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## Dark Liturgy, Bloody Praxis: the 1916 Rising

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# Dark Liturgy, Bloody Praxis: the 1916 Rising<sup>1</sup>

Séamus Murphy SJ

There is something mysterious about our commemoration of the Easter Rising. Even on the dubious assumption that Irish history is just a long struggle for national independence, it is striking that other important events in that history are not commemorated.

Militarily insignificant, the Rising's political impact was large. It reinforced Ulster unionist determination to refuse all compromise with nationalists. It undermined John Redmond's Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP). To the present day, it has inspired IRA clones to bomb Britain and the unionists out of Ireland.

In the 1972–1998 period, Irish governments tacitly acknowledged the politically destructive link between the Rising and the IRA campaign by dropping the military element in the Rising's commemoration. It is unclear why they reverted to it after the 1998 Good Friday Agreement (GFA).

Revealingly, Irish governments rarely celebrate the Rising on its own merits. They usually tether it to a democratic project. In 1941, de Valera linked it to Irish neutrality during the Second World War; in 1966 Sean Lemass associated it with economic development; and in 2006 Bertie Ahern surrounded it with the democratic *cordon sanitaire* of the 1937 Irish Constitution, the 1972 ratification of the Treaty of Rome, and the 1998 GFA. Tethered it may be, but democratic transubstantiation of the Rising never succeeds. This article explores why it cannot succeed.

Democratically grounded political events are absorbed into the nation's sense of itself as yesterday's almost forgotten achievements: not just part of our history, but part of us. *We* accepted the Constitution, voted ourselves into the EEC, and validated the GFA.

By contrast, the Rising represented nobody but its leaders: not the IPP or its voters, not Sinn Féin, not the Volunteer leadership, not all the IRB, and not even all who marched out on that Easter Monday in 1916. That many nationalists view the Rising's leaders as heroes is implicit recognition that

we ordinary people are not on the same plane as they. The lack of democratic legitimacy is no mere legal technicality: it is precisely why the Rising can never be fully part of us.

What, then, is the nature of the symbolic power that the Rising exerts even over many nationalists who disapprove of IRA activity?

### **Liturgy and action**

It is often noted that the Rising was theatre, rarely that it was liturgy. Theatre and liturgy are representational and symbolic, presenting image and rite to the congregation or audience, moving their emotions in catharsis and/or elevation, shaping their image of the world, and calling them to anamnetic action of remembrance and reenactment.

Unless they lead to action, theatre and liturgy are impotent; the Rising was not impotent. As such, it is not above moral evaluation because it is liturgical, nor beneath it because it is theatrical. Liturgy and social praxis, Christian or pagan, are deeply interrelated and dialectically reinforcing.<sup>2</sup> Worship and liturgy are morally serious. Here I explore the relationship between the Rising's social praxis and its 'liturgy'.

Christian liturgy expresses and affirms the faith and is related to action, for it is the nerve-centre of Christian life, modeling self-sacrificing service, inspiring the Eucharist-united community to peace, mercy and justice, and being the source of revitalisation of identity and hope.<sup>3</sup> From it flows Catholic social thought (CST), which identifies goals of peace, social order, common goods, human rights, equality, solidarity and subsidiarity, etc., as well as the limits on the means by which to pursue those goals.

### **The call to sacrifice**

The prophecy of the Rising was the staging of Yeats's 1902 play *Cathleen ni Houlihan*, wherein a personified Ireland calls on the young to shed their blood in battle for their country.<sup>4</sup> When first staged, it electrified audiences. It thematised, focused, and intensified nationalist sentiment. It also politicised it, since it was a call to insurrection and a rejection of the Home Rule movement. It shaped the imagination and symbolic thought of the Rising's leaders. In particular, the old woman's words, 'They shall be remembered forever', remained with them.<sup>5</sup>

When, in September 1914 Tom Clarke's faction of the IRB began planning the Rising, they wanted to win and had no interest in blood-sacrifice. By



1916, along with James Connolly, they were desperate to have an uprising, even an unsuccessful one. Over the weekend of Easter Sunday, the non-arrival of German aid and Eoin MacNeill's cancellation of Volunteer manoeuvres ended all hope of success.

At this point the blood-sacrifice theme moved from the background to centre-stage in the minds of the leaders. Pearse, MacDonagh and Plunkett were dramatists and poets, who loved the stage and blood-imagery. Pearse had long preached blood-sacrifice, as IRB member Bulmer Hobson later recalled: '[Pearse] was a sentimental egoist, full of curious Old Testament theories about being the scapegoat for the people, and he became convinced of the necessity for a periodic blood sacrifice to keep the national spirit alive'.<sup>6</sup> Hardheaded types like Clarke and Connolly had dismissed Pearse as a dreamer. But in the early months of 1916, aware of the power of Pearse's oratory when he was in spiritual communion with Cuchulainn and Tone, they embraced the blood-sacrifice theme.<sup>7</sup>

Clarke had distrusted Pearse's political judgment, but he gradually saw the propaganda value of Pearse's oratorical gifts and got him to produce the fiery speech at O'Donovan Rossa's graveside in summer 1915. In Easter week, he too used that language: 'in the history of Ireland the shedding of blood had always succeeded in raising the spirit and morale of the people'.<sup>8</sup>

In December 1915, Pearse described the previous sixteen months of the Great War as 'the most glorious in the history of Europe', adding: 'Such august homage was never before offered to God as this, the homage of millions of lives given gladly for love of country.' Connolly denounced him as a 'blithering idiot'.<sup>9</sup> Two months later, he wrote: 'Without the slightest trace of irreverence but in all due humility and awe, we recognise that of us, as of mankind before Calvary, it may truly be said "without the shedding of Blood there is no Redemption"'.<sup>10</sup> To have Connolly speaking thus is striking testimony to the ascendancy that Pearse's blood-sacrifice thinking had acquired over the minds of the Rising's leaders.

In imagining the Rising, Pearse adapted several Christian-related ideas: (1) it is good to die for others; (2) such dying is heroic, even when failing, perhaps particularly when one knows it will fail; (3) such failures are only apparent, since a victory is achieved through death, whether through its being exemplary or leading to resurrection or apotheosis;<sup>11</sup> (4) death and bloodshed can be redemptive.<sup>12</sup> He used the Christ-image too: on one occasion he compared himself to Christ, at another time Tone is the Christ-figure, and on

a third occasion the Irish people themselves are to be their own saviour.

### **Time and place**

Pearse grasped the importance of symbols in the Church's life, and applied this to the Irish nation's life.<sup>13</sup> He knew that symbols include not just material objects but also utterances and actions. Importantly, he understood what is incomprehensible to a utilitarian and nominalist mindset: that to symbolise is not merely to represent but also to transform, for the sacrament effects and makes present that which it signifies.

For time, he chose the high festival of Christ's resurrection as the day to launch the Rising, sacramental token of Ireland's resurrection. For place, he chose Dublin's city centre, the most densely populated part of Ireland, as the 'high place' where the greatest number of people could behold the ritual of their redemption, the blood-sacrifice that would be a symbolic dramatic reenactment of age-old Irish war against the British.

### **Sacrifice and scapegoat**

Their seizure of the GPO on Easter Monday was like the entrance of priests into their temple: their *Introibo ad altare Dei*, with appropriate cleansing of the temple. They represented the people, not as a politician represents the electorate, but as a priest represents the congregation. Congregations are not consulted about the sacrifice.

As priests, they guarded their 'mystery' from the profane, behind the 'veil of the temple' or iconostasis of the GPO walls. When Pearse went out to read the Proclamation, he was the priest coming from behind the iconostasis to proclaim the gospel, the saving word to a bemused laity, telling them that the prophecies of what he (in his essay 'The Sovereign People') called 'the four evangelists' of Irish nationalism, Tone, Davis, Lalor and Mitchel, were being fulfilled in their sight, and that their god stood revealed at last, in the word and deed of the Proclamation and Rising.

The Proclamation uses religious and sacrificial imagery. It is issued 'in the name of God and the dead generations', not in the name of the living. It receives the 'pledge' of 'the lives' of the Rising's leaders and soldiers. It 'claims the allegiance' of all Irish people. It demands that the Irish people be prepared to 'sacrifice themselves for the common good' in order to 'prove worthy' of 'the august destiny' to which the nation is called. Distinguishing Ireland from the people, it deifies: 'Ireland, through us, summons her



children'. The people are, at need, to be sacrificed for, or to, Ireland.<sup>14</sup> After reading the sacred text, he withdrew behind the iconostasis to complete the sacrifice.

The bystanders, not realising they were part of a drama, let alone a sacrificial liturgy, sniggered. But at the end of the week, with the blood of nearly five hundred dead poured out, and much of O'Connell Street, including the GPO, in the flames of the sacrificial holocaust,<sup>15</sup> they were more respectful.

In Hobson's recollection, Pearse confused sacrifice with scapegoating. The instructions of Leviticus for Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, direct that two goats be presented to the Lord. The one the Lord chooses is sacrificed as a sin-offering, while the one the Lord rejects is loaded with the guilt of the people and driven into the desert.

What Pearse and the other leaders did was in line with Leviticus. They were the pleasing blood-sacrifice or 'august homage' for Ireland's redemption. This was helped by the fact that the British executed sixteen of them, although the sacrifice would have worked had they died fighting. With many wounded, the congregation of Dubliners had the blood sprinkled on them. Non-combatants killed could count as a secondary part of blood-sacrifice.

The scapegoat was Britain. It was a shock to nationalists to find a large minority of Irish people insisting they were unionists and rejecting Dublin rule. This could not fit into the nationalist worldview. While Redmond and the IPP were struggling to come to terms with it, the Rising's leaders went into denial about the unionists, by the mechanism of scapegoating the British. The Proclamation mentions the existence of a minority, but dismisses them as not serious and blames Britain for their existence.

The Rising was a ritual driving of the British (with their parliamentary politics) out into the wilderness, as the guilty cause of all the trouble, whose expulsion would unite the people in peace.<sup>16</sup>

The acolytes played their parts well. Rank-and-file Volunteers and Irish Citizen Army members, male and female, fought well and displayed discipline, in combat and surrender, earning the respect of British officers and Dubliners.<sup>17</sup>

The drama was not a mere theatrical piece, but had liturgical effect, since it involved real bloodshed, some of it spattered upon an amused, abusive and uncomprehending people, overawing them into silence and a wondering uncertainty,<sup>18</sup> and in the subsequent months moving them to utter 'Amen', token of the sacrifice taking effect.<sup>19</sup>

### **The Kingdom is at hand**

In the aftermath, the spiritual power of the Rising worked on Irish nationalists. Sinn Féin found itself thrust into the role of political heir and transformed from a pacifist and dual-monarchist party into something more amorphous. Within a year, local Volunteer groups intent on carrying on the work of Easter Week emerged, and from their initiative began the War of Independence in 1919, subject to little control by the Dublin GHQ, and, despising politicians as the Rising's leaders had, indifferent to the Dáil.<sup>20</sup>

As a French observer noted at the time, many Sinn Féiners and Volunteers in the 1919–22 period had a 'deliberate determination to ignore what is, and to take account, nay to admit the very existence, only of what ought to be'. He characterised them as 'millenarians',<sup>21</sup> expecting the imminent revelation of the Kingdom-Republic of Cathleen ni Houlihan, as foretold by visionaries like Pearse. Millenarianism is always pre- or anti-political: it requires only faith and unquestioning acceptance of the glory being revealed.

### **The violent bear it away...<sup>22</sup>**

From the initiation of the 1919–21 War of Independence, through the occupation of central Dublin by anti-Treaty forces in 1922, the border campaign of 1956–62, the Provo war, up to the Real IRA's campaign, legitimacy has always been claimed as inherited from the model of the Easter Rising, not from parliamentary elections.

Irish governments repress the IRA, but avoid rejecting the Rising, saying that it must be 'reclaimed from the men of violence', as if the Rising's leaders were not themselves 'men of violence'. It cannot be so 'reclaimed', for, separated from its leaders' intentions and worldview, the Rising has no meaning, and symbols and texts cannot be made to mean whatever one wishes them to mean.<sup>23</sup>

Pearse and the others were not so much blasphemers as idolators.<sup>24</sup> When Pearse said of the slaughter of the First World War that 'such august homage was never before offered to God as this',<sup>25</sup> he was not – regardless of what he thought – referring to the Christian God. The kind of god who would value such 'august homage' is a Mars or Odin. In 'Ghosts' and 'The Sovereign People', Pearse praises John Mitchel, one of those whom he terms the four evangelists of Irish separatism, for having 'preached hate'.<sup>26</sup> The 'god' invoked (twice) in the Proclamation and to whom sacrifice was offered was not the God of Jesus Christ, but an Ireland that hates Britain: that god rejected



Redmond and Craig along with Asquith.<sup>27</sup>

As the Proclamation's opening shows, the Rising's leaders envisaged a new communion in the blood of dead martyrs and of the martyrs-to-be and, to that end, sought, by devices theatrical and liturgical, to take possession of the souls of the living. To a remarkable extent, they succeeded. Christian faith holds that Christ's sacrifice ends the need for any future sacrifices. But, in Yeats's words: '*For Patrick Pearse had said / That in every generation / Must Ireland's blood be shed*'. The sacrifices must go on.<sup>28</sup> Through the sacrificial aspects of the Rising, they perpetrated a spiritual violence upon the Irish nationalist community from which it has not fully recovered.

Central to the drama is the dream of freedom. It is beautifully expressed in Liam Mac Uistin's poem 'Aisling' (1976) in the Garden of Remembrance, a poem that, saying nothing about violence, could as easily embrace O'Connell and Davitt as Tone and Pearse. But the Garden was opened as a shrine to the Rising. The Rising's vision was anything but 'inclusive': from that church of authentic Irishness are excommunicated the democrats, constitutionalists, home rulers, and unionists. It is as if O'Connell and Davitt had no dream of Irish freedom, made no sacrifices for it, and did not give their lives for it. That no comparable shrine exists for them reflects the grip of the new communion established in the blood of the Rising's leaders.

In this view, bloodshed has become an end in itself, since Irish freedom without it has no value. Only a dark pagan liturgy can command and celebrate such bloody praxis.

### **Social thought**

In Christian life, the liturgy symbolises and focuses social action. That the Rising's god is not the Christian God is reflected in the deep incompatibility of its socio-political values and action with Christian social thought.

Modern Catholic social thought was inaugurated in Pope Leo XIII's 1891 encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, which focuses on the conditions of working class life under industrial capitalism. It made quite a stir in Catholic circles and would have been known to the Rising's more literate leaders, particularly Connolly, who engaged in debate with Catholic priests on social justice and Catholic social teaching. They would also have been aware of this teaching as it concerned war and peace, the state and political revolution.

In broad terms, (1) Catholic social teaching supports peace and tolerates only a restricted resort to war, holding that social progress requires peaceful



means. (2) It takes the person, not the nation or collective, as the central locus of value, holding up personal dignity and human rights as non-negotiables. It conceives of social well-being as achievable only on the basis of the principles of (3) the common good and solidarity, (4) subsidiarity and participation. It values (5) the rule of law, and takes the proper goal of (6) politics to be the common good, as well as taking general political participation to be integral to the common good. (7) It affirms private property as a socially accountable stewardship, and views the material goods of the earth as destined for all.

Thanks to the influence of the Irish Labour party, the Rising's social thought accepted (7). But, engulfed in nationalist millenarian emotionalism, it rejected all the other principles. In brief:

- (1) They were opposed, in principle, to peaceful means of obtaining independence.<sup>29</sup>
- (2) They valued the nation above the person.<sup>30</sup> The Proclamation calls on Irish citizens to sacrifice themselves in response to the summons of a nation that was not to be identified with the actual Irish people.
- (3) The only common good they recognised was that of the Irish nation: not those of local government or non-state groups, nor that of global humanity, nor goods common to Britain and Ireland. Furthermore, they saw themselves as the only competent body to determine that common good.

Pearse emphasised separation and sovereignty as the essence of Irish freedom. Catholic social teaching sees national sovereignty as having merely instrumental value, proposing solidarity in order to achieve common goods and holding that these obtain at local, regional, national, and international levels.

- (4) They did not value participation or subsidiarity. They were indifferent to the 1898 democratisation of local government, and despised democratic elections. In deciding on a rising, they excluded anybody who might have disagreed with them.<sup>31</sup> The Proclamation indicates that, while the people will eventually be allowed to choose a government, decisions for independence and a republic are not theirs to make. Although promising the people equality and care, it treats them as subjects, not citizens.
- (5) Their religion entailed the rule of gunmen in the image and likeness of Cuchulainn and Tone, which entailed rejecting the rule of law.
- (6) While Catholic social teaching views politics as aiming at the highest good of the community, the Rising's leaders rejected politics. Being a

republican in 1916 did not mean having constructive political proposals, but only hating the British (and unionists) enough to want to drive them out by force.<sup>32</sup>

By the standards of Catholic social teaching, the Rising's social praxis is destructive and dehumanising, as it was bound to be, given the faith and cult from which it arose.<sup>33</sup> A few years later, PS O'Hegarty, former member of the IRB Supreme Council, portrayed the spiritual effect of the war of independence in searing language:

We turned the whole thoughts and passions of a generation upon blood and revenge and death; we placed gunmen, mostly half-educated and totally inexperienced, as dictators with powers of life and death over large areas. We derided the Moral Law and said there was no law but the law of force. And the Moral Law answered us. Every devilish thing we did against the British went its full circle and then boomeranged and smote us ten-fold; and the cumulative effect of the whole of it was a general moral weakening and a general degradation and a general cynicism and disbelief in either virtue or decency, in goodness or uprightness or honesty ... And the shock of that plunge from the heights to the depths staggered the whole nation.<sup>34</sup>

The mark of the false god: it has power to destroy, but none to create.

## Conclusion

Today, a century later, the uncritical official enthusiasm for the Rising shows that its sacramental power continues to grip us.

Ethical critique of the Rising is often dismissed as revisionist soulless rationalism.<sup>35</sup> But Sean O'Casey's play *The Shadow of A Gunman* (1923), set in the War of Independence, captures the desolate darkness of the Rising's liturgy-and-praxis. In moral agony, one of the characters shrieks:

I wish to God it was over. The country is gone mad. Instead of countin' their beads now they're countin' bullets; their Hail Marys and paternosters are burstin' bombs – burstin' bombs, an' the rattle of machine-guns; petrol is their holy water; their Mass is a burnin' buildin'; their De Profundis is "The Soldiers' Song", and their creed is, I believe in the gun almighty, maker of heaven an' earth – an' it's all for "the glory o' God an' the honour o' Ireland". [Act II]

In his 'Meditations in Time of Civil War', Yeats said of the Rising's spiritual food:

*We had fed the heart on fantasies,  
The heart's grown brutal from the fare;  
More substance in our enmities  
Than in our love.*

In the hate-filled violence unleashed, both artists intuited the religious symbolic power at work. It might masquerade in Catholic devotional dress, but its meaning, the master whom it served, was not the Christian God.

A sacrament is a sign that effects what it signifies; the Rising's liturgy was indeed effective. If we embrace the signifiers, we are assenting to the effects. Celebrating the Rising is celebrating its sacrament. We cannot partake of that sacrament without being changed by it. To remember respectfully – and without qualifying it in light of the Good Friday Agreement – is to submit to its transformative power, to partake of its nourishment, and to commit oneself (however unconsciously) to imitation: 'Do this in memory of me'.<sup>36</sup> In the preface to 'Ghosts', Pearse remarked: 'There is only one way to appease a ghost. You must do the thing it asks you'.<sup>37</sup> The command of Pearse's ghost has been obeyed in this centenary of the Rising, and his bloody sacrifice reenacted sacramentally. It will not be without effect.

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#### Notes

- 1 In memory of Fr Frank Shaw SJ, author of 'The Canon of Irish History: A Challenge', *Studies* LXI, 242 (1972).
- 2 The Bible (Colossians 3,5 and Ephesians 5,5) identifies greed as idolatry. Idols or false gods are revealed not just in ritual but also in the related moral order.
- 3 See Séamus Murphy, 'Liberating the Irish Mass', *The Furrow* 32/9 (1981), 564–575.
- 4 Going further to propose actual worship of Cathleen ni Houlihan, Yeats's poem 'Red Hanrahan's Song About Ireland' (1904) reinforced the message.
- 5 See Padraig Pearse's poem 'The Mother', written while awaiting execution.
- 6 BMH (Bureau of Military History), Witness Statement 82 (Bulmer Hobson).
- 7 Relevant Scripture references: Exodus 9:21-27 (the blood of the lamb makes



- the angel of death pass over), Leviticus 8-9 (blood purifies), Leviticus 16 (the scapegoat), and Hebrews 9:22 (no redemption without blood-sacrifice).
- 8 BMH, Witness Statement 399 (Min Ryan).
  - 9 *Workers' Republic*, 25 December 1915.
  - 10 *ibid.*, 5 February 1916.
  - 11 At his trial, Pearse stated: 'We seem to have lost. We have not lost. To refuse to fight would have been to lose; to fight is to win. We have kept faith with the past, and handed a tradition to the future. If you strike us down, we shall rise again and renew the fight'.
  - 12 For relevant writings, see Patrick Pearse, *The Coming Revolution: The Political Writings and Speeches of Patrick Pearse* (Cork: Mercier Press, first published, 1917; reissued with introduction by Gabriel Doherty, 2012).
  - 13 See Pearse, *op. cit.*, pp.122–6.
  - 14 Eoin MacNeill's letter to Pearse just before the Rising attacks the Cathleen ni Houlihan idea that Ireland transcends the Irish people. For the full text, see FX Martin, 'Eoin MacNeill on the 1916 Rising', *Irish Historical Studies* 12/47 (1961), 226–271.
  - 15 Compare 1 Kings 18,38 for the fire that consumed Elijah's sacrifice.
  - 16 Unlike the blood-sacrifice theme, this could not be conscious. René Girard's work on the scapegoating mechanism is relevant here: see his *La Violence et le Sacré* (Paris: Éditions Grasset, 1972), translated as *Violence and the Sacred* (Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, 1979); *Des Choses Cachées Depuis la Fondation du Monde* (Paris: Éditions Grasset, 1978), translated as *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World* (Palo Alto, California: Stanford University Press, 1987); and *Le Bouc émissaire* (Paris: Éditions Grasset, 1982), translated as *The Scapegoat* (Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, 1986).
  - 17 See Clair Wills, *Dublin 1916. The Siege of the GPO* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009), pp.99–102; Fearghal McGarry, *The Rising. Ireland: Easter 1916* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), chapter 7.
  - 18 By Wednesday of Easter week, one witness described 'everyone he met as trying to read the "secret" opinions of others' (Wills, *Dublin 1916*, p.68).
  - 19 See Wills, *op. cit.*, pp.105–18 on the outpouring of popular feeling after the executions, intensely religious as much as nationalist. Masses, prayers, icons, and references to 'St Patrick Pearse' multiplied. The Church found itself annexed to Pearse and his comrades' nation-worship.
  - 20 See Charles Townshend, *The Republic. The Fight for Irish Independence, 1918–1923* (London: Penguin Books, 2013), pp.73–89.
  - 21 Townshend, *op. cit.*, pp.20–1.
  - 22 Matthew 11,12.

- 23 As in Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, the ring of power cannot be made to serve purposes other than those for which it was created.
- 24 See Francis Shaw, 'The Canon of Irish History', 122–6, for the blasphemy charge.
- 25 Pearse, *The Coming Revolution*, p.170.
- 26 *ibid.*, pp.200–1, 284.
- 27 In 'Ghosts', Pearse uses priestly language to curse IPP leaders as apostates who have offered 'holocaust' and 'sacrifice' (his words) to a demon (*ibid.*, p.183).
- 28 See Dogberry's exclamation in *Much Ado About Nothing*, IV.ii: 'O villain! Thou wilt be condemn'd into everlasting redemption'.
- 29 Eg, Pearse, *The Coming Revolution*, p.171: 'Ireland will not find Christ's peace until she has taken Christ's sword'.
- 30 Pearse, *ibid.*, p.84, said patriots should not worry about shooting the innocent, for 'bloodshed is a cleansing and sanctifying thing'.
- 31 The 19<sup>th</sup> century Catholic Church condemned secret oath-bound societies, since hermetically sealed élites are closed to all dialogue.
- 32 See Diarmaid Ferriter, *A Nation and Not A Rabble. The Irish Revolution 1913–1923* (London: Profile Books, 2015), p.9; Wills, *Dublin 1916*, p.12.
- 33 A muted note of repentance is discernible in the short story 'Guests of the Nation' (1931) by Frank O'Connor, who had fought in the War of Independence. In the story, where the IRA carry out a reprisal killing of two captured British soldiers, the humanity of the British is acknowledged, and the Volunteers who shoot them are granted the grace of seeing the damage they have inflicted on their own humanity, expressed poignantly in the last lines: '... and I was somehow very small and very lonely. And anything that ever happened me after I never felt the same about again'.
- 34 PS O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Féin* (Dublin: Talbot Press, 1924), p.91.
- 35 'Is their logic to outweigh / MacDonagh's bony thumb?' (Yeats, 'Sixteen Dead Men').
- 36 Luke 22,19; 1 Corinthians 11,25.
- 37 Pearse, *The Coming Revolution*, p.175.

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