I've Never Known You Be So Bad Before!

- Land, Community and Climate Change

Alastair McIntosh

Angus Macleod Memorial Lecture

I’ve Never Known You Be So Bad Before!

Land, Community and Climate Change

The Eighteenth

Angus Macleod Memorial Lecture 2021

Alastair McIntosh

Thursday 21st October 2021

Kinloch Community Hub

Balallan Old School

Published in 2021 by Comunn Eachdraidh na Pairc

www.cepairc.com

Pairc Historical Society
Ravenspoint
Kershader
Isle of Lewis
HS2 9QA

Cover design by Donnie Morrison Printed and bound by Pairc Press

Angus Macleod beside the Pairc Deer Raiders monument near Balallan

FOREWORD

In this booklet, based on the Angus Macleod Memorial Lecture, Alastair McIntosh outlines his views on how the ethos, spiritual, and community values of small communities such as those in the Hebrides can inspire us all (from world leaders to ordinary citizens) to contribute to tackling global climate change challenges.

Alastair's lecture, entitled 'I've Never Known You Be So Bad Before! – Land, Community and Climate Change', draws on his own experience of working with island communities from Lewis to the South Pacific to regain control of their own land, tackle the legacy of past exploitation, and build a future in line with principles of community solidarity and non-material values.

Alastair is a well-known writer, scholar, broadcaster, and activist, and his insights into climate change and the need for a massive shift in human behaviour if a catastrophe is to be avoided are timely as international attention focuses on the crucial COP26 meeting in Glasgow and follow-up action. He argues that - paradoxical though it may appear – the culture of seemingly remote Hebridean islands could hold the key to the sort of changes required much more widely to address the pressing global challenges of our time. In doing so, Alastair brings together ideas on land, community, and climate change – inter-linked themes which are central to his own philosophy and life-long campaigning.

I am delighted that this booklet will provide a permanent record of Alastair's lecture and reach a wider audience than those who had the privilege to hear the lecture in Balallan or listen to it live over the internet on 21st October. The aim of the lecture series is to celebrate the life and work of Angus 'Ease' Macleod of Calbost, South Lochs (1916-2002). Alastair's lecture is exactly the sort of wide-ranging and provocative discussion which Angus would have approved of and loved to participate in – linking together local and international issues through stories and reflections of the kind with which he was familiar in the Calbost ceilidh-house of old.

We are grateful to all who helped make the 18th lecture in the annual series a success, not only Alastair himself but also our partners in organising the event – Kinloch Historical Society, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar's e-Sgoil and Multi-Media Unit, the Islands Book Trust, and Angus Macleod's family.

DONNIE MORRISON

Chairman, Comunn Eachdraidh na Pairc (Pairc Historical Society)

October 2021

I've Never Known You Be So Bad Before!

Land, Community and Climate Change

The Angus Macleod Memorial Lecture 2021

Alastair McIntosh

Friends who are gathered here tonight, both in-person and online: partly because of an education in Leurbost School and the Nicolson Institute, I get speaking invitations from many corners of the world. But none can be a greater honour than to be invited to speak in one's own community.

So thank you, and here we are. We're in the old Balallan school where, every week back in the days, my dad Dr Ian Kenneth McIntosh would hold an outpatient surgery. There is a loch out the back along the peat. *Loch na Craoibhe* – the Loch of the Trees, and around about 1970 he and his friend Dan Smith of *Sildinis* stocked it with a hybrid rainbow trout called Sunbeam. They got the fry from the Highlands Board, part of the early experiments and development of fish farming.

The location was strategic, because the police station was there. You see, at times when dad was single handed, he'd be on call 24/7 for 1,800 patients, sometimes covering the South Lochs practice too. It meant that in those days before the mobile phone, he could only go out fishing where he could be quickly reached in the event of a medical emergency. So it was that for a while, the loch acquired a second name the Doctor's Loch. And so it was the Balallan police existed in those days not just to catch the poachers.

Stirrings of Land Consciousness

Having attended one of the schools in this parish makes me think about my teachers, specifically some of those with Lochs connections. There was Miss Montgomery in Leurbost primary, and I wasn't the only one in our class of 1960 who couldn't quite believe "Montgomery", and thought it was "MacGomery". Later, we had Miss Mackinnon who became Mrs Macdonald of Balallan. Two years ago I had the pleasure of renewing our acquaintance after all those years, when I met her in the Ravenspoint Centre. This, as you'll know, holds the archive and museum collection of Angus Macleod, Angus "Ease" of Calbost in South Lochs, in whose memory tonight's annual lecture is held.

Also, of Balallan at Leurbost Junior Secondary School. was John M Macleod, the deputy headmaster, who, when he wasn't out on the loch sweeping all the prizes in the fishing competitions, worked side by side with the head-master, John Murdo Macmillan. Once a week the pair of them, along with my dad and perhaps the Reverends Neil Macdonald of the Church of Scotland and Donald Gillies of the Free Church would gather in John Murdo's kitchen. They'd talk about the welfare of the children and of families that might be struggling, and they'd do what they could to put the parish to rights. That was how it happened in the days before we'd heard of social workers and all the wheels of health care that you'll find today at the much-extended and re-named Langabhat practice.

Alastair McIntosh with Marion Macdonald , one of his teachers (then Miss Mackinnon) at Leurbost School in the 1960s.

It was a splendid thing to reconnect with John M and Margaret in adult life in the early 1990s. The trigger was awareness raised by the marking of the centenary of the Crofters' Act of 1886. Some of you may have seen the powerful exhibition at the time in An Lanntair. You might have a copy of the explosive book that Malkie Maclean and Christopher Carrell curated for the purpose. [1]John M's part was to serve on the committee that later raised money for the memorial to the Pairc deer raiders, down at the *Eisken* road end. This was one of four such artistic statements for which Angus Ease had built the vision, closely helped by Malkie, who suggested Will Maclean (with family roots in Uig) to be the artist. Will's evocative designs were magnificently executed in dry stone by Seumas Crawford, the antiquarian and mason of *Gearraidh na h-Aibhne*.

When I asked Malkie about the legendary opening day of the Lochs cairn, he said: [2]

> What happened, is that the vision that Angus had inspired communicated itself to the hundreds, perhaps even a thousand people, who marched through Balallan that day. The excitement ran on into an incredible ceilidh late into the evening, and you could just feel the birthing of a new land consciousness, and of what it means to be a living community. It was an unforgettable experience. In fact, I would see the mounting of such events as a strategic priority. They are the kind of coming together of the community around a common achievement that we need from time to time to ensure the survival of a Gaelic culture. John M summed it up in a letter that he sent me afterwards. He called it "the biggest event in Lochs since the Pairc deer raid itself".

The march through Balallan in 1994

Note these points for what I want to talk about. The legacy of Angus Macleod is that, in varying ways, he sparked in many of us a modern Scottish land consciousness. And crucially, hand in hand with that, a fresh consolidation of community consciousness. My task tonight is to attempt to demonstrate how these self-same qualities can also factor in to how we might both face, and begin to get to grips with, climate change.

But before I leave this litany of teachers in the community, let's not forget away down there in *Airidh a' Bhruaich*, a full three miles away, and one of our physics teachers in the Nicolson, Mr Maclennan.

It's probably just as well he never knew how close I came to blowing up his lab. Ahh – Brown Owl! But you, you know, you got off lightly. It was Johnnie Robbie's chemistry lab that, according to a tale that I deny, had cause to be evacuated.

Well, don't blame me! I blame Marion Mackinnon. It's quite simple. She was not strict enough with us!

They Were Looking After Us

You'll all be thinking these exploits explain the enigmatic title of my lecture. But no, so here's the story. My father ran the North Lochs medical practice with help from my recently late mother, Jean, a much-loved network of district nurses and a string of trainee assistants fresh from out of medical school. But the person who held the whole setup together was the Practice Manager, Agnus Maclennan of Great Bernera, Breasclete and Achmore.

Ever since I was a child, she'd regale me with the stories – and notice how in the island people often use the definite article. Not just "stories", but "the stories". I'm guessing that's the way it comes out from the Gaelic, but it also has the virtue of giving them a presence in their own right. On the last occasion that I visited before her passing, she told me one I hadn't heard before that her mother used to tell. I remember her old mother. A kindly old soul, bedridden in the house at Achmore where Agnus and her sister Joan cared for her, and with a big pile of big black bibles and prayer books by her side.

Now, I'm guessing that her mother's tale would have been set in Kirkibost, or thereabouts in Great Bernera. And before I tell it, let me set it in the contest of an instructive remark from Angus Ease that's recorded in his archives. Angus said:[3]

> We made our own entertainment, ran around the hills, went after the birds' nests, rabbits and various things like that. Fished in the lochs and on the shore, ceilidh in the houses, and the whole village was one unit; everybody in the village was just like one family. If they saw you as a child doing something out of order, they just shouted, "I'll be telling your father that if you don't watch." So, they were all looking after us.

But inevitably, that same making of our own entertainment would often be tied in with "doing something out of order". How can you have such youthful entertainment without an element of disorder? As such, and even into my time, there was a culture amongst both boys and girls of playing practical jokes on each other. Now, remember, that in the days of Agnus' mother's maidenhood, there were no insecticides, no hot running water, no washing machines and no electric irons for the clothes that would kill the eggs of such unwelcome visitors as … body lice.

Well, there was this old bodach in her village, and every night before he went to bed, he'd take off his shirt, and he'd shake it over the fire that would be in the middle of his blackhouse floor. This would be in the times before the chimney migrated to the wall with the upside of a cleaner atmosphere, but the downside of no longer gathering in a circle. And as he'd shake his clothes, the lice, poor things, bloated with a day's supply of blood, would crackle and pop as they landed in the embers. And perhaps it was inspired by Burns' poem, "To a Louse". Or perhaps, just a sense of moral decency, as if to justify the necessary cruelty of his procedure, he'd look onto the fire, and address the fast-expiring lice, with the same words every time: "Oh, you've been bad tonight!"

Every night, the same words, like a sentence from the sheriff. "Oh, you've been bad tonight!"

Now there were three village lads who were notorious pranksters. The kind you'd hope who'd get the *cùram* come the Day of Visitation, and end up Free Church elders, every one of them.

And one night, as the old man was readying for bed, the first one of them went to the window, so that he could watch for when the ritual began.

The second of them went to the door latch, so that he could hear what words were spoken.

And the third one, he climbed up onto the roof, and to the smoke hole in the middle. And he had in his pocket a handful of the rock salt.

Those of you who've ever had occasion to put a barrel of herring down for the winter, will know that rock salt crystals tend to saturate with water. So it was, that when the boy watching at the window signalled that the man was on the brink of shaking out his shirt, the one up by the smoke hole dropped the crystals, straight down onto the fire.

As the embers popped and crackled like the Devil had touched down, these were the words heard by the lad with his ear pressed to the latch.

"Oh, you've been bad tonight!"

"You've been very bad tonight!"

"*I've never known you be so bad before!*"

Ecology and the Bank of Social Values

That afternoon, as I saw her for the last time in this world, Agnus fixed me with her eyes before I left. She said, and I wrote down the words as soon as I got back into the car, because they functioned as a touch of blessing: "Make sure you keep thinking about the stories that I'm telling you."

Agnus understood that stories tell us about our past, but open up to vision, that tells us about our future. Vision, like Angus Ease demonstrated when he dreamed up the land heroes' memorials and set up the Scottish Crofters'

Union. There is a passage that I often quote right at the end of *Crofting Years* by Francis Thompson. The crofting communities, he concludes, have been:[4]

> … instrumental in producing folk who are still proving to be the "bank" of social values and ideas for the nation as a whole. And it is from those reserves of character that the will to survive against multinational commercial and national government interests is drawn. That indeed is a song worth the singing.

Now, the picture that I've been painting for you so far, is a melange of places, scattered name drops and anecdote. But these stories that I'm telling you are for a reason. Even if you're of a generation or from a place and the names mean nothing, I'm trying to convey a sense of what a living community looks like. And can and could and I'd say should, still look like. In the terminology of my own field of study and practice, this is "human ecology". We get the word "ecology" from the Greek, *oikos*, which means "home". From the same root we also get the theological term "ecumenical", meaning "the whole world, or home" of relationships between different faith denominations. And in the social sciences, another *oikos* word, "economics", means the "the management of the home".

We can make that Greek root feel very much at home in the Hebrides if we further take into account that *oikos* is a proto-Indo-European (PIE) root, derived from the language group of which Sanskrit in India is the closest survivor. Its PIE root is *weik*.[5] If you play imaginatively with the sound, you can squeeze out an "oik" and then morph that into an "eek"! It means, "clan". So, the household of the clan or extended family rests upon the *ecology*. Its business affairs are conducted through the norms of *economics*. And all will be well in the world provided that relationships between the Church of Scotland and the Free Church of Scotland here in Kinloch are kept on a sound *ecumenical* footing.

As such, ecology may be defined as the study of plant and animal communities. It follows that human ecology is the study (and practice) of human community. And that, as the complex interactions between the

natural environment, the social environment, and especially (as we have just noted), the spiritual environment. I stress the "especially", because in today's mainly secularised world, it is the spiritual aspect of this three-part definition of community – soil, soul and society – that arguably needs the most attention.

Angus said about his own village in South Lochs - "I feel that Calbost speaks to us all, not only in Lewis, but in the whole Highlands and Islands."[6] Here we glimpse the way his vision saw the universal in the particular. A recurring insight of Chinese Taoist philosophy is that if the sage can be at peace within his or her self. That is to say, if they can be spiritually grounded. Then there will be peace in the community. And if there is peace in the local community, that is the greatest contribution we can make to peace in the world.

I joke, of course: and yet, what happens between the Kinloch churches, two-by-two, out there in the wilderness between Balallan and Laxay, is therefore not inconsequential for the world. And in the schools. And the surgeries. And the shops. And the domestic kitchens. And down the crofts. At the fank, or peats, or on the loch.

And note that point. If spirituality means anything, it means to me the profound interconnection of all things through life as love made manifest. As somebody put it a very long time ago - Angus could have told you his name - this is not about just any old life, but promised life, "abundantly".[7] Now, that is quite a vision, built upon old stories. And remember that. It will be important as I look at why these communities, in these islands, may be important in a world that struggles to find hope, or meaning, or fresh openings of the way in climate change.

Set your eyes on what it takes for all to live "abundantly". From the deepest ground of being. Then you'll find it's not so much you've got a plan, but you're living it.

Unprecedented Climate Change

But from Angus, back to the tale handed down to Agnus from her mother, and "I've never known you be so bad before". Here we are tonight. Sitting in the village old school – and note my turn of wording there. And looking out the windows on a world of climate change that's breaking in. The scientists tell us that they've never known it been so bad before. Standing on the shoulders of such as the evangelical geologist Hugh Miller of Ross & Cromarty, let us turn to the science. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the IPCC, is the expert group of many thousands of the world's best scientists that reports to the United Nations.

Its most recent report came out just two months ago and says: "It is unequivocal that human influence has warmed the atmosphere, ocean and land." This has caused "widespread and rapid changes" to many aspects of the world's climate system, and these "are unprecedented over many centuries to many thousands of years."[8]

To put some numbers to that: global carbon dioxide (CO_2) emissions have been going up and up in nearly every year. In 2020, it fell by a mere 7% due to the pandemic's economic slowdown. But in 2018, human impacts on the earth resulted in the emissions of a mix of greenhouse gases, amounting to 55 billion tons - 55 thousand million tons – expressed as CO_2 equivalent into the atmosphere. [9]

What humankind has done since the industrial revolution is we've taken what had been safely locked away in the rocks for maybe hundreds of millions of years and pumped it out into the atmosphere. Just because greenhouse gases such as CO_2, methane and oxides of nitrogen from traffic fumes are invisible doesn't mean they go away. Within human timespans, CO_2 the major one, and the one that methane breaks down into, is a permanent pollutant. It just keeps adding up and up. Only in the fulness of geological time does the bulk of it gradually get drawn down in the form of seashells, heather, wood, algae and so on, and form fresh deposits of such soils and rocks as peat, coal, oil, gas and limestone.

And for sure, planting trees in the right places – and not over deep peat bogs – is a good thing. But remember, even if the entire fertile surface of the earth was reafforested, it would mostly just be putting back what had been previously cut down or burnt. We'd still be left with all the fossil fuel emissions in the atmosphere.

They used to say it takes a hundred years to form an inch of peat. That's probably not a bad estimate if you're talking of the nice black stuff. So if you cut the peats for fuel, lay the turf back carefully. That way, the living bank will keep on drawing carbon down. I consider that activities conducted in a controlled traditional way – like the peats, the fishing or the guga hunt – can help to keep us connected to our environment. But informed care and restraint are crucial. It's like when God said to go forth and multiply and "fill the earth … abundantly". [10] He never said to overfill it.

The mussel feast in the ruins at Croirgerraidh—Papuan delegation with Alastair McIntosh, Evelyn Coull Macleod and Catherine Mary Maclean

The *Feannagan* (raised beds) truncated by rising sea levels at Loch Leurbost

Overflowing of the Atlantic

The effects of the climate change from the above constantly accumulating emissions are grave. Locally, let me just take rising seas and storminess as an example. Two years ago, at the suggestion of Alex George Morrison of Leurbost, my wife and I led a group of community leaders from West Papua Province in the Indonesian-controlled west of New Guinea down to *Croigearraidh* at the head of Loch Leurbost.

Along with Shonny Macdonald or "Rusty", another classmate from Primary 1 in Leurbost, and a younger generation, Evelyn Coull Macleod and Catherine Mary Maclean, we gathered shellfish, made a fire in the ruins, enjoyed a feast of mussels, and talked about the signs of the times in the landscape.

When I was a boy, the ends of the *feannagan* – the raised beds for arable crops – terminated suitably above the high tide mark. Now, they're being eaten away, and a little more on each storm tide. Those of you who may have worked the *feannagan* will know about the back-breaking work it took to make such fertile black soil from mixing the peat with seaweed, sand, manure and other compost. When you see the *feannagan* slipping away, I'm sure you'll share a sense of ebbing loss.

Once again, like Angus said of Calbost: look into the village and you'll see

the world. Our Papuan visitors could recognise the same losses in their island communities on the other side of the planet. Finding such common cause helped to focus everybody's thoughts. Global warming caused the "absolute" sea level – that is, the level independent of other "relative" local factors such as harbour works, sedimentation and shifting currents, to rise by 1.1 millimetres a year between 1900 and 1990. But the rate is speeding up fast. According to the latest IPCC report, it's now up at 3.7 millimetres. That's about an inch every seven years. In my lifetime alone, absolute sea levels have risen by 150 millimetres or about six inches. Add to that such factors as a considerable increase in recorded wave heights in the North-East Atlantic, and you have the creeping makings of a perfect storm. The tragedy of 2005 with gusts of over 120 mph that saw the loss of five lives in the islands south from here, was just a warning sign of what we can increasingly expect.[11]

An online mapping tool used by planners that was sent to me by Professor Frank Rennie at the University of the Highlands and Islands in Stornoway suggests that, by 2030, large areas of the fertile *machair* lands along the west coasts of the Uists will be prone to flooding on peak tides, especially if the protective lines of dunes are breached.[12]

At spots like at Aignish just across the Braigh, or on the Galson machair, the *teampaill* as the medieval "temples" or chapels are called in Gaelic already rely on walls of quarried rock to provide sea defences. It brings to mind the prophecy of an old woman of South Uist, told to Alexander Carmichael in 1869. She forecast "an overflowing of the Atlantic and submerging of certain places", until a time will come to pass when, "the walls of the churches shall be the fishing rocks of the people," and amongst the resting places of the dead, "the pale-faced mermaid, the marled seal and the brown otter shall race and run and leap and gambol – like the children of men at play."[13]

Such concerns – the old woman now backed up by science - are why what I call "the consensus expert science" of the IPCC states that to keep the planet relatively safe, to keep the rise in global temperatures to within

about 1.5 degrees of pre-industrial levels, the world must reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 45% of 2010 levels by 2030, and bringing it down to net zero by 2050.[14]

As yet, the efforts of the world and specifically, the rich world to date are hardly scratching the surface. Yes, in a country with the options that Britain has, we've replaced most coal burning with gas and renewable energy sources. But that's the low-hanging fruit. The heavy lifting is to decarbonise transport, heating, industry and agriculture. This remains a work in early progress.

Population and Consumption

Greenhouse gases function like a blanket in the atmosphere that wraps around the earth, and traps heat like a greenhouse on a sunny day and causes plants to wilt. I want to turn now to what drives the escalation of these dangerous gas emissions.

In its simplest expression, the annual addition of more than 50 billion tons of CO2 or its equivalents in other gases boils down to two variables in an equation.

Greenhouse gas emissions = population x consumption

Both population and consumption are key elements, but consumption contributes more than population. Let me show why.

I was born in 1955. In that time alone, world population has increased threefold. But CO2 emissions from consumption have increased sixfold. And what has been a 2:1 differential will increase if world population stabilises or falls, but material consumption keeps on going up and up, unless there are dramatic technical innovations such as the advent of nuclear fusion power generation. Fusion is the joining of atoms and a relatively clean process, not to be confused with conventional fission that releases energy by splitting atoms. The trouble is that ever since I've been a boy, fusion technology has been 30 years into the long grass.

On the political far right wing, people love to focus on population being "the problem". They say the problems of the world are caused by "too many" Chinese or Indians. But that's an untrue and a racist argument. In China, the fertility rate – the number of children born to the average woman – is now down to 1.7, even though they've abandoned their one-child policy. In India, it's down to 2.3, which is just above the replacement rate of 2.1. Indeed, in their socially progressive state of Kerala, it's down to 1.8.

In comparison, the UK's fertility rate stands at 1.9. The Republic of Ireland, culturally a Roman Catholic country, and Malaysia, a Muslim one, both stand at 2.0. Brazil is a way down at 1.7. And Portugal, another Catholic country, and Moldova, which is majority Russian Orthodox, are away way down at what, for them, has become a worryingly low 1.2. This shows what is possible, and it has come about in the course of just two or three generations.

The political right wants to focus on what they enjoy calling "population control". In some parts of the world, such authoritarianism has included compulsory sterilisation and abortion measures. This leads many on the left wing or the greens to give the knee-jerk response: "You can't talk about population, because that's a racist right-wing agenda!" What they miss, is that it's not about "population control", but social wellbeing.

How so? Because the evidence is that fertility rates fall naturally, and rapidly, when two main conditions are in place. First, when there is social security in the broad sense of that term, so that people don't need to fear for when they're old, or sick, or if they fall on hard times. And second, fertility drops radically when women are free. Free from being "barefoot, pregnant and in the kitchen". That is to say, free to be educated, free to engage in the economy, free to vote and be elected, as well as free to have access to family planning and good perinatal health services. And underlying these, free from patriarchal violence and domination.

Afghanistan is (or perhaps was, given the resurgence of Taliban control) an emergent case in point. In 2009, it had the highest fertility rate in the world, at 7.2. A decade later, that had roughly halved. Presently, the top slot at 7.2

has been taken over by poverty-riven, drought-stricken, conflict-torn Niger in Africa.

Why don't we hear more about these successes of fertility rate declines from the hard right? I would suggest, because social justice and women's emancipation are hardly a priority for authoritarian patriarchs. But why then don't we hear more of it from the greens and the left? I think, because they've unwittingly allowed authoritarian narratives and practices of "population control" frame the agenda. In trotting out such dogmas as "population is not the problem, if we all go vegan", they've failed to separate authoritarianism from the voluntary consequences of creating a more just and equitable society.

But in defence of the greens and left, I think they are correct that "population" is not an issue that we need to "push". It doesn't need pushing. It just needs enabling, because for most women it has its own "pull" factors. Women will decide if women have free choice. When I was growing up on this island, families of six were still quite common. Now they're very rare. To get there, nobody had to go around bullying young couples to go easy. The district nurses, who dealt with most mother and child health, would have been effective health and family planning educators. In my father's day, they used to handle routine childbirth at home. Dad would be called out at night only to a difficult delivery.

Thinking of these deliveries, one of Dad's proudest remarks, spoken in the Caberfeidh at his retirement function, just before he passed in 1986, was: "My babies are now having babies." And alongside that, the happy knowledge that the great majority of those children – some of you most likely sitting here tonight - would have been wanted children. And that's important. A wanted child is a child well knitted to the community.

Consumerism confronts Providence

If population is one variable of the emissions equation, what about consumption? Everything material that we consume, both goods and services, has an embodied carbon footprint. You get on a bus, and the bus emits carbon dioxide. That, divided by the number of passengers, is your share of its carbon footprint. You open a can of beans, and the carbon footprint embodied in it is made up of emissions from the land that was ploughed up, the manufacture of the fertiliser on the field, the energy used in the crop's harvesting and processing, and what went in to mining and refining the metal in the tin, and finally, it's transport to the shop. You could go on. You could add the energy on the hob to heat it up. And of the sewerage pumping and processing. How wide the web becomes depends on where you set the system boundaries, the framework that you're looking through.

Now, those of you here tonight of my generation and older will remember a time when many families were relatively self-sufficient. Their personal carbon footprint would have been very low. When we'd row out from Keose into Loch Erisort there, we'd go halfway across to where the fence comes down from *Gearraidh Bhaird.* We'd drop anchor in ten fathoms, and catch a bucket full of haddies, whiting, cod and flounders on the mussel-baited handline. That kind of subsistence economy had virtually a zero carbon footprint. You'd share the catch amongst neighbours, and few people back then had a fridge. We had no fridge in our first years, living at the Halfway House before moving to the *Gleann Mòr* surgery. Back then, the village was our refrigerator. I'd give you fish. You'd give me lamb.

But today? Well, this is what it's like. Awhile back, I asked the Calmac chef on the Stornoway crossing where they got their excellent haddock form. Deep frozen in from Norway! That's what he told me. And there you see it. In half a lifetime, we've jumped from zero carbon to high carbon, and all because we've lost our anchors in communities of place. And our haddies in the sea loch were getting fished out by marauding boats even before they stripped away the three-mile limit in 1984.

Tide gone out on village fishing at Loch Leurbost

When we took the Papua visitors down to the head of Loch Leurbost we stopped and mused upon the village boats, several of them pulled up there and rotting. We explained how the combination of greed and technology so badly damaged our coastal fishery, starting around the early 1970s. Rusty could name whose boat was whose. The Papuans looked on, lamentfully. They could see it written there, in the signs of the times, how relatively recently these boats had been tied up. One of them said ruefully: “That’s the way it’s going for us in Papua too.”

So it is that plenty shifts to scarcity when natural resources are laid open to forces that refuse to work with nature’s providential cycles. For people at the bottom of the social pile, those with least political leverage, the end can be a sorry mess of poverty and even, destitution.

I define consumerism as, consumption that is in excess of what is needed for a dignified sufficiency of life. What is sufficiency? Sufficiency is that

which can allow us to glorify the source of providence – the source of life itself - and to enjoy, forever.[15] How's that for a traditional definition of "sustainable development"! Or, as the United Nation's Brundtland Report of 1987 put it, almost as famously as the Westminster Shorter Catechism: sustainable development is, "Development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." [16]

The issue at stake, therefore, if I might continue leaning on the Free Church theology to which Angus Ease adhered, is how best might we engage with those decrees that manifest, "in the works of creation and providence".[17]

False Magic that Deceived the World

Worldwide, the global economy has shifted from satisfying fundamental human need, to stimulating human greed. This, and our appetites that encourage it, is what is driving our colossal carbon footprints ever upwards. The average carbon footprint in the UK is given in official statistics as 5.8 tons of CO2 per person. But as I've shown in *Riders on the Storm*, what's not counted in the way these figures are produced, are such factors as the goods that we import from countries like China. When this is brought into the equation, the real per capita carbon footprint in the UK, expressed in CO2-equivalent terms, is double the official figure. It stands at 11.9.

Compare and weep! In Indonesia, the political entity to which our Papuan friends are attached, the footprint is just 1.8, the same as India. In neighbouring Papua New Guinea where I lived for four years, it is a mere 0.9. Even oil-rich Nigeria is only 0.6. And the poorest countries of the world - including Malawi, Chad and Niger - emit a miniscule 0.1 tons of carbon dioxide, just a hundred kilos, per man, woman and child. The poor are not the pressing problem!

The bigger problem is not that there are too many poor people in the world. The bigger problem is too many rich. And now look where stands the earth. Angus Ease would probably have used the King James Version in what I am

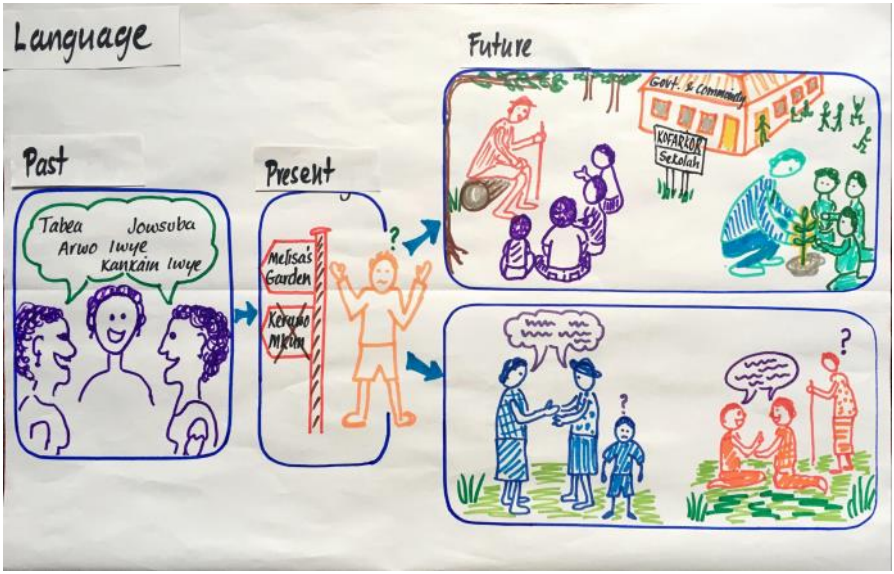
about to quote, but perhaps he'd forgive me if I use a modern translation. It brings out the meaning clearer to the modern ear. The text depicts the fall of Babylon. A city that, in its mercantile lack of constraint, traded not only in gold and silver, silk and scarlet, rare woods and ivory and marble; but also, we are chillingly told, in "… horses and carriages, slaves and even men's souls".[18] And so:

> The businessmen of the world grew rich from unrestrained lust…. This great and mighty city of Babylon! ... The businessmen who became rich from doing business in that city, will stand a long way off, because they are afraid of her suffering. They will cry and mourn, and say: "How terrible! How awful for the great city! She used to dress herself in linen and purple and scarlet, and cover herself with gold ornaments, precious stones, and pearls! And in one hour she has lost all this wealth!".

The *Book of Revelation* there, also known as The *Apocalypse of John*, is not an attack on business as fair trade that answers human need. Let me be very clear on that. Indeed, on Friday I will be speaking in Cumbernauld at a conference of Rotary International. I'll be able to tell them how, in 1977, it was businesspeople and professionals of the Stornoway Rotary Club that sponsored my travel to do Voluntary Service Overseas in Papua New Guinea. And imagine this! Being sent from the highly Presbyterian Isle of Lewis to a Roman Catholic mission school for so-called "drop-out" children. It was an education, I can tell you. Not least, we had to build ourselves. But in this we were helped by skilled teams who came up from Rotary International in Australia. When I speak in Cumbernauld, I'll be using this to emphasise the part that ethical businesses that serve real need in the community can play in tackling climate change.

So, no, I do not read *Revelation* as an attack on common commerce. Rather, John's Jeremiad was crafted at the height of brutal Roman Empire power. Most modern theologians see his strange nightmarish text as a brilliant exposé of an empire's innermost psychotic workings: the corrupted spirituality by which violence and unfair terms of trade both grind the poor and crush the goodness of the earth. And by the way, to any who might be

"No land, No life" - a summary of learning from the islands land trusts.



A "Past, Present, Future" exercise , showing the importance to the Papuans of what they learned about language.

Papuan leaders' delegation at *an Suileachan*, the Uig land heroes monument with Malky Maclean

Papuans with Alastair McIntosh at the Callanish Stones

wondering if I'm bringing too much theology into this lecture on climate change, I would argue that you cannot have enough. None other than the great social historian, E.P. Thompson, who in 1963 published *The Making of the English Working Class*, gave as the title of the last book before he died: *Witness Against the Beast*. *Revelation's* mark of the Beast, he says, would seem "to have something to do with the buying and selling of human values."[19]

The technical meaning of the Greek *apocalypse* is "to remove the cover" or "reveal", thus why the Biblical text is known simply, as *Revelation.* Revelation in this sense is spiritual seeing, the prophetic function of the ology. Such revelation, such apocalypse, is therefore an essential tool to employ as the United Nations readies for its COP 26 climate change summit in ten days' time, taking place a mile from where I live in Glasgow.

Let us then listen to the scientists, and the policy makers, and the heads of state. But listen also to the prophets, to the bleeding hearts and artists, whose words "Are written on the subway walls / And tenement halls". And that in part because "the people bowed and prayed / To the neon god they made".[20] Consumerism is driven by marketing and its tricks of motivational manipulation, but these in turn reflect the pre-existing Microsoft "security vulnerabilities" buried deep within the psyches of each one of us. Were it a local minister to be saying this tonight, you'd be lined up for a full throttle sermon on "original sin"! My theology as a Quaker is a little different. But we can for now stick to the text and notice how the *Revelation* of John of the Apocalypse goes on to nail down business practice that is monopolistic, manipulative and murderous.

> Your businessmen were the most powerful in all the world, and with your false magic you deceived all the peoples of the world!" Babylon was punished because the blood of prophets and of God's people was found in the city; yes, the blood of all those who have been killed on earth.

And to bring this down to grounding in the local, to bring it back from right across the world to Calbost or wherever: this text can speak prophetically to

a planet under climate change.

"Oh, you've been bad tonight!"

"You've been very bad tonight!"

"*I've never known you be so bad before!*"

Owning Agency and Rejecting Despair

But it's not enough to leave it there. As graffiti at the Faslane nuclear submarine base once had it, "Any fool can live in conflict. It takes guts to live in peace." Anyone can say what's wrong with the world. The newspapers are full up with such columns every day. It's easy just to shake a finger at the corporations and the governments. Some of them stick out so ugly, they deserve it. But some environmentalists and eco-lobby groups just leave it there, content with shouting - "Do something! Do something!" - but without the foggiest of what it is that might be done such as would both add up to addressing the problem scientifically, and be sustainable politically in a democracy. Leaders must lead, but they can only lead from so far ahead of the pack, without getting kicked out at the next election. And presumably, nobody is arguing for green fascism, are they? Because if they are, there'll be other fascists waiting in the wings, who might play a rather different fascist game were that to be legitimised.

Morally and psychologically, if we point the finger, even at what seems to be an impersonal entity, it is well to check if other fingers might be pointing back to us. Any of us with a pension policy, with some savings earning interest in the bank, who rent a room or shop around to search for the best "competitive" deal, are complicit to some degree in "the system". We can reject responsibility for that, or we can own our part. But if we seek the comfort of rejection, we also give up our agency in the matter. We collude in our own sense of powerlessness. We become victims of "the Beast" that is, in part, of our own making. This, of course, is not true of oppressed peoples who have little or no power. But it is true of most of us. Little

wonder Jesus was a political danger. He exposed the people to themselves. The religious authorities pointed at the Roman authorities. But Pilate pointed back to them and was left to ponder "What is truth?". [21]

A system is precisely that. A system! A system that is made up of both its own over-arching constellating reality that nobody, not even the 1%, are really in control of; but also, the emergent property of its component parts. This is why it takes mass movement systemically to change a system. It's no good chasing change that does not begin with us, and while that's humbling, it also points to where nonviolent agency is found. Forty years ago, I took a financial MBA at Edinburgh University to try and understand this. For all the fancy economic formulae, it turned out not to be rocket science. Collectively, and excluding situations of overt colonisation and oppression, we broadly get the system that we choose to live. But of those who cannot see that, I often have a chuckle. Substitute "the Devil" for "capitalism" in many a newspaper column, and you get a perfect old-style hellfire sermon. Beware the wine of old psychology in new skins. The same archetypal psychological pattern plays out on loop. Be it "Rome", "Babylon" or "capitalism", the system that is driving climate change is in part "the Beast" created by the aggregate of all our actions.

Carl Jung showed that the shadow denied, the part of ourselves we hide from, is the shadow that trips us up. The Devil is the *diabolos* in Latin, precisely because "he" is thrown across our path. That is the etymology.[22] Indeed, what would we do without him, to speak so graphically of depth spiritual psychodynamics? And another thing to chuckle at. Have you noticed these days how God, quite rightly in my view, can now be He or She? Rightly, in my view, not least in accordance with Genesis 1:27 and Galatians 3:28. But as for the gendering of the Devil? Well! Maybe we'd better not be going there tonight. Systems must be challenged and transformed at a system-wide level. But it is better if we own our small part while doing so. If we acknowledge our complicity. "Forgive us our debts." That way, no longer having to avert our eyes, we can see more clearly what might trip us up along the path.

The Worst and Best Nail in the Ark

I want to tackle how we might respond to what we see, and specifically, with application to climate change and consumerism as its driver. The Reverend Robert Finlayson of Caithness became the minister of Lochs in 1831. He married a Miss Macaulay from Uig, said to have been a relative of *Mac an t-Sronaich*, and any time you hear that name on this island even the children will know the story must be true.

The Reverend Norman Macphail of Juniper Green documented that he preached a sermon, right here at Balallan village school. Or perhaps, wherever in the village it was then located, but the school nonetheless. Now, I can't speak for Balallan, but Angusina, who ran the Leurbost school canteen when we were small was lucky not to have been here. The sermon could have made a worthy extension to the passages that I've quoted from *Revelation,* chapter 18. It was a sermon, verily, that shook the people as if shaken out like body lice that crackled and popped upon the fire.

"O Balallan!" he said:[23]

> O Balallan, you are the Devil's kitchen where he cooks his meals. He may dine elsewhere, at Keose, or Cromore or Crossbost, but it is here he cooks. O Balallan, throw water on those cooking fires!

Now, being a Quaker and therefore something of a heretic, an ecologist raised on this island and therefore, you might suspect, a Pagan Presbyterian Quaker, my theology does not hold that God "punishes" people. Even though we're in an island full of *Tormods* and *Torquils*, Norse names derived from Thor, I don't believe that God hurls thunderbolts to destroy the city. To me, narratives of divine punishment are a figure of speech, a way of reaching us where we might be at in our understanding. "I have no pleasure in the death of anyone," says God. For the name of the game is to get a new heart and a new spirit.[24] For in the three most important words in the Bible - "God is love" - and "perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love." [25]

So it was that the Reverend Finlayson did not leave the people of Balallan stewing in their cauldron. Later he came back with cause to preach a very different sermon. Angusina might happily then have swapped canteens.

> O Balallan, the Devil's quondam (former) kitchen, you are now become a very Bethel, a House of God.

"O God of Bethel, by whose hand/ thy people still are fed…." Ours is not to despair. Our Muslim sisters and brothers remind us that to despair is a sin, because it indicates a loss of faith in God. Ours is to face the sorrows of the world, the sorrows and the challenges of climate change, and have them lead us on a deeper journey on "this weary pilgrimage", "till all our wanderings cease".[26]

Mr Finlayson's sermons appear to have been master classes in contextual theology, in understanding stories in the Bible not necessarily literally, but as metaphors that speak deeper than the words. And so it was, he told his congregation, the shoulders on which we stand, that the Ark was built in Lewis. And Noah went to Ness for a bull, and to Uig for a ram, and so on.[27]

And if I might cut at this point to an Irish sermon of the sixteenth century, one that's in Professor Jackson's magnificent anthology, *A Celtic Miscellany*, there you have it! The animals are boarding, two-by-two. And the clouds brought on by climate change are looming in the west, as, you may remember from Genesis, "because the earth is filled with violence through them".[28]

But the shipwright isn't happy. He's envious. He knows he hasn't got a ticket to ride. He'll be one of those who, as Mr Finlayson told us, went and spent his wages in the bars. No doubt the bars of Babylon. Of Stornoway. No doubt of Cromwell's Bar before they re-baptised it, McNeill's.

So what does he do? He drills a hole in the bottom so that the Ark will leak and sink.

But the Devil, of course, is watching. And he's thinking to himself that there'll be further mischief he can work before his triumph as the ship goes down. So, he sneaks on with the animals, and hides down amongst the

ballast where, as we know from the writings of the Reverend Kenneth Macleod of Eigg, the lost souls of southern lairds wail and curse and gnash their teeth amidst the grinding of the gears and clanking of the chains. [29]

So there's he is, waiting in the steerage, but what he hadn't reckoned was that Noah, before he raised the anchor, would raise his hand to bless the Ark in God's most holy name.

Now, the Devil can withstand the red hot fires of Hell. But no asbestos skin can take the white hot heat of love. Desperately he struggled to escape. And on spotting the shipwright's hole, he turned himself into a snake to take leave by the fire exit.

But alas, alas, the hole was much too tight! There he got himself stuck, head pointing out and tail pointing in. So he stayed, until the flood subsided and the Ark berthed gently on Mount Ararat. And so, the Irish sermon ends, the Devil was the worst and best nail in the Ark. [30]

Ears to Hear and Hands to Dig

And so it is with climate change today.

It was inevitable that humankind should reach this point at this stage in our biological and cultural evolution.[31] Our forebears were not to know that CO2 would overheat the earth and acidify the oceans. Mostly, we only know what we think we known of climate change, because of the science of climate change. The greenhouse heating effect of CO2 was first discovered and experimentally demonstrated by the American women's rights campaigner, Eunice Newton Foote, in 1856.[32] But it took until the 21st century for the ecological implications to sink into the consciousness of most of us.

We don't have to beat ourselves up about that. These things happen. Our task now is to take what is happening in the world and turn the worst nail in the Ark into the best. And that requires a wide world vision and focussed local application.

Until his untimely passing at the age of 39 in 2005, my wife Vérène and I were close to Colin Macleod where we live in Govan. He and his wife Gehan founded the GalGael Trust, a community of people in a hard-pressed part of Glasgow who build boats and rebuild identity and community. His parents, as many of you will know, are Donnie and Josie Macleod of Gravir, and you may have seen the magnificent BBC Alba documentary about his life: *The Birdman of Pollok*. [33]

Colin came out with many pithy sayings. One of them, like that nail in the Ark, was: "Shit happens. What matters is how you shovel it." We have to take the dirt life throws at us and turn it into compost. We have to face the truths of climate change and turn it into consciousness. This is what the Haudenosaunee, the Six Nation Confederacy of the Iroquois native peoples, have called "a basic call to consciousness". That's the term they used in 1977 when they addressed the non-governmental organisations of the United Nations in Geneva, calling for "liberation theologies" that can "challenge the assumption widely held in the West, that the Earth is simply a commodity that can be exploited thoughtlessly by humans for the purpose of material acquisition."[34]

What matters is how you shovel it, and the one occasion that I had the blessing to meet Angus Ease, was in the 1990s at his home in Marybank. I was on the island with a group of students, and it was Seumas Crawford, the mason of the land memorials, who set the visit up.

That year, and most unusually, there was a bit of an urbane streak in a small contingent of the students. A bit of a questioning of what it was that they could learn from Lewis, and from an antique crofter of a bygone rustic age.

One of the lassies – a lovely person, but she'd got caught up in the smart Alex banter – pitched a question to Angus that poked a bit of fun. I can't remember what she said, but it was the kind of comment for which Miss Mackinnon once gave me two of the belt, accompanied by the memorable words: "You'll know what this is for."

Well, Angus didn't bat an eyelid.

He just cocked his head and said: “I’m sorry my dear. I didn’t hear what you said.”

She repeated the remark.

“I’m very sorry. You see, I’m getting a bit deaf. Could you say it, louder.”

She did but this time, in the embarrassment of a minor apocalypse of self-revelation.

“I’m sorry, my dear,” Angus concluded, in his tone of quite impeccable politeness.

“I just can’t make you out. Are there any other questions?”

I’m not always that quick on the uptake. It was Seumas, later, much amused, who pointed out that Angus heard the question perfectly. He just wasn’t going to be distracted by those without the ears to hear.

What matters is how you shovel it. We must turn the worst nail to the best. Not allowing ourselves to be distracted by the climate change deniers, who say it isn’t happening. Not allowing ourselves to be distracted by the climate change alarmists, who exaggerate the science to make out we’ll mostly all be dead quite soon. Both beg the question - “What’s the point?” – and fore-close upon the space and time available for action.

As Colin Macleod of Pollok, Govan and Gravir used to say: ours is to rise up as eagles, with eyes set to far-seeing vision. Maclennan’s Gaelic dictionary has a word for eagle vision, it’s in the poetry of Duncan Ban MacIntyre too: *biorshuileach.* If the eagle chased the small birds that come mobbing to distract it, it would never find its food. And so we shovel that which comes to pass. And when we land, we dig from where we stand.

Jeremiah's Field

As an outcome of COP 26, Boris Johnson wants to see the rich countries of the world spend $100 billion a year on tackling climate change.[35] It sounds colossal, but let's put it in perspective. Last month a study came out of Brown University in Rhode Island state. It estimates that the spending of the United States government alone on its post 9/11 wars –the wars of just the past 20 years alone - has been $8 trillion.[36] Eight thousand billion dollars! Eighty times the annual sum that Boris Johnson wants the world to spend on averting ecological catastrophe.

That's his measure of priorities. But even with such crumbs from off the table, the remedies of technology, economics and conventional politics alone are not going to be enough to tackle climate change. In practical terms in my view, tackling climate change needs tackling three things. TPC. Technology, population, consumption.

Technology - such as that which enables and utilises renewable energy; but also, I would suggest, a review by the green movement of where the debate now stands on fission-based civilian nuclear power based, and perhaps, how fusion might enter into the equation later on this century. After sixty-five years of civilian nuclear energy in the UK, it is possible that some of the earlier arguments against nuclear power may have modified. It is most certainly the case that CO2 has now gone "critical", rendering the planet permanently "hot" in ways not factored into earlier thinking. I do not know what the outcome of such review might be. Brown Owl didn't take me that far. I'd just suggest that an expert green technical and ethical review might be timely.

Population – when I boil it down to social security and women's emancipation, I'd just want to note that the framework for advancing these broad aims has already been laid out as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations.[37] I welcome these having been bolted into the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework.[38] I would recommend familiarity with them, and their teaching and discussion in schools. The 17 SDGs include such aims as zero poverty, gender equality,

clean energy, responsible consumption and production, climate action, and peace and justice. In addition, and for when COP 26 comes to Scotland, let's not forget that we're the home of golf. A full golf course has 18 holes. So, let's in our minds add another to the 17. SDG 18. Community!

Consumption – technology, as just discussed, factors into production, which results in turn in the carbon footprint of consumption. That is why I simplified the earlier formula for greenhouse gas emissions to, simply, population times consumption. We saw that of these two, consumption is by far the greatest future concern. The narrative of "degrowth" posits shrinking the economy, but the narrative of "just transition" recognises that this must not be at the expense of the poor. This is why the UN's 8th SDG holds out for "decent work and economic growth". Such growth must be for the poor, and degrowth for the rich.

But how can the rich be expected, or persuaded, to consume less and less until they (including we) come into line with planetary fair shares? That's a central question of climate action.

My hope for a survivable future on planet earth is a vision where the product of our population and consumption keep pace within the limits of the planet's carrying capacity. That implies welcoming, and planning for, a natural reduction in the human population. And understanding and undercutting the drivers of consumerism. This would require us to face up to what is happening on earth, but to hold a vision for the future. *Biorshuileach*! What might that look like on the ground? On this island, I think we're already heading in the right direction.

In the 18th year of Nebuchadnezzar, as the Babylonians were storming through Jerusalem, what did Jeremiah do? He went out and bought a field. He did so against all the odds, because the word of God had come to him. "Houses, fields and vineyards will again be bought in this land."

"Ah, Sovereign Lord," he prayed - "Nothing is too hard for you" - and I could well imagine Angus Ease would many times have prayed such prayers. And what is it to pray? But to immerse oneself and one's community into a

ground of possibility that stretches far beyond our own limitations.

In Jeremiah's time, because they had neglected the widow, and the orphan, and the foreigners, and the poor, the city burned down to the ground. And yet, the land endured. And "I will give them singleness of heart and action," said God, anticipating their return from exile, their return from alienation from their own lives' calling.

"I will rejoice in doing them good and will assuredly plant them in this land with all my heart and soul."[39]

A Living Land Theology of Liberation

Two miles down the road from here is the Pairc deer raiders' monument I mentioned earlier. It is pictured on the cover of the extended published version of tonight's lecture. There you'll see a delegation of indigenous Papuan politicians and civil servants from some other parts of Indonesia that Vérène and I brought here in 2015.

Why cross the world in times of climate change to visit such as Angus' museum at Ravenspoint? And to meet with members of the Pairc land trust in Orinsay village hall? And similarly, to visit other monuments to the land heroes, and the community museum in Uig, and the land trusts of West

Community meeting—visitors from West Papua Province with the Pairc Trust in Orinsay Hall

Harris, North Harris and the Stornoway Trust with Iain Maciver of Laxay? Here I'm only naming some of those with Lochs connections, and at other times we've also gone to see land or development trusts in Eigg, Skye and Fintry. Our reports on these are all online.[40]

All that I need say here, without needing to go into the machinations of funders and national politics, is that I knew of no better place in the world where we could open with them profound explorations of what the island poet Iain Crichton Smith called "real people in a real place". Indonesians and Melanesians are a very spiritual people. That can take a group beyond the normal limitations of community development. And where better to find it than here.

In a paper that he published in 1987, Professor Donald Meek explored the land reforming work of another minister of this parish, the one who helped stir up the Pairc deer raid when the people were hungry, Reverend Donald MacCallum. He suggests that MacCallum's preaching preceded by the best part of a century the land rights liberation theology of Latin America. And I love these lines that he translates of the bard, *Màiri Nic-a'-Phearsain*, Mary MacPherson, Big Mary of the Songs, when she heard MacCallum speak in 1884 in Skye. That day: "She glimpsed the apocalyptic 'new day', when oppression would be banished for ever", and:[41]

> *Chunnaic sinn briseadh na fàire*
> *Is neòil na tràillealachd air chall,*
> *An là a sheas MacCaluim làimh ruinn*
> *Aig Beul Atha nan Tri Allt.*
>
> We saw the dawn break on the horizon
> and the clouds of thralldom flee away,
> the day MacCallum stood beside us
> at the Fairy Bridge.

This is what it means to be community. This is what it means to hold and carry forward a vision. When I lived in Papua New Guinea in the 1970s and 1980s, this was what their people taught me of the land. Can you imagine having them come here? On the Indonesian side, a people who were

colonised by the Dutch, formally so from 1898 as Netherlands New Guinea, and them now coming here to Lochs and sitting in the ruins and hearing of the Highland Clearances on this side of the world?

Hearing how so many villages, from *Croigearraidh* to the south, were emptied of their people in the 1820s. And as we ate our mussel feast, to have Evelyn saying how one of those ruined houses had been the home of one of her grannies. And like you may have seen on Alba television recently, to experience Rusty talking of his forebear's evictions from *Budhanais*, across from *Eisken*. And me, embarrassingly chipping in, that some of Donald Trump's maternal ancestors also underwent eviction there. Which focuses the question: How to challenge and transform the world that Donald Trump stands for?

In *Riders on the Storm,* I propose 4 Cs. Clearance, collapse, consumption, and then of a different order, community.

Clearance - the way so many peoples of the world were disconnected from communities of place, uprooted both from both nature and connections to each other, a cruel violation of both their natural ecology and human ecology.

Collapse - the evidence that's now so well researched, that when a native people are displaced from their *oikos* of ancestral belonging, something dies within the soul. "There's no ceilidh on the prairie." And it's on the native reservations that the social consequences show, including as the GalGael Trust recognises, our native reservations in cities like Glasgow.

Consumption - because the gnawing emptiness so created leaves us vulnerable to motivational manipulation. And we "can't get no satisfaction" because the blandishments of consumerism are false gods. In contrast, those of us who grew up here were held in the basket of a living community. As Angus put it: "… they were all looking after us." They for all their faults and sometimes their religious harshness: they knew that "there is but one only the living and true God."[42]

And so - *community.* And I ask you to imagine the junior Donald Trump.

Quite literally, a son of this island. A son in part of Lochs. And the baby and the child and then the youth, growing up in a big house with servants and with parents who were too busy fleecing the poor and galivanting with high society to raise their child. For some of Fred and Mary Anne Trump's kids, writes Donald's niece Mary in her book, *Too Much and Never Enough*, "lying was a way of life" – either for survival or for self-aggrandizement, both of which can share a common root.[43]

I put it to you, that Donald Trump never had the community's weavers pedalling on their Hattersleys, singing to the rhythm, putting weft to warp and rounding off the warped rough edges of emerging character. He never would have had the village boats to take him out and learn the lessons of humility and respect taught by the sea. He never will have had them say, "And when did you come home?" Held in the semi-permeable basket of the community in settling down with lengthening years perhaps to knowing God.

A Long and Tangled Saga

For to really tackle climate change, to go beyond the economics and technology, beyond the chattering machinations of conventional politics, we must reach down to roots and touch the taproot in ourselves.

The small agenda will play out at COP 26. The big agenda is our human beingness. That rising up basic call to consciousness. That mounting up with wings as eagles, to weave back membership one of another, and reset seeds of Eden. You might complain we'd have to wait 'till Kingdom come. That, my friends, is precisely why Miss Montgomery taught us when we pray to say, "Thine Kingdom come."

Thine community come … "on earth as is in heaven."

That is why modern Scottish land reform is such a beacon in the storms of climate change. It rekindles community. Give us each day such daily bread, at COP 26. And not just any old land reform. Not state nationalisation of the

Evelyn Coull Macleod interviewing Shonny 'Rusty' Macdonald about the clearances at Budhanais, opposite Eisken on Loch Shell

Croigearraidh at the head of Loch Leurbost, cleared in the 1820s

land, or a patchwork of quite often selfish private owners like they have in Ireland. But rather, land holding whereby residents are democratically accountable unto themselves. And to make that function, well, here is what Ishbel MacLennan told the Papuans at Angus' museum at Ravenspoint in 2015:

> Community doesn't just happen on its own. It's hard work. If we don't make it happen for ourselves, nobody will make it happen. You also need sackfulls of humility because you'll never make progress if you think you're going to have it all your own way every time. Progress doesn't happen without making a lot of wrong decisions.

And they found that so inspiring, so convincing, because here was a community that was shovelling it. And in *A Long and Tangled Saga*, Bob Chambers' new work shows just how hard that journey was. If the empowerment that arose in Pairc were to be multiplied up by small communities around the world, just think what impact could be made on climate change. Thine Kingdom come, not mine!

A Stricken Ship and Salvage

Often when I'm writing, I'll have dreams that seem to capture and affirm things that I'm wrestling with. As I began to write this lecture, I had a frustrating afternoon in Glasgow's Pearce Institute, fondly called the PI. For those who've not been there, it's a rambling Victorian community centre that's just down river from the COP 26 campus. I was setting up the technology to run a blended meeting, but low bandwidth on the internet not least had made it challenging.

In a dream that night, I was in the canteen of an institution like the PI. But instead of being in the heart of Govan, the building was perched high above Loch Grimshader on the Ranish side. I was sitting in its canteen which was packed with people eating. There was a large plate glass window at the end, and as I watched I saw a Victorian style of steam ship heading down the loch. It was narrow as such ships were, painted red and white, and riding

much too high in the water, as if she was devoid of any ballast. Her keel looked like a skater's blade that skimmed along the water, and as she skirted round the hidden skerry at Loch Grimshader's mouth, the waves began to strike and I felt a dread sense rising of impending doom. As she cruised on full speed and out into the Minch, I saw that the waves were rising, each one bigger than the one before. And then the inevitable struck. A vast wave rose up, she nosedived down into its leading trough, and when surf eventually subsided, she foundered with her rigging stripped and funnel bent in half.

Nobody else had noticed in the canteen. And so, to the alarm of the diners, I stood up and shouted at the top of my voice: "Emergency!"

The diners now could see the tragedy but didn't have a clue what to do. I tried desperately to call the coastguard but could get neither signal nor bandwidth on the internet. I felt powerless and despairing. But, all of a sudden, I found myself surrounded by a knot of half a dozen crofter boys. Scarcely teenagers, dressed in homespun clothing like in those 1950s Lewis photographs, they were laughing and happy because they all knew the drill, and now was the chance to put it into action.

Most of them ran off to home to get the village fishing boats called out. One came with me to search the coastline for survivors. As we came down the Ranish hill we paused at Chrissie Angus John's peat stack. We'd need to light a fire to warm the stricken mariners. And then we carried on along the coast until the dream faded out.

On waking up I wondered what its meaning might be. In Carl Jung's mode of dream analysis, I follow the energy of the dream and consider what its symbols and motifs might signify to me. Gradually, the parts fell into place, building up into a satisfying and meaningful pattern.

A steamship runs on coal, and the Waverley is berthed beside the Science Centre in Glasgow, right where COP 26 takes place. The PI in Govan with the diners and the failing internet signal suggest the deficit of agency that many will experience if the COP fails to achieve much. The lack of ballast in the

ship speaks to that lack of gravity – a COP led by Boris Johnson – and sailing full speed out into the Minch without a jot of seamanship.

But here's the joyful bit. "From whence shall come my aid?"[44] Aid was in the form of those laughing youngsters from the village. Whether literally or more widely, metaphorically, powering up with land reform – and that "bank of social values" that harbours "those reserves of character" from where in part might come the resilience that we need. And as Francis Thompson's book concluded: "That indeed is a song worth the singing."

Pleating the Iolaire's Rope

In closing, I come back to the visitors from Papua whose eagle vision from across the world helped me, and I think many others who met them, to see our own communities in a deeper perspective. On the last day with the delegation of grassroots community leaders that came to Lewis and Harris in 2019, we went to look at community-based renewable energy with the Point and Sandwick Trust. Their three wind turbines out on their common grazings on the Pentland Road generate getting on for a million pounds most years in revenues. These do not go into filling the pockets of a private landlord, such as is usually the case. They get recycled back into community causes.

But it was not to stand and look at turbines that Rhoda Mackenzie and Katie Laing took us that day. This was the year that marked the centenary of the Iolaire tragedy. We were taken both to see the land heroes' monument at Aignish, and to where the Iolaire had struck rocks down by the shore in a storm. One man had managed to swim to safety with a light throwing rope. He used it to pull across a hawser, and some forty sailors were able to make it to safety before the vessel lurched, the rope was lost, and some 200 souls perished.

I must admit, I had wondered whether visiting the Iolaire monument – the coiled ropes cast in metal on a viewing platform – was going to be a good use of our time. But the Papuans were deeply moved. I had overlooked the

Mama Enggelina at the Iolaire memorial: "That rope is how they pulled life back into the community."

fact that they, too, are a maritime people and understand the meaning of such loss at sea. And one of the women elders, Mama Enggelina, reached down ever so gently, and touched the sculptor's representation of the rope. It was as if to give or to receive some sort of blessing. She is some sort of pastor in her community.

Later, we asked what had most moved them in the day. Given Papua's history of authoritarian governance, for some it was the speculation that the local sailors were unable to tell the ship's officers that they were off-course due to the social class differences between them. For others, it was the way the imperilled swimmer used his knowledge of the sea – his indigenous technical knowledge - to judge the exact right moment to surge

forward with the rope and reach the beach. But for Mama Enggelina, it was the rope itself, its many-pleated strands that spoke.

“What did it say to you?” we asked her.

“That rope,” she answered, “is how they pulled life back into the community.”

Many times since then, when speaking to communities about the mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions and necessary adaptation to come-what-may in the come-to-pass, I’ve quoted what Mama said that day. And I’ve asked a question: “What strand of the rope can you pleat in your communities, to pull life back in a world of climate change?”

The Rising of Iona

There is a book of Hebridean legends by the Skye-connected folklorist, Otta Swire. She was the mother of the campaigner Dr Jim Swire, whose daughter, Flora MacDonald Margaret Swire, was a medical student who died in the Lockerbie bombing of Pan Am flight 103 in 1988. [45] Otta’s book retells the legend of the Three Great Floods drawing partly on the archives of Alexander Carmichael but probably also other sources that she does not name.

The first was the primordial flood of the Creation, when God’s spirit “moved upon the face of the waters.”[46]

The second was the flood of Noah, as Genesis tells, brought on by human hubris.

And the third was, as the old woman mentioned earlier told Carmichael, the flood yet to come.

Otta adds that in the final flood, the oceans will sweep over “and drown all the islands . . . but Iona will rise on the waters and float there like a crown; and the dead who are buried in her will arise dry and so be easily recognised at the Last Day.”[47]

And that's it. But stories need decoding, they need to come alive and speak in us like dreams.

What, then, did Iona mean to the Gaels of old? But the epicentre of the Scottish Celtic church and life in God.

What does it mean to keep your feet dry? Perhaps to "keep the heid", and be well grounded in communities of place?

What does it mean to rise up like a crown? But that come what may, the spiritual life is what endures.

Our visitors from Papua were touched by many things and people they encountered in the Hebrides. They were struck by the importance of museums, of language, of women's role in community empowerment, of the land and efforts made to hold on to the language.

They were struck especially by the still-living spirituality in the community, and on the two occasions that we visited the Church of Scotland down in Leverburgh with the elder, Shonny MacAulay the boatbuilder, even some of the Muslims came.

And here is their conclusion. Here is what they're taking forward, every day, in their work over on the other side of the world.

Here is what they made of climate change, land and community empowerment in these islands.[48]

> We have seen that people here have two things that makes their communities work: love, and a sense of ownership. The land in Papua is more productive, but because these people love so much it holds it all together. They're happy to live for other people and not just for themselves. They understand that land is God's creation.

I'll leave you with those words. May they rise with you like a crown above the waves. I have shared with you tonight the best I can some impacts of the life and work of Angus "Ease" Macleod.

Thank you and goodnight.

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In this booklet Alastair McIntosh, the well-known writer, scholar, broadcaster, and activist, sets out some typically provocative and insightful views on climate change and the need for a massive shift in human behaviour if a catastrophe is to be avoided. He argues that - paradoxical though it may appear - the ethos, spiritual, and community values of small and seemingly remote islands from as far apart as the South Pacific and the Hebrides could provide the inspiration and hold a key to the sort of changes required much more widely to address this pressing global challenge. In doing so, Alastair brings together ideas on land, community, and climate change – inter-linked themes which are central to his own philosophy and life-long campaigning.

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Tel: 01851 880737-

ISBN 978-1-907443-82-4

www.theislandsbooktrust.com

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Price £6

www.angusmacleodarchive.org.uk

Design and print by Pairc Press