant it from the bottom of my heart. I just didn't have any idea how difficult that vow was going to be.

CATHOLICS AND PROTESTANTS



*P*eople born in Northern Ireland were like Henry Ford's Model T car. You could have Henry's famous car in any colour as long as it was black. In Northern Ireland you could be whoever and whatever you wanted to be as long as you were Catholic or Protestant. You could be a devout Catholic, a staunch Protestant, a lapsed Catholic, a backslidden Protestant, a Catholic atheist or a Protestant atheist but you were born to be one or the other.

Many of our problems began in the 12th century when England invaded Ireland. The rest goes back to the time of Adam and Eve. The result in 1971 when Brendan and I were married meant Catholics and Protestants were living separate lives in separate communities in a deeply divided society.

In other parts of the world Catholics and Protestants might live quite happily together but not so in Northern Ireland. Here we were divided by where we lived, where we worked, what schools we went to, how we danced, what church we attended, how we celebrated life, what games we played, how we spoke, what music we listened to and how we prayed to God.

Even today over twenty years after the Good Friday Agree-

ment we're still living in polarised communities and the underlying tension between our Irish and British identities is still largely unresolved.

I was raised on a farm and had little contact with Protestants. Brendan on the other hand knew many Protestants. This was because his Catholic mother Mary lived her early life with her grandmother amongst Protestant neighbours in the countryside.

After Mary was widowed she moved with her three young children to Francis Street, Lurgan, on the advice of Protestant friends. They said it would be too risky trying to raise three Catholic boys in a rural Protestant area. Brendan was three, Patrick nine and John eleven when they flitted.

Mary and her sons often visited their Protestant friends in the countryside. Brendan hated the injustice and political gerrymandering in Northern Ireland that resulted in a Protestant parliament for a Protestant people but he loved and respected Protestant people as individuals and families.

He said, How could I hate lovely Mrs Best and her gentle son Russell? They were always so kind to my mother when we visited them. How could I dislike the caring Gilpin family and the long summer days we spent picnicking on their farm and playing with their big horse Jubilee? How could I not love Hannah Gilpin who dandled me on her knee when I was a child and photographed me in her graduation gown when I was a teenager? They were beautiful people though the system that ruled them and us was not.

As a teenager Brendan spent three years in Lurgan Technical College, one of only a handful of Catholics there. He said although many of the Protestant pupils were typical examples of their sectarian upbringing others were not. Some were just open and interesting teenagers trying to navigate Northern Ireland's ugly colonial legacy.

Internment without trial was a game changer. It was forced

upon Northern Ireland in August 1971 and lasted until December 1975. Internment camps were a frequent way British colonialism dealt with anti-colonial dissidents. But in 1971 it was a shocking psychological blow to the Catholic community. The fact an innocent person could be jailed and tortured for no reason other than suspicion by a partisan police force was unbelievable.

During this time 1,981 people were interned; 95% were Catholic and 5% Protestant. Due to mediocre military intelligence many of those interned had no links whatsoever with terrorism. Some of Brendan's innocent friends and neighbours were interned.

Brendan sometimes wondered why he was never interned. Then one day he realised we were married in June 1971 and shortly afterwards we moved to Coleraine for my last year at university. So two months later if they came during the night for Brendan in Lurgan he was sound asleep beside me in Coleraine. I dread to think what our lives would have been like had they wrongly jailed Brendan.

Internment was a political disaster. It led to mass protests that resulted in twenty-five people dying in street violence within four days. It also caused seven thousand people to flee their homes in fear. Tragedy followed on its heels.

Five months later on Bloody Sunday in Derry City on January 1972, British soldiers shot 26 unarmed civilians during a peaceful protest march against Internment, organised by the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association. Fourteen people died from these shootings.

On the Monday morning after this tragedy there was a crowd of noisy students outside Coleraine University. As I walked through them on my way to my lab someone kept shouting, Blackleg! Blackleg! Blackleg!

I thought they were referring to my stockings until Brendan later explained what exactly Blackleg meant. The

students had been protesting against the Bloody Sunday shootings.

Days later Brendan and I travelled with a busload of New University students to the Bloody Sunday funerals. The crowds dressed in black, and coffin after coffin being carried through the streets was a sad sight. Brendan who'd been on many peaceful civil rights marches was stunned by the wrongness of it all.

Thirty-eight years later the British Prime Minister, David Cameron acknowledged all those who died were unarmed. He said what happened should never have happened. He then apologised to the relatives of the dead on behalf of the British Government.

After I graduated in 1972 we weren't sure what to do next. We travelled to Lurgan to visit Brendan's mother for the weekend. Brendan went for a drink in the *Stable's Bar*. There he met a man who asked if we would like a house in one of the neighbouring Catholic housing estates in the new nearby city of Craigavon.

Craigavon was planned to be the centre of a linear city incorporating Lurgan and Portadown. The scheme was a flawed venture from the outset. Most of the intended work was never completed. The Protestant Government named it after Northern Ireland's first Prime Minister James Craig, 1st Viscount Craigavon. The name Craigavon with its triumphalist sectarian associations instantly alienated the Catholic community.

Craig is often quoted as saying Northern Ireland had a Protestant Parliament for a Protestant people. When the new city was officially named in July 1965 one prominent nationalist quipped that Craigavon was now, A Protestant city for a Protestant people.

The man in the bar told Brendan the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association had recommended people should participate

in a rent and rates strike against Internment. This man was part of a local Tenants Association that was now taking responsibility for allocating houses to suitable families.

Brendan and I accepted his offer and moved into a house in Tullygally Estate the next weekend. Within a few days we realised we didn't like the area so this man allocated us another house in nearby estate.

I was pregnant when we moved to Craigavon and I soon gave birth to our lovely son Brendan junior in Craigavon's brand new hospital. One good thing about living near Lurgan was Brendan's mother could spend time with her grandchildren. Sometimes we'd leave our daughter Shann with her for the weekend and Shann would be kilograms heavier when she returned.

Shortly after we moved to Craigavon, Brendan began working again in his old job in the Goodyear Tyre Factory. He worked shifts and although the work provided money it was soul destroying. Brendan compensated by drinking and partying too much.

I also found employment. I became a full time teacher of religion, maths and biology in *St Catherine's College* Armagh, twenty-six miles away. We employed a babysitter. I loved teaching and enjoyed the interaction and energy of the young female pupils.

Around this time a friend said I had my quota of children and I should now take the birth pill and save up for a house and a car. I thought her advice was wise. And that could have been our life for the next forty years but God had other plans.

One day Brendan had a dental appointment, which allowed him to call early to collect our children from the babysitter. She was flustered when he came early to her door. When Brendan entered her living room Shann was drawing a picture of a rainbow and young Brendan was sitting tied in an armchair.

The embarrassed babysitter said she'd been cleaning the

carpets but Brendan could see no sign of a vacuum cleaner. The babysitter was a kindly older woman but this incident shook us to the core and made us think about our priorities.

Another incident also shocked us. Jacob McCarthy, an old hippy friend of Brendan's from Dundee, Scotland was staying with us for a month. Jacob had been a Christian in his youth and had a very compassionate personality. Brendan had met him one Saturday morning when Jacob was sitting quietly on a bench at the top of Brendan's street.

One sunny Sunday afternoon we were chatting with Jacob in our back garden when a local child came to the open gate and shouted, Come quickly, a man has just run over your daughter in his car.

Young Shann had slipped unnoticed out of the garden for a few seconds. Then a neighbour accidentally reversed his car onto the footpath and ran over her. Shann was still beneath the mini car when Brendan kneeled down and removed her stiff little body. She was bloody all down one side and she wasn't breathing.

Brendan shouted, Ah Jesus!

He pulled her close to his chest. She began to whimper. An ambulance took Shann to Craigavon Hospital where she was kept in for a few days. Thankfully there was no permanent damage and her skin eventually healed up.

The man who knocked Shann down was a local gentle giant. He couldn't read or write and wasn't capable of passing his driving test but he owned an uninsured and untaxed car. He functioned as a free taxi driver for local elderly people and children. He'd been driving six local children to a nearby lake for a picnic when he accidentally reversed his car over Shann.

This man was symbolic of the general lawlessness in Northern Ireland in those days. Disorder and danger lurked around every corner. One day a Catholic would be murdered. The next day a Protestant would be murdered. Car bombs

exploded without warning. An IRA sniper shot from the corner of our house and British soldiers rushed through our rooms looking for him.

We were all body searched as we went shopping and an army patrol might suddenly stop and push Brendan up against a wall and roughly frisk him for concealed weapons. A backfiring car had us all crouching.

In the summer of 1973 I desperately wanted a holiday so we took a week's break in a flat above Morelli's Café in Portstewart. Portstewart was where Brendan came to visit me at university and where we lived during our first year of marriage.

We were due to vacate our holiday flat around noon on Friday but when I went to hand in the keys the letting agent said we could stay until Monday because the next holidaymaker wasn't arriving until Tuesday.

Brendan said, Let's do it.

He knew how important holidays were to me.

On Monday on my way to again hand in the keys I bumped into a girl I'd known from university called Angela Coyle. Angela was with her boyfriend called Charlie. They were both from Derry City. I invited them back to our accommodation for a cup of coffee. They were in Portstewart, so Charlie could have his future told by a local fortune-teller called Foley, who operated from a booth along the Cliff Walk.

We were ignorant of the dangers of fortune-telling in those days. We were unaware we could be cursed for consulting a fortune-teller. Deuteronomy says, *And do not let your people practice fortune-telling, or use sorcery, or interpret omens, or engage in witchcraft, or cast spells, or function as mediums or psychics, or call forth the spirits of the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the Lord.*¹

Charlie wanted to know if he'd get a place on a new course at Magee University College in Derry. I don't remember what Foley told Charlie but I do remember Brendan asking Charlie

details about the course at Magee. Charlie explained it was a foundation course for students aged twenty-three or older. Passing the course would allow the student to proceed onto university.

Brendan who'd recently turned twenty-three asked Charlie to please send details. Charlie kept his word and Brendan applied and was given an interview. Brendan stayed with his friend Robin Millican in Coleraine the night before the interview and consequently was nursing a bad hangover during the interview.

There were half a dozen interviewers sitting around in a circle. One of them an English sociologist asked Brendan why he wanted to move away from the wonderful experiment that was Craigavon.

Brendan looked at the man and started to roar with laughter.

Frank Darcy a lecturer, who later became a good friend to Brendan, was one of the interviewers. Later Frank said it was at this point that everyone on the panel, apart from the bemused English sociologist, knew why they wanted Brendan on the course.

During term time, Brendan stayed at Magee from Sunday night to Friday afternoon and travelled home for the weekend. In retrospect, it would have been better if we had joined Brendan for his year in Derry City but knowledge comes a lot quicker than wisdom.

In the end, Brendan passed the Magee course with flying colours and gained a place at Coleraine University to study English Literature. Our world and our worldview were about to change and the book that would cause this great upheaval wasn't even on Brendan's reading list!

SEEKING THE TRUTH



In Coleraine, Brendan relished the freedom of university life. He mixed with all kinds of people, Catholics, Protestants, atheists, communists, New Agers, straights, gays, lesbians, poets, playwrights, singers, alcoholics and gamblers. He loved debate and variety. He was a great man for drinking and partying. You never knew who or what he'd bring home. Never knew who'd be sleeping in one of our spare bedrooms or on our couch.

Brendan started acting for his university classes. I remember him in Chekov's *The Three Sisters*, O'Casey's *The Plough and the Stars* and Shakespeare's *Richard II*. He also started acting at being a student. He'd regularly lie on in bed and miss lectures due to hangovers. Overdue essays piled up. Sometimes he'd not come home at night. I thought I smelt perfume on his clothes.

He became friendly with a woman whose family were spiritualists. She practised automatic writing and saw visions. Brendan was intrigued. All his life he had an interest in supernatural things. For years he talked to teachers and priests about how to hear God's voice. No one helped him. As a child he'd spent hours praying the Rosary in nearby fields hoping The

Virgin Mary might appear to him just like she had appeared to Bernadette in Lourdes.

There was something in Brendan that wanted God. At Lurgan Technical College he even attended Protestant Scripture Union Classes but was disappointed when they told him God didn't speak directly to people anymore.

I began to realise our marriage was in trouble. Our social life was too centred on the pub. I hated the thought of my husband spending so much time drinking and socialising. Maybe Brendan didn't want to change the cultural habits of a lifetime but I desired something more, some ray of hope, some guiding star.

I realised our lifestyle wasn't much of a foundation for our future. We started to fight and argue. I told Brendan I wanted more out of life than being married to *The Playboy of the Western World*.

He laughed and said, Angela, you've been reading my books again. Isn't Synge wonderful?

I thought back to my childhood with my family on the farm. I remembered the rhythms and seasons of work, all of us eating together on a Sunday evening. All of us opening our Christmas presents after Midnight Mass. I wanted my own children to grow up in a loving home. I wanted to meet with other families and not just with Brendan's crazy friends. I wondered how other young parents were rearing their children.

During the summer I took Shann and young Brendan on the train to Portrush where they paddled and played on the beach. I've always loved the sun and the lapping of waves. Two odd looking ladies in dark dresses with their hair in buns came to our part of the beach each day. They set up a little pulpit and a small folding table. The older one in glasses played the accordion and they both sang hymns. Then one of them would climb the three little steps to the pulpit and teach from the Bible.

I enjoyed the readings and the way they interpreted the spir-

itual meaning of each story. Brendan might have laughed but I thought they were lovely. I always liked the scriptures during Mass.

In fact, a Catholic Mass is about 30% scripture while a typical Bible-based Evangelical service is only about 3%. The main difference is the Evangelical 3% is usually well explained. I began to look forward to these ladies and their talks. While my body enjoyed a good beach beauty treatment my soul soaked up their beautiful words. I always returned home happier.

Meanwhile Brendan was devouring every spiritual book in our local library. I remember books by Jeane Dixon the American psychic and books on Edgar Cayce the sleeping prophet. Brendan was very impressed by the Brazilian psychic surgeon Ze Arigo. He read all sorts of occult books especially books on spiritualism and spirit guides. He was seeking an alternative lifestyle, one that didn't involve a controlling religion and a hatred of the other crowd.

We owned a four-bedroom terraced house in Abbey Street and often had people stay for extended periods. We never charged rent. Brendan's old hippy friend, Jacob McCarthy from Dundee, would occasionally visit. He was quite a character with long white hair and a shaggy beard. Jacob had polio as a child, which left him with a strong upper body, weak legs and a swaying gait. His routine was to go down to *The Oak Tavern* at ten o'clock most nights to drink and chat with the locals.

We also had a homeless couple and their newborn baby stay. One night I was babysitting their child and was half awake worrying I might miss her feeding time when I heard a voice say, Go back to sleep. The baby is okay. I now believe this was an angel speaking.

Another time we hosted a separated mother and her two children until they found a home of their own.

One day Brendan bought a book called *The Magic of Findhorn*, a story about a miraculous community who lived near

Findhorn in the North of Scotland. Their gardens produced 40lb. cabbages, 8-foot delphiniums and beautiful roses that bloomed in winter. The author claimed people were reborn there and faith, love and energy triumphed. They also communicated with supernatural devas and had dreams and visions and heard voices and practised alternative medicine. Brendan was captivated. He shared this book with his spiritualist friend who thought it was wonderful.

One night Brendan came home from the pub and announced he thought we should go to Findhorn the next day. It sounded exciting that people could live together in peace and harmony. It also sounded tempting to live far away from the daily death and murder in Northern Ireland. Although I knew we didn't have enough money to travel to Scotland I agreed with Brendan.

The next morning a cheque came in the post, payment for some temporary teaching I'd done months earlier. Two days later Brendan and I and Shann and young Brendan were sipping nettle soup and chatting with leaders in The Findhorn Community but it didn't take us very long to discover everything in Findhorn had a price. Food, books, courses, workshops, accommodation all cost money.

In the end Brendan and I thought our own little pop-up community in Abbey Street, Coleraine was a lot more generous and open hearted. For some reason we intuitively knew that finding the truth was not a matter of buying and selling but of giving and receiving.

Findhorn had no room available for us. They suggested we sign up for a future expensive workshop. We stayed for a couple of days in a nearby bed and breakfast above a local pub. There we discovered the supposed wonderful happenings in the Findhorn Community had no effect whatsoever on the locals who just viewed them as strange outsiders. In the end we realised Findhorn was just a well-written book with nothing for us.

So we moved on and took the long road home. We hitched around Scotland via Aberdeen, Glasgow, St. Andrews, Edinburgh and Dundee on our way back to Coleraine. People gave us lifts, bought us meals and put us up for the night. I always felt safe with Brendan. I trusted him to look after us. I also enjoyed the adventure.

One interesting outcome was that years later seven of our fourteen children attended universities in the Scottish cities we visited during that journey.

Back in Coleraine on Saturday mornings I'd take Shann and young Brendan to the local library to return my husband's eight library books. While Shann and young Brendan had children's story time I browsed the spiritual section.

I picked up a book about Catholic Saints. They were all single people, nuns, priests and monks. None were married to a man like Brendan. Another book looked interesting. It spoke about Americans from different Christian backgrounds, who met together to pray and who believed Jesus still healed people today. They prayed and God answered their prayers and people were cured.

I was excited at this possibility. Since my rheumatic fever days I was always interested in healing. My ears always picked up at Mass when the priest read about Jesus healing someone. The thought of Jesus healing people today in Ireland was breathtaking.

Wouldn't it be great if instead of hating and killing one another, Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland loved one another and prayed for healing for one another?

I wondered if anyone prayed like that in Coleraine. I thought, God if there is anyone or anything like this in our town please let me know.

Harry McCourt, the owner of the bombed pub in our street was a great storyteller, singer and historian. Brendan and Harry got on like a house on fire. Harry was hospitable and kind. He

invited us to dinner, to meet his gentle wife Pat and their lovely young children. The only downside for me was that Harry and Brendan would go off on all-day adventures, storytelling, singing, reciting poetry and drinking whiskey.

Harry only drank Power's Whiskey. If you put a dozen different glasses of whiskey in front of Harry he could pick out the Power's immediately.

One night in his pub when the craic was good Harry for some reason reached over the bar and gave me a Bible. I didn't know it then, but Harry was giving me a power that would change our lives forever.

We had a big Family Bible in a glass cabinet in the sitting room of my childhood home. In 1955 Pope Pius XII had encouraged Catholic families to own a Bible. He said reading the Bible would be a great spiritual blessing to the whole family.

Now I had my own Bible and for the first time in my life I began to seriously read it. Our old Scottish friend Jacob was again staying with us. Jacob had been a Pentecostal Christian and a boy preacher in his youth but had backslidden for over forty years. Still he knew a lot more Scripture than we did. After Brendan went off to university for the day I'd read my new Bible for fifteen minutes. Then I'd discuss what I'd read with Jacob and like the little odd ladies at the beach Jacob would explain the spiritual meaning to me.

I began asking people if they knew of a prayer meeting in Coleraine like the American one I'd read about. One time when I was supply teaching in St Joseph's local secondary school I asked a teaching nun if she knew of any prayer meetings in Coleraine. She referred me to a Catholic couple called Kit and Dennis McClarey who had five children of their own and two adopted children.

I thought, This sounds like a couple who might be able to help me. I wanted to know more about their lives and how they reared their children.

Kit and Denis made me feel at home. I visited them often. Their family life was much like my own upbringing. Kit also prayed with me. She was the first person I ever heard speaking in tongues.

She also had books about what the Holy Spirit was doing in the world today. She told me how the Holy Spirit sovereignly fell upon Catholics at a retreat centre called *The Ark and The Dove* near Pittsburgh in February 1967.

Best of all she put me in touch with some women in Coleraine who prayed together every week.

THE HOLY WOMEN'S PRAYER GROUP



Sylvia Eyre was a Methodist with a strong call of God upon her life. She was the leader of the women's prayer meeting recommended by Kit McClarey. Brendan called them, *The Holy Women's Prayer Group*. These ladies met in different homes, maybe a farmhouse one week, a house in a posh area next week and a home in a working class estate another time. Sylvia was the wife of the vice principal of Coleraine Academical Institution. Another was the wife of a university lecturer, another a businessman's wife and another a farmer's wife.

There was also an assortment of other interesting folk. One was a loyalist woman who used to piss in the Holy Water font of the local Catholic Church before God changed her heart. Brendan said she'd fit right in with his circle of friends. He didn't mind me attending this Protestant prayer meeting. He remembered the kind Protestants of his childhood.

The women were from different denominations mainly Methodist, Presbyterian and Church of Ireland. I was the only Catholic. From the first moment in their company I felt loved and accepted. There was joy and gentleness in their midst. I felt

blessed as I experienced love and unity for a couple of hours each week.

My children and I looked forward to these Wednesday mornings with their homemade goodies, coffee and fruit juice.

Everyone was softly spoken. There was no jealousy or anger. No ambition. No hangovers. They loved Jesus and one another. There were no arguments about religion. Their only focus was to pray to the loving God they believed in.

The meeting always started with a few simple choruses. Then someone would read a scripture and we talked about how it might apply to our lives. This always brought encouragement. Then the meeting ended with a prayer time.

Most of the praying was done in English but some of the women spoke in a language they said the Holy Spirit gave them. They called it speaking in tongues. They always prayed for all those in authority in Northern Ireland to do God's will.

These women believed in a God who cared about their lives and who was willing to help them in everyday matters. They weren't shy. They spoke from their hearts. They prayed as if they were talking to a friend. Some even called Him Daddy God or Abba Father. Best of all they prayed for healing like the Americans I'd read about. I was delighted God had answered my prayer. Now I was listening to women in my own town praying for healing! I noticed they ended each prayer with the words, In Jesus' name.¹

Every week testimony was given about how God had helped someone the previous week. We'd often hear good news about the healing of a family member or some other sick person in the community. I was excited. God was alive and listening.

The truth that God the Father would answer our prayers when asked in Jesus' name forever changed my prayer life. I'd found a treasure no one could ever steal from me. All I had to do was believe and ask and receive from God. It was my key to a

whole new reality. I now knew there was hope for Brendan and me.

Before I attended these meetings I thought God was far away and unapproachable. We used to call Him, *The Man Above*.

My first memory of earnestly praying was when aged ten I prayed I should pass my Eleven Plus exam in order to attend Grammar School. I thought I'd finished the exam in plenty of time. After a while I glanced over my answers and was shocked when I discovered I'd missed out an entire section. I quickly rushed through it and finished just before the bell rang.

I was so anxious that Saturday morning when the results were posted out. For some reason the Protestant postman came two hours later than normal. You received a heavy brown envelope if you passed and a lighter brown envelope if you failed. Mine was heavy. My life might have been so very different if God hadn't answered my childhood prayer.

I'm so grateful for these Coleraine women who taught me to pray. They didn't have any particular teaching method. They just showed by example and I learned by watching and listening. Jesus said He would be with us when two or three believers met together in His name.² And so it was with us. I soon took courage and approached God myself.

Norah Brown, a farmer's wife, who didn't know I was a Catholic later told me she thought I was the best wee Evangelical Protestant she'd ever heard praying!

My faith in Jesus exploded in this atmosphere of love. I began to believe Brendan would give his life to Jesus. The prayer group joined me in this. For over a year we constantly prayed for him.

Around this time young Brendan started school, which left me with a lot of time on my hands. I desired another child. I read, Children are a gift from the Lord; they are a reward from him³ and, Your wife will be like a fruitful grapevine, flourishing

within your home. Your children will be like vigorous young olive trees as they sit around your table.⁴

These scripture inspired me even more to want a child. Then one night I made a promise to God. I said, Lord for some reason I'm not getting pregnant but Lord if you give me another child I will give my life to you. I didn't really know what I was saying.

GRAPES AND GIANTS



A part from *The Holy Woman's Prayer Group* I didn't know too many people in Coleraine. My old circle of university friends quickly blew away like clouds without rain after graduation. During my time at university, I'd sometimes meet a widow at the bus stop on my way home from the library. Mrs McKeary was always going to work, washing dishes in a local hotel. She was friendly and very chatty. When we returned to Coleraine from Craigavon, I bumped into her again and invited her to my home.

Through her I met her teenage daughter Wilma who became my babysitter and friend. Wilma then introduced me to a family of four lovely girls aged between ten and fourteen whose names were Francis, Maureen, Alison and Susan Keating. Brendan used to enjoy having a pint of Guinness with their dad, Tommy. They too came to play with my children.

I also met a young married woman called Joy Cosgrove in *The Oak Tavern*. Joy had an infectious personality and was so full of life. Years later Joy gave that life to Jesus and became a great friend and prayer partner.

After Shann started school I got to know some of her

friends' mothers. I also joined a typing class for one morning a week while young Brendan attended playschool. Others were there for typing skills but I was really only there for the coffee break and chat.

Then one frosty morning I bumped into Hazel Patterson in the local launderette. Although I'd never actually spoken to Hazel I recognised her immediately. She'd been at university the same time as me. Hazel had belonged to the Christian Union. While Hazel and her friends were being filled with the Holy Spirit in their meetings my friends and I were being filled with wine and beer in our meetings in the university bar.

While Hazel's future husband Willie was praying for a sign as to whether it was God's will for Hazel to be his wife, Brendan was travelling to see me on a train from Belfast to Coleraine, full of passion, with no thought whatsoever of God's will.

Now Hazel and I had something in common. We were both married each with a boy and a girl. Hazel became a new friend for me, and her children Stephen and Heidi became new friends for Shann and young Brendan. Meeting Hazel reminds me of the Bible story where Paul met Lydia and women who were washing clothes by the river and Paul told them about Jesus.¹ In my mind Hazel was Paul and I was Lydia.

Hazel invited me to her home. She had a peace in her life that was missing in mine. She and her husband Willie communicated well and had a good relationship. I wanted that for my marriage. They attended the Baptist Church in Abbey Street, a stone's throw from our home. In those days, my understanding of being a good Christian was that you didn't smoke or drink. I thought it would be wonderful if this happened to Brendan, so I began to pray he'd become a good Christian.

Willie and Hazel also started praying for him to know Jesus. The ladies in *The Holy Women's Prayer Group* also regularly prayed for him to be saved. I suspect they all understood

becoming a Christian meant something more than giving up smoking and drinking.

Years later Willie told us God had put a heavy burden on his heart for Brendan to come to salvation. The only other person Willie had carried such a burden for had been his own brother Jim.

Hazel invited me to the Baptist Church for their midweek prayer meeting. Brendan had no problem with this. He was just looking for spiritual reality elsewhere. In Northern Ireland Catholics and Protestants were murdering one another daily so Baptists and Catholics praying together in Coleraine was ground breaking in its own small way.

Willie and Hazel continued to reach out to us. They often invited us to their home for dinner or took us out for drives, eight of us squeezed into their little red mini. Willie who'd studied the Bible was well able for Brendan's many challenges and questions about Christianity. Willie wisely kept bringing the argument back to Jesus and God's plans and purposes. One evening after dinner Willie told us about the Children of Israel going into the Promised Land.²

He explained how God delivered the people of Israel out of bondage in Egypt with great signs and wonders. He opened the Red sea for them to cross over. He sent plagues to Pharaoh and Egypt. God wanted to bring Israel to the good land He'd promised to their forefather Abraham. The only problem was there were demonic giants and other nations already living in the land, but God assured them He'd be with them to help defeat the giants.

Moses sent twelve spies into Canaan. He wanted to know what the land and the people were like. Joshua and Caleb returned with a huge bunch of grapes and gave a good report. They told of great cities and a land flowing with milk and honey. But the other spies looked at the giants and gave a bad

report that caused fear. They said the giants would devour them and their children.

Joshua and Caleb tried to quell this fear. They said with God's help they would defeat the giants and take over the land. But the people doubted God's help and because of their unbelief the entire nation of Israel couldn't enter the land. The ten spies died, and the rest of the people had to wander around the desert until all that unbelieving generation also died out.

This story shocked me. I couldn't believe the people of Israel didn't take the inheritance God was freely giving them. All they had to do was believe God and obey Him. Instead they disobeyed and wandered about in the dry and dusty desert for forty years and died.

I thought, I want to believe God. I don't want to live in a desert of unbelief for the rest of my life. I want the grapes.

When Caleb was eighty-five he finally entered the Promised Land. His first words were, Give me my mountain!

This story inspired me to believe God had a Promised Land for Brendan and me despite the many giants in our lives. I knew Brendan was searching for truth and wouldn't suffer fools gladly. I believed if he truly searched he'd eventually find Jesus who was the way, the truth and the life.³

No matter how long it took or how difficult the path he would find Jesus. All his life Brendan seemed to be searching for the truth. He was never happy with the clichéd answers religious people or his teachers gave him. I knew in my heart Jesus was the answer to all his searching.

But Satan wasn't going to let him go so easily. Satan was happy when we were drinking and partying but when I turned to God he wasn't about to give up without a fight. He tried to break up our marriage and destroy our family. Jesus called Satan a lying thief who came to kill, steal and destroy.⁴ Satan was trying to lead Brendan into the occult and bad company away from his family.

I could have easily stopped believing because I was feeling rejected and misunderstood by Brendan. Where was the love we had for each other at the beginning of our marriage? But I took hope and faith in God. Jesus came to give me abundant life.⁵ With his help I could overcome my pain and forgive Brendan.

God was working on my husband's life, but the spiritual forces of darkness didn't want him to come to know the truth. In Brendan's dreams he would see demonic creatures coming to attack him. He would call on the name of Jesus and they would flee. He didn't understand all this. In his life outside of dreams he didn't believe in Jesus, yet he experienced the power of the name of Jesus in his dreams.

One day he asked his friend the spiritualist lady what she thought about Jesus. He was shocked when she snarled, You might need Jesus but we certainly don't. Brendan also asked her to find out if the spirit guides at her sister's Spiritualist Church in England might have any messages for him. Again, he was surprised when two weeks later a letter came back saying, The only thing we can get for this man is the hymn, *How Great Thou Art*.

When Brendan read the words, *When Christ shall come, With shouts of acclamation, And take me home, What joy shall fill my heart*, he thought, But surely this sounds like Christianity. He was even more confused.

I was very weary. We'd been praying for a year for Brendan. My longed for baby was also due soon. It was nearing Christmas and I needed a break. I prayed for a holiday. The answer came in an unusual way. A friend of Brendan's invited us to Bedford for Christmas. I told my doctor I wanted to go to England for Christmas.

He said, Mrs McCauley, you can't go away on a trip like this when your baby is due so soon.

I said, The Virgin Mary rode on a donkey to Jerusalem for seventy miles and had her baby safely. She didn't even have a

place to stay.

He didn't answer. He wrote a letter for me to give to the doctor in England.

In Bedford I went to Mass and found out about a local Charismatic Prayer Meeting. The people were warm and welcoming and prayed for my baby and me. I went into labour on the 28th of December and our beautiful daughter Nora was born safely.

On our return boat trip to Ireland I was walking up the gangway when a Catholic priest saw me and waited. He then prayed for Nora and me. I felt this was God's care because we were in a spiritual battle. The birth of Nora was the beginning of a major change. Brendan loved cuddling Nora. She was a little door to his heart.

One day back in Coleraine I met a Brethren Christian lady called Maisie who used to talk to people in the pubs about Jesus. That day Maisie and I prayed for Brendan. I said, Lord, I've been praying for a long time for my husband. Lord I want you to remove whatever unbelief is upon him and cause him to believe.

Another lady in the town, Cecily Newman, a doctor who attended *The Holy Women's Prayer Group* had prophesied Brendan would come to know Jesus. Cicely's prophecy gave me hope.

One night I managed to get Brendan to come along to a Charismatic Meeting in Kit McClarey's home. He grudgingly agreed on the condition we'd be back home in Abbey Street before *The Oak Tavern* closed.

An American Catholic priest and a Scottish Presbyterian minister took the meeting. Both were baptised in the Holy Spirit and both were open to Christians of other denominations. During the meeting they started to prophesy. Most of the people attending hoped for a prophecy but Brendan who knew absolutely nothing about prophecy was the one chosen, and

they spent such a long time speaking over him.

The American priest said God had called Brendan to walk on the Highway of Holiness and Love. He said there would be great love and acceptance through Brendan's ministry for all sorts of people.

The Presbyterian minister said God had called Brendan to a ministry of reconciliation all over the world. He said Brendan would be bold and fearless in his ministry.

Brendan was embarrassed by all this attention. The people who knew him in the meeting were also embarrassed. They thought Brendan was a bad boy.

Afterwards Brendan said, Angela please don't ever ask me to go to one of those Holy Moly meetings ever again.

He was glad and relieved when he returned home to the old familiar spirits in *The Oak Tavern*.

THE COLDEST WINTER



January 1978 was the coldest winter in almost fifteen years. It was threatening snow all day. Brendan and a friend had been pub-crawling since noon. That evening they ended up in the nearby *Oak Tavern* where the owner Harry was honouring his Scottish heritage and preparing for *Burn's Night* with songs and poems of Robbie Burns,

O wad some Power the giftie gie us,
To see ourselves as ithers see us,
It wad frae mony a blunder free us,
An foolish notion:¹

After midnight, Brendan and his friend returned home with half a dozen bottles of Guinness and a large bottle of Black Bush whiskey. They spent the early hours telling stories and listening to music, strains of *Mull of Kintyre* by ex-Beatle Paul McCartney.

At one point Brendan changed the music tape to one given to me by Sylvia Eyre. It was a teaching about the baptism in the Holy Spirit. The main speaker had a clipped English voice,

which Brendan found unpleasant. The English had been excessively cruel to the Irish. Brendan fast forwarded the tape and hit upon an American called Brother Michael. This was better. America had helped Ireland during the famine.

Brother Michael was charged up and excited. He was explaining how his friends had taken him from church to church in the hope of getting him baptised in the Holy Spirit. Brendan grew interested.

Finally, they took Brother Michael to a church called *The Powerhouse*. They said if he didn't get it here he wasn't going to get it anywhere. They laid hands on Brother Michael and shouted and quoted all the scriptures they knew but despite their best efforts Brother Michael didn't get it. Brendan wasn't sure what Brother Michael didn't get but he felt sorry for him nevertheless.

Then Brother Michael began to speak quietly. He said he was grateful for all that Jesus had done for him. He said the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

He spoke of how Jesus had come to earth to lay down his life for suffering humanity and how Jesus had willingly gone to The Cross for Brother Michael's sin and the sins of the whole world.

Somewhere during Brother Michael's soft teaching on Jesus, Brendan became a Christian. He said it was like someone flicked a switch and he immediately believed in Jesus as his God and Saviour. It was a sudden as that.

He turned to his friend and said, I've just become a Christian!

His friend poured a large glass of Black Bush and said, Don't worry about it. Have another shot of The Craythur.

Brendan came upstairs to our bedroom. I was lying awake praying for him.

He said, Angela, I've just become a Christian.

I said, Praise God!

Minutes later Brendan said he was going to tell his good news to Kit and Dennis McClarey. It was over a mile to their home. As he trudged through the virgin snow his were the only footprints. Kit and Dennis puzzled at being disturbed so late at night had different responses. Kit knelt down and thanked God and spoke in tongues.

Dennis looked at Brendan and said, Do you think maybe you're an alcoholic?

Then Kit and Dennis dressed and walked Brendan back home. Afterwards Kit often spoke of how Brendan's footprints to their home were a complete straight line in the snow without any staggering or wavering.

I was delighted when Brendan told me about his experience with Jesus. I wasn't surprised because so many of us had been praying for him for over a year. Brendan now believed Jesus was the Son of God who lived on planet earth and who died on The Cross to forgive his sins. He never afterwards felt guilty. He knew he was free, knew he was given a new opportunity to be involved in God's great plans and purposes.

I thought my battle was over. Now I could rest and let Brendan look after me and be a good husband who didn't smoke or drink. We could now live happy ever after.

I became careless and eased off praying and seeking God as I'd been doing for the past year. Our family had a new beginning. Brendan was spending more time at home. He didn't drink with his friends anymore although they often came to our door looking for him. He also stopped seeing the spiritualist woman. Brendan would sit for hours and nurse baby Nora who was just one month old. I was so overjoyed with God's answer to my prayers, the gift of a wonderful child and the gift of my husband coming to know Jesus.

Prior to his conversion Brendan's bohemian lifestyle meant he often neglected his studies. The previous year he'd let twelve

essays pile up and with the end of year exams fast approaching he decided to just drop out of university.

Then Professor Alan Warner from the English Department called at our home and urged him not to give up. He said Brendan had the talent to write those essays and pass the upcoming exams. Brendan responded to Professor Warner's encouragement and quit drinking for a month and managed to get through to his final year.

But six months later in January 1978 when Brendan became a believer he was again behind in his studies and essays. But being off alcohol and with God's help he studied hard and ended up with a 2.1 Honours Degree in English Literature. People who knew him, especially fellow students, were amazed at this turn of events.

Someone said Brendan might be eligible for a grant to do a Master's Degree because of his 2.1 degree. One morning during the summer Brendan woke up and thought he should go down to the university grants office and inquire about this. When he strolled in and told the chief officer he'd like to do an MA in Irish Literature the man stared at him.

He said, I don't believe this! You should have applied for a grant like this, months ago. Fifteen minutes ago, you hadn't a hope in hell of getting a grant but just five minutes before you came in I was notified there is a last minute grant available for a suitable student to do an MA in Irish Literature. Can you believe that?

Willie and Hazel continued praying for us. They also invited Brendan to attend the nearby Baptist Church. I was expecting our fourth child and I was busy at home looking after the other three. I was so happy with the change in Brendan I thought Bible teaching might help him know Jesus better.

Pastor John Hansford of Coleraine Baptist church was an excellent Bible teacher. Brendan drank in John's words like he'd once drunk whiskey. Brendan was becoming stronger and freer

in his spiritual walk. Scripture says you shall know the truth and the truth will set you free.²

Some of the Baptists were very kind to us. They invited our family to dinner and often dropped in meals of delicious food. Brendan became a celebrity among other Christians. They took him to meetings to give his testimony. He was an ex Catholic drinker who had his life turned around by Jesus. I didn't mind him going to these events. I was very happy with our life together.

After Brendan went back to university for his MA he'd occasionally lapse back into drinking with fellow students. One day he came home from university only to be met with Pastor Hansford and two Baptist elders in our front room. I'd asked them to speak with Brendan.

One of my favourite scriptures is Matthew 18:19 where Jesus says, *Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.*

But just before my favourite scripture Jesus also says, *If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.*

I'd told Brendan I thought his drinking was a sin. But when he wouldn't stop I contacted Pastor Hansford and the elders to either get him to stop drinking or to put him out of their church.

During their conversation one of the elders said Brendan was filled with the Holy Spirit so he shouldn't need to be filled with wine.

Brendan asked was this verse in Scripture.

The elder opened his Bible and read, *Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit.*³

Brendan said, Maybe that's the problem? I don't think I'm filled with the Holy Spirit.

The elder said, Brendan you have given your life to Jesus Christ. That means you definitely are filled with the Holy Spirit.

Brendan laughed. He turned to Pastor Hansford. He said, John, there must be something missing here. I certainly know what it's like to be full; full of wine and full of whiskey. Believe me, I'm definitely not filled with the Holy Spirit.

I told Brendan about my friends at *The Holy Women's Prayer Group*. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit. Most of them prayed in tongues, a language given by the Holy Spirit.

Brendan started to ask God about this. He enjoyed the Baptist Church meetings, but they never preached about baptism in the Holy Spirit. They believed in Cessationism a Protestant doctrine that says spiritual gifts like speaking in tongues, prophecy, and healing ceased with the Apostolic Age. Brendan didn't know much about theology. He just thought all Christians read the Bible and believed and obeyed Jesus.

Brendan and I started reading *Nine O' Clock In The Morning* by Dennis Bennett. Dennis was an American Episcopalian minister who wrote about his experience of being filled by the Holy Spirit and speaking in a new language just like Jesus' disciples on the day of Pentecost.

One Monday morning Brendan was lying in bed talking to God. He said, Father, if baptism in the Holy Spirit is for today please have Sylvia Eyre come around this morning to see us.

Brendan wasn't overly fond of Sylvia or any of the other women from the prayer group. He felt they favoured me and still saw him as the bad boy and to a certain extent he maybe had a point.

When he came downstairs that morning Sylvia, a friend called Pauline and I were drinking tea and eating scones with strawberry jam and fresh clotted cream. Brendan joined us and started smoking a cigarette.

He prayed inside himself to God. He said, Lord if you want me to be baptised in the Holy Spirit please have Sylvia start talking about this subject.

Within seconds Sylvia started speaking about a conference she'd been at over the weekend. She said lots of people from all sorts of denominations were being baptised in the Holy Spirit and many started speaking in tongues.

Suddenly Brendan blurted out, Can I be baptised in the Holy Spirit?

We were shocked. There was silence for a long time. Then Sylvia said, Brendan if you believe Jesus Christ is your personal Lord and Saviour then there's nothing to stop you being baptised in the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues and receiving whatever other gifts God has for you.

Okay, let's do it, said Brendan. He flicked his cigarette into the fire and knelt down. Sylvia looked at Pauline and me. Sylvia and I then laid hands on Brendan and she prayed for him to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Brendan raised his hands but not a squeak.

Sylvia encouraged him. She said, Stop thinking about speaking in tongues and turn your eyes and spirit upon Jesus and worship Him.

Seconds later Brendan burst into tongues and Pauline ran out our back door to our outside toilet and didn't reappear for a while.

Brendan still with his hands lifted began to sing in tongues.

After this experience Brendan's spiritual life took off like a rocket.

He also shared his new experience of the Holy Spirit with his friend Willie Patterson who had some thinking to do. Willie

read through *The Foundation Series* by Derek Prince and became convinced baptism in the Holy Spirit was definitely for today. Willie's brother Jim who'd been with *Youth With A Mission* had also experienced baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Jim belonged to a parachurch Charismatic group called *Bangor Christian Trust* who met together to pray and worship. Many people our age joined them. Willie and Brendan travelled down to Bangor from Coleraine on many Saturday nights. I sometimes joined them. God was doing something new and exciting amongst these young people. There was great joy and excitement in their meetings.

I was in *The Mary Rankin Maternity Home* having our fourth baby. I had laboured all night. Although it was time for the night shift nurses to go home they decided to remain to see my big baby be born. At one point the doctor told me to lift up my leg and I responded by shouting, Lift up the Lord, Lift up the Lord and then Brendan and I started loudly speaking in tongues.

The staff were delighted at our impromptu praise service. When Aaron popped out at ten pounds ten ounces there was great joy in the ward. Aaron was the brother Shann and young Brendan had prayed for.

Brendan bought an big old-fashioned pram that had enough room for two children and a rack underneath for groceries. I often used this to go out and about to show off our new son.

Brendan was busy making our home more comfortable. He upgraded the kitchen and repainted the bedrooms.

Soon another baby was on the way. Mary was born in *The Mary Rankin Maternity Home* on Christmas Eve. I enjoyed my beautiful dark haired girl and my lovely Christmas dinner while being cared for in the maternity home.

But after I returned home I soon became confused with all the changes that were happening in our lives. Although Brendan was looking after our family and me I began to experience the

old disabling feelings of rejection. Something I couldn't put my finger on was wrong.

I was busy with children. Brendan was busy meeting with Baptists twice on Sunday and on Wednesday evening. He also met with Willie on a Friday night to pray and play darts and regularly went to the Bangor Meetings on a Saturday night.

Brendan rarely came to the Catholic Church with me anymore. He found it dull. I felt my life was spiralling out of control. Things seemed to be happening too fast. I couldn't make sense of all the activity. I was becoming stressed. Some part of me sensed I was losing Brendan and it felt scary.

WHEN YOU PRAY, FORGIVE!



After my initial excitement of experiencing God's love and His answers to my prayers I was about to learn a painful lesson. God promises to write His laws on our hearts.¹

The words He painfully engraved on my heart were, When you pray, forgive!

Jesus said if we don't forgive others then God won't forgive us.

Peter asked Jesus if he needed to forgive seventy times?

Jesus answered, Seventy times seventy.²

After Brendan's sudden conversion he immediately knew God forgave him because of Jesus' sacrifice. Afterwards he never experienced condemnation, but I couldn't forgive him so easily. I resented his growing freedom and the favour he was receiving. I felt overlooked and neglected. After all, I was the one who constantly forgave and prayed for him when no one else cared. To make matters worse many Christians, especially Baptists, thought I couldn't be a true Christian because I was a Catholic.

In the winter of 1983 Brendan was attending the Baptist Church near our home and I was attending the Catholic Church

about a mile away. We had no car, so I walked there with our five children every Sunday morning whatever the weather.

In my heart I longed for us to be united as a family and to go to the Catholic Church together. Brendan and I were raised Catholics and married as Catholics. I thought our newfound faith might enable us to help other Catholics know God better. Brendan on the other hand found the Catholic Church lifeless. He knew God was calling him to something new and he was responding with all his heart.

Our disunity was nothing to do with politics. We both believed the abuse of political power in Northern Ireland was wrong. We knew it wasn't fair a young Protestant girl should be allocated a house while a large Catholic family with children were denied the same house.

Of course, it wasn't fair Catholic fathers had to go to England to find work because of job discrimination at home. Northern Irish politics and religion were deeply entwined with history. The main issue was the triumph of one ethnic group over the other. Brotherly love and equality as preached by Jesus were in short supply.

In *The Holy Women's Prayer Group* there was never any talk about who was or who wasn't a Christian. In America and England, Catholics and Protestants freely mixed in Charismatic circles but in Northern Ireland this rarely happened.

Yet Scripture says there's a special blessing when believers from different backgrounds unite in prayer. Psalm 133 talks about how good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity. It's like precious anointing ointment. God blesses unity.

So, I visited other Christian Churches. I went to Presbyterian, Brethren, Methodist, Pentecostal, Church of Ireland, Free Presbyterians and Baptist Churches in the hope of fellowship with other Christians. I believed we were all part of the Body of Christ.

Brendan sometimes came along with me but he was committed to the Baptist Church where he was devouring the Bible and growing under the teaching of Pastor John Hansford. For Brendan everything was fresh and new. For the first time in his life he was actually getting answers to many of his spiritual questions.

Three years earlier on Sunday 24th May 1981 Brendan and I were given our first prophetic word together, at a time when most people in our generation hadn't a clue God was still speaking through prophecy. That word said,

My son you have come to My Kingdom by many strange and diverse roads. You have known great pain and great unrest in your life. I am now unravelling your life. It will take more time but already you see my hand of blessing on you. Don't just look at the present and what you still desire in your life and marriage. You see the present, but I see the end. I want you to remember these words and feed upon them in your heart. Your end is to be in total unity in your home. Your end is to be in great blessing.

Your end is for your wife to be a fruitful vine at your side and for your children to be raised up as olive shoots around your table. I see this end my son. You will not always be receiving ministry. There will come an end to this. There will come a time when you are both healed, and your lives are totally unravelled.

You have both known great conflict in your relationship. But these last two years this conflict has been Me working with you in order to unravel your lives. And I will continue to unravel your lives. I will continue to unravel the strange roads you have been down. But there will come an end to this unravelling. There will be an arriving at a place of health and healing. At a place of freedom. At a place of blessing, where your home and your marriage and your children will be an example to all the flock. I see this end.

As you go through these coming weeks and months feed upon this word in your hearts. Never lose it. Lay hold of this word for it is My word to you. Know I will never leave you nor forsake you, no matter

how sluggish you find yourself at responding to My teaching, no matter how weak you feel and no matter how stubborn you are in your hearts against My discipline. I assure you I will not faint nor grow discouraged with you for I have set My heart and My face towards you in order to see you through and to unravel your lives.

Both your hearts desire this. Both your hearts long to be free in My Kingdom. You often express this yearning in different ways and say different things to one another. Often you cannot understand each other. Often you do not recognise the same hunger in both your hearts. Yet I tell you it is there, and I tell you that I will bring you to a place of unity. Unity in worship. Unity in prayer. Unity in living in the practical issues of day-to-day life. I will bring you to unity in the faith says the Lord.

That prophecy touched the very core of my being. I remember us holding hands and sobbing. Our lives did need unravelling. Unravelling from occult influences. Unravelling from superstition, traditional religion, atheism, conflict and riotous living.

According to the prophetic word, both Brendan and I loved God, but we didn't understand each other. Religious traditions hindered our simple faith in Jesus. We both wanted to love and obey God and love and honour one another but religion kept muddying the waters.

At that same meeting Brendan was delivered from a Jezebel Spirit. It took six men to hold him down. Afterwards Brendan gave his first prophecy and has never stopped since. No one had taught him about prophecy. He hadn't read about prophecy. It was a gift that suddenly appeared after Jezebel was dealt with.

Still, I was holding on tightly to my religious traditions. The Baptists believed they were right. Scripture says the traditions of men make void the word of God. My Catholic tradition became more important to me than my newfound faith in God.

I had stopped praying with *The Holy Women's Prayer Group* because my family had grown too big. They would have needed

a crèche to accommodate my children! I also stopped praying in tongues and went back to praying the Rosary.

The Bible says, When you pray, forgive!³ I wasn't forgiving Brendan and his friends. I wasn't healed from old hurts. I felt God wasn't answering my prayers any longer. Jesus told the *Parable of the Unmerciful Servant* about a man forgiven a large debt by his master who refused to forgive a smaller debt owed to him by a friend.

I felt like this unmerciful servant. I had been forgiven much but I wasn't willing to unconditionally forgive Brendan. I still had a long list of his sins in my head. Who did he think he was to be so easily pardoned?

In Psalm 51 King David asked God to create in him a pure heart. I honestly didn't realise I was holding onto unforgiveness and self-righteousness. These were hidden issues in my heart robbing my joy. I was troubled and sad all the time.

Brendan still often travelled to Bangor to experience lively worship and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. He received still more deliverance from demons from a visiting speaker called Derek Prince and a local preacher called Jim Quinn. I'd happily gone to Bangor with Brendan a few years before but when I retreated into the Catholic Church and the safety of tradition I stopped flowing in the new things of the Holy Spirit.

Brendan passed his driving test and planned a weekend away for the two of us in Donegal. Some friends helped with the children. Another friend, Robert Henderson, who has a ministry of helps, offered his car. When we crossed the border it was as if the war between us stopped. We found a lovely hotel and enjoyed one another and our time together. There was a ceasefire for three days.

I particularly resented Brendan's friendship with Willie Patterson and the Baptist Church. I felt they were stealing my husband from me. Brendan went to Willie's home every Friday night for fellowship and prayer. Of course, it was a

better option than going to the pub, but I felt neglected and unloved.

The division escalated. I cut my long hair and started wearing a headscarf. I also started wearing sandals in all weathers. I felt I was in mourning. I took no interest in my appearance and had no desire for friendship or coffee with friends. I once heard a woman say she'd never met a happy legalist. That perfectly described me. I'd become stubborn and inflexible in my thinking.

I sometimes wonder if cutting my hair wasn't some sort of unconscious rebellion or a cry for help. In Ephesians, St Paul gave instructions for Christian households. He said, *Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Saviour. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.*⁴

This means a husband is a covering and a protection for his wife just like Jesus is a covering and a protection for His Bride the Church. In 1 Corinthians Paul says, *If a wife does not cover her head she should have her hair cut off.*⁵

I wouldn't receive Brendan as my covering and I certainly didn't want to submit to him. I insisted on my own way as regards how we should pray and where we should go to worship. I knew there was no space or place within the traditional Catholic Church for Brendan to grow in his prophetic gifting, but I didn't care. It was just too difficult to keep following God amongst a group of people who didn't appreciate or understand me.

Our Scottish friend Jacob was again living with us. Through Brendan's faith and witness Jacob returned to the Lord after having been backslidden for nearly forty years. Jacob began to read his Bible again.

He and Brendan no longer went down to *The Oak Tavern* to

drink Drambuie and sing and recite Robbie Burn's songs and poems. Instead they sat at home around our fire discussing the Bible. Jacob would read his King James Bible throughout the day and mark passages and write in the margins for these nightly debates.

Brendan owned a Bible called *Dake's Annotated Reference Bible*. It was a huge tome of a thing with 35,000 notes and references to all sorts of Bible subjects and issues. I only had a simple RSV Catholic Bible with few notes or references.

Nightly I was overwhelmed in these debates. My starting position was that the Catholic Church was the one true church and Jacob and Brendan had therefore better obey what the Pope said concerning all things spiritual.

Jacob would always state his case from the Bible and his daily written notes. Brendan due to his clever use of Dake's Bible could always run rings around us. Brendan used to laugh and say, Come on now lads! Tell the truth! Which is the best Bible? Dake's Bible, Jake's Bible or Angela's Bible?

Sometimes those nightly Bible studies were awful and sometimes they were wonderful but overall, they played their part in Brendan and I coming to love and know Scripture.

The Baptists had given and loaned Brendan various Bible concordances, dictionaries, Greek-Interlinear Bibles and a host of other Bible based books. His head was full of this stuff. I became fed up with all of Brendan's talk and prophecy and gifts of the Holy Spirit. Why could we not just go back to Sunday Mass like our parents did? I couldn't cope with Brendan's new Bible knowledge anymore. I felt my own ideas and opinions were not valued.

In the end I became so unhappy and overwhelmed by the disunity in our home that I decided to get rid of all the gifts and books Brendan's Protestant friends had given us. So, one day when Brendan was at university I burnt all the gifts and furniture they'd given us. I also collected all the Bibles and all the

literature the Baptists had given Brendan and I burnt them in the front street near the Baptist Church.

I also burnt Brendan's big Dake's Bible. Then I tried to take Jake's Bible to burn it too, but he wouldn't relinquish it. Even though Jacob had polio in his legs as a child he had very strong arms. I had a good grip on one side of his Bible, but he held on like grim death to the other side. Just then Brendan opened the living room door and waltzed in. He said, There's an awful smell of burning outside.

He looked at us struggling over Jake's Bible and asked what was going on.

Jacob explained what I had been doing. He then looked me in the eye and said in his strong Scottish accent, You can take my life but you canna take my Bible!

Brendan started laughing. He said, Angela you need to settle down or next you'll be burning Jacob and me at the stake.

He also said, Jacob you're some pup. You haven't read your Bible for over forty years and now you're willing to die for it. I suppose now it's just down to Jake's Bible and Angela's Bible!

Afterwards the only Bible I allowed Brendan to use was my Catholic Bible. But that also caused problems. Brendan started reading the Apocrypha in the Catholic Bible and was able to outwit Jacob and me in that whole area.

The Bible reformers said the Apocrypha although not canonical should be read often by believers for inspiration. Brendan used to have great fun using the Apocrypha in our discussions. Afterwards he said the simple Bible made him study the actual meaning of scriptures instead of relying on Dake's notes.

I became even more distressed. I sometimes wondered should I leave Brendan. The spiritual atmosphere in our home often reflected the political tension outside. I called my dad for help. He lived eighty miles away. Mum had died a few years earlier.

One Sunday afternoon Dad dropped in unannounced and found us sitting around our table happily eating lunch. Our home was in order. My husband and children were happy, healthy and well looked after. Dad probably wondered, What's the matter here? Brendan is being a responsible husband.

Dad advised me to work with Brendan. He said there was no reason for me to leave Brendan and he certainly wasn't able to look after five children and me.

Brendan's mother had commented on our situation. She said, Angela isn't it better Brendan is going to the Baptist Church than going to the pub and living the life he used to lead?

My father gave me a large crucifix and asked Brendan if he would let me have it in the house. Brendan agreed out of respect for Dad. Before that Brendan didn't want religious pictures or symbols in our home.

After a few days hanging in our bedroom the crucifix inexplicably fell off the wall. Brendan put it back up but during the night it fell off again. There was no rational reason for this. After that I gave up my ideas of having religious items in our home.

I had stopped praying in the Holy Spirit and stopped praying spontaneously as I had learned to do at the *The Holy Women's Prayer Group*. I prayed the Rosary instead and insisted my children pray the same way with me every night. I wouldn't let Brendan tell them Bible stories anymore. Brendan must have been at his wits end with our disunity. I know I was.

WAR ON THE SAINTS



I read of how Joshua and the people of Israel walked around Jericho seven times and the walls fell down. Jericho was a stronghold that represented opposition to God's purposes for His people. In my mind Willie Patterson and the Baptist church symbolised Jericho in our life's journey.

So, one Friday night when Willie and Brendan were playing darts and praying together I decided to walk around Willie's house until something changed. After four rounds of the house Willie spied me and invited me in. He wasn't sure what to do. He certainly didn't want his house to fall down.

Brendan on the other hand was happy to let me continue for another three rounds just to see what might happen. It was decided we should get advice from Jim Quinn a leader from the Bangor Christian Fellowship and Father Hugh Murphy my local Catholic priest.

Jim Quinn said, Angela, what exactly do you want from Brendan?

No one had asked me that before.

I said I wanted Brendan to come to the Catholic Church with our children and me every Sunday.

Jim asked Brendan if he was willing to do this.

Brendan said he would.

I felt relieved. At last there was some compromise. Someone had listened.

We went to see Father Murphy. A few years earlier Father Murphy had made the national news when Protestant extremists kidnapped him. They held him hostage in an attempt to force the IRA to release a severely wounded policeman they had captured. Father Murphy was bound and hooded with a coal sack during his ordeal.

He was eventually released unharmed when the Reverend Ian Paisley and the policeman's wife intervened on his behalf. Father Murphy then pleaded unsuccessfully with the IRA for the release of the policeman. When the IRA executed the wounded policeman a grieving Father Murphy said, I feel I've lost my right to life.

Our first meeting with Father Murphy went well. I wrong footed Brendan by telling Father Murphy my husband, the father of our children had become a Protestant.

Brendan glared at my badly cut hair and sandals and tried to justify himself to Father Murphy. Father Murphy then defended the authority of the Catholic Church in an attempt to sort out Brendan's theology.

Our second meeting with Father Murphy didn't go so well. In those days I'd often dig my heels in with Brendan and insist on my own way over a whole range of issues. Maybe I'd walk about in the snow in just my sandals and cardigan and Brendan would be anxious for my health.

This time the issue was over a new woollen coat and a pair of leather boots Brendan had bought for me that I wouldn't wear. We'd brought our new baby Hannah with us in our big pram. Every time Father Murphy saw me he immediately reached for a cigarette. I again started off on the premise that

Brendan who was now a Protestant was not a suitable spiritual head for me. To my surprise Brendan didn't defend himself.

He said, Father Murphy, please let's not argue over what I believe. Angela says you are her spiritual head and I've no problem with that. So whatever you decide Angela and I should do I will comply with your decision.

Father Murphy listened to my complaint that I didn't want to wear the woollen coat and leather boots. He then touched me on my shoulder and said, Angela your husband is a good man doing his best. You should take all he offers you. I speak to so many women whose husbands don't care for them like Brendan cares for you.

Father Murphy then suggested I could wear the boots and woollen coat outside the home and the sandals and cardigan inside. I said I couldn't agree with him because God had told me otherwise. That was the wrong thing to say.

Father Murphy didn't believe God spoke to ordinary people today and certainly not to women. He then gave me a long talk about how the Pope and the cardinals, and the Magisterium in Rome were the only ones to correctly interpret Scripture and hear from God. I looked at Brendan who regularly heard from God through dreams and prophecy and gifts of the Holy Spirit, but he wasn't going to help me.

He just repeated, We'll do whatever you say Father.

Just then Hannah awoke. Brendan lifted her and started to comfort her.

Father Murphy asked her name.

Brendan said, Hannah.

Father Murphy tickled her under her chin and said, Little Hannah banana, Little Hannah banana.

I went ballistic. Brendan had called Hannah the same thing and I hated it.

I said to Father Murphy, Don't ever call my child that name!

Father Murphy took a long drag of his cigarette and rolled his eyes at Brendan.

That a layperson should hear from God was a strange notion to a priest. I felt Father Murphy became too sympathetic to Brendan after that. I also felt he hadn't any real solution for my issues.

After a year, I became even more distressed when Brendan decided to be baptised by full immersion at the Baptist Church. The Song of Solomon says many waters cannot quench love¹ but now it seemed the Baptist waters were finally going to kill my love for Brendan. I felt betrayed and rejected by Brendan and his friends. I was aware some of them advised him to leave me. They didn't believe I knew God or was really saved.

Some of them also advised Brendan to use birth control in order to limit our family. They'd heard about the many prophecies concerning Brendan going to the nations. They said, You can't afford to have a ministry to the nations if you continue to have children.

Their views made me hold on tighter to my Catholic faith because the Catholic Church is the only church whose teaching is not supportive of artificial birth control.

I also believe God had spoken to me from the Bible to increase and multiply. God had answered my prayers for more children. He had opened my womb and continued to bless me with children. I thought, How dare Christian people and their fear-based theologies stop us from bringing forth blessings and rewards from God!

There was war in our marriage. Outside on the troubled streets of Northern Ireland crowds roared their slogans of *No Surrender* and *Never! Never! Never!* It seemed like these same spirits had now entered and invaded our home.

Where was the unity the prophetic word had promised? I could see no future for us together. Religion had broken me.

Jesus said a house divided against itself would not stand.² I felt Brendan and I would never see eye to eye. There was no peace in my heart. All this religion was tearing us apart. What should I do?