



**Image of  
the day**

**St  
Patrick's  
Parish  
Church  
Brough -  
shane**

December 18, 2021

## Overview

### +Image of the day

St Patrick's Parish Church, Broughshane

### +People and places

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Good practice highlighted in Eco–Congregation Ireland recent newsletter

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When all the others were away at Mass by Seamus Heaney





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## People and places

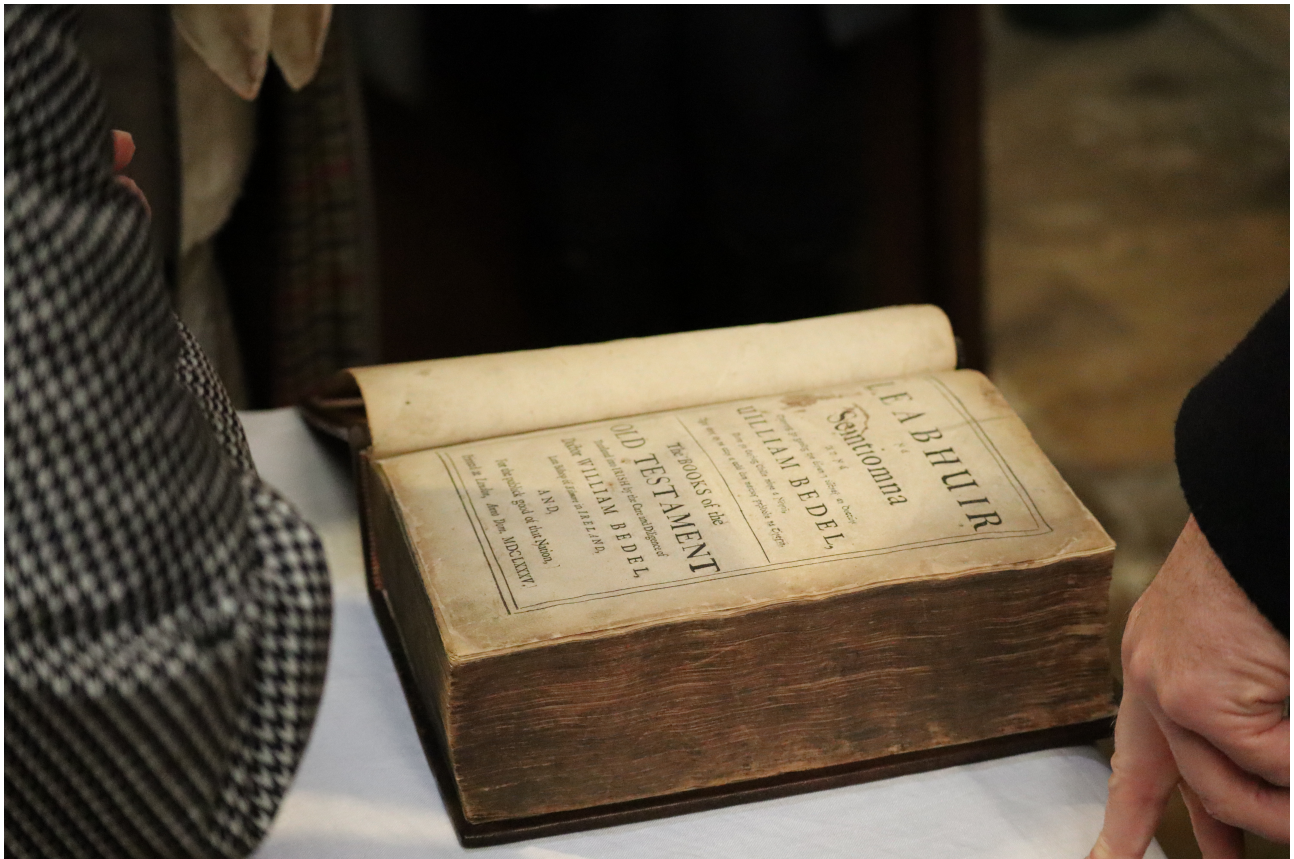


The Rev. Ted Ardis, Dean's Vicar, and the Rev. Tony Murphy

### **An Bíobla Naofa presented to St Fin Barre's Cathedral, Cork**

**On Saturday, 11th December 2021 Cumann Gaelach na hEaglaise presented a copy of “An Bíobla Naofa” to St Fin Barre's Cathedral, Cork. An Bíobla Naofa is a translation from the original Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek Bible texts into Irish which was completed in 1981.**

After the presentation, Daniel Fleming, curator at The Cotton Library Lismore, gave a talk and allowed the congregation to have a closer look at an original translation of the Old Testament from 1685.



## Original copy of the Old Testament in Irish from 1685

The Rev. Tony Murphy said: “Cumann Gaelach na hEaglaise (The Irish Guild of the Church) is delighted to have had the opportunity to present a copy of “An Bíobla Naofa” to St Fin Barre’s Cathedral in recognition of the hospitality that Dean Nigel and the Rev. Ted offer us in both holding our monthly service and making it available on the internet.”

The first Irish Language translation of the New Testament was completed by Uilliam Ó Domhnaill, Archbishop of Tuam in 1602. The task of translating the Old Testament was undertaken by William Bedell, an English Man and Bishop of Kilmore. Bedell learned the Irish Language and with the aid of two native speakers undertook the much bigger task of

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translating the Old Testament. This task was completed in 1640.

It was over forty years later before the full Bible, Old and New Testament, was published under the patronage of scientist Robert Boyle. The Roman Catholic Church for many years did not encourage the production of the Bible in the vernacular. For that reason there was little work carried out on further translation of the Bible in Irish.

In 1970, nearly 300 years later, Canon Cosslett Ó Cuinn published an *Tiomna Nua* on behalf of *Cumann Gaelach an hEaglaise*. During this time work was also underway in the Roman Catholic Church on the modern publication of a full edition of *An Bíobla Naofa* in 1981. This was a massive effort and a life long work by an *tAthair Pádraig Ó Fiannachta*, *Beannacht Dé ar a anam*.

The size of the book is not suitable for the average person in the pews. An ecumenical project led by *Cumann na Sagart*, the National Bible Society of Ireland, the Bible Society of Northern Ireland, and *Cumann Gaelach na hEaglaise* works on the publication of *An Bíobla Naofa* in a size that each person can hold.

A campaign has started to raise €50,000 to support this publication, so that a free copy can be presented to all *Gaelscoileanna* and language bodies. Archdeacon Gary Hastings, a man who learned Irish in his adult years, has been heavily involved in this project and the introductory comments have been signed by the Roman Catholic and Church of Ireland Primates.



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**Colm and Bronagh called with Black Santa on their wedding day. Congratulations to the newly weds.**

## **Good practice highlighted in Eco–Congregation Ireland recent newsletter**

**Eco–Congregation Ireland’s latest newsletter is now available, highlighting examples of environmental projects undertaken by churches across the island of Ireland.**

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This edition includes coverage of a Service of the Word for COP26 at the Church of Ireland Theological Institute, a Gold Award for Westport Eco–Congregation, and apple tree planting in Carrigaline.

Eco–Congregation Ireland is an initiative of the Irish Inter Church Meeting, and includes members from the Roman Catholic Church, Church of Ireland, Presbyterian Church, Methodist Church and Religious Society of Friends.

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## News Reports

### **Australian Anglican Church defrocks former Archbishop of Perth for failing to deal appropriately with allegations of sexual abuse of children**

**The Anglican Church of Australia has restated its firm commitment to the safety of children and vulnerable people, following the defrocking of Roger Herft, formerly Archbishop of Perth and Bishop of Newcastle.**

The Episcopal Standards Board of the Anglican Church of Australia determined on 13 December the Mr Herft is “unfit to remain in Holy Orders” and so will no longer be recognised as an ordained member of the Anglican Church.



The decision was made in response to the findings of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, made public in 2020. The report determined that Mr Herft had failed to deal appropriately with allegations of sexual abuse of children during his time as Bishop of Newcastle between 1993 and 2005.

There is no suggestion, and there has been no allegation, that Mr Herft himself personally participated in such behaviour. The Board has examined the extent to which he discharged his responsibility as bishop.

The Primate of the Anglican Church of Australia, Archbishop Geoff Smith, said the church has been “shocked and dismayed” at the findings from the Royal Commission, and of the “scope of our failure to tackle child sexual abuse



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within the Church and the depth of survivors' pain and suffering".

"We are deeply ashamed of the many ways in which we let down survivors, both in the way we have acted and the way we failed to act," he said in a statement.

"The Anglican Church of Australia is committed to the safety of children and vulnerable people in its care and to ensuring that information concerning possible abuse is taken seriously and dealt with appropriately."

## **NI leads rest of the UK on donations to good causes**

**Some people in Northern Ireland give £1,200 a year to charity, making them the most generous donors in the UK.**

Research shows that in every constituency here, the typical donor gives more of their income to charity than the UK average of 0.7%., Claire McNeilly writes in the Belfast Telegraph

Donors in north Antrim were found to be the most generous because the typical person there donates 2.9% of their gross income, or £1,200 a year, according to the Law Family Commission on Civil Society.

Nationally, however, research by Pro Bono Economics found that typical donations from the UK's top 1% of earners — those earning more than £175,000 — dropped by 21% in

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Magheracross clergy from Anglican and Catholic parishes -  
“Thank you to all who dropped by and made yesterday such a wonderful day. So many chats and waves and stories shared. Donations made a total of £4852.20. A great community effort.”

real terms between 2011/12 and 2018/19, despite the typical annual income among this group rising by 10% over the same period.

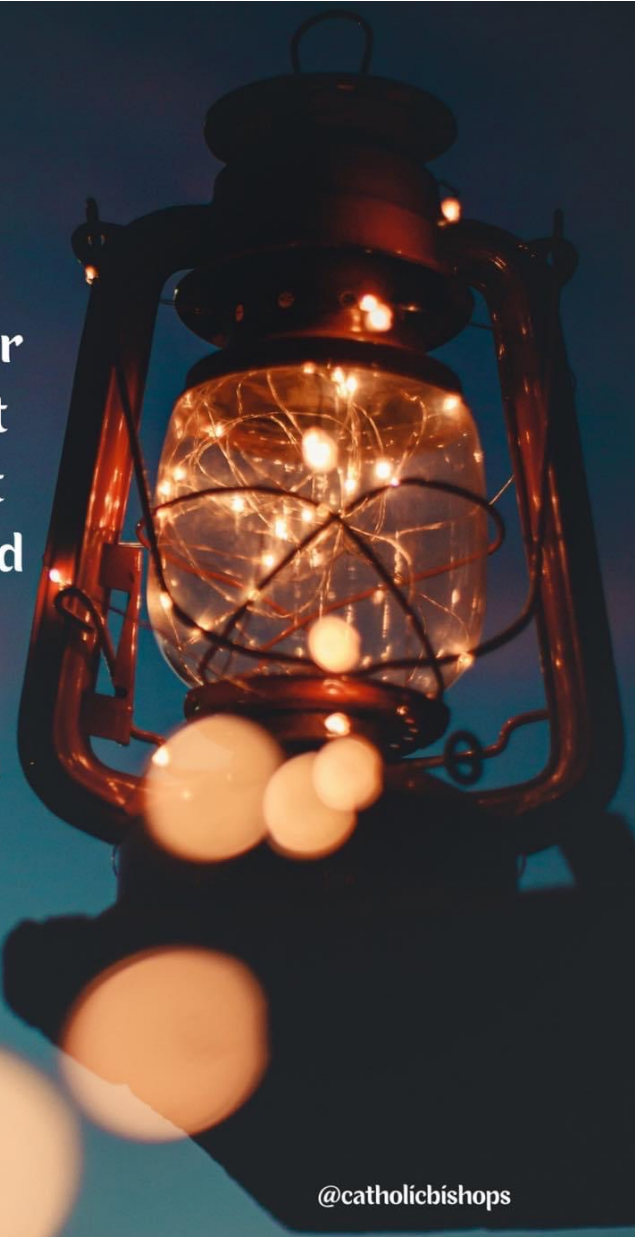
To tackle this decline in philanthropy, the commission is calling for a collaborative effort between the charity sector, central and local government, philanthropists and business in order to bring giving across the country up to the same levels as in Northern Ireland, which is being hailed as a trailblazing region.

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Northern Ireland has the highest rate of average donations to charity in the UK in terms of those who declare charity donations in their self-assessment tax returns, the study found.

In that scenario, 1.7% of the typical donor's income is being given to good causes each year. This is more than double the typical UK average of 0.7%. The analysis found that in 2018/19, the residents of north Antrim who declare



Can we older people pray  
during Advent, not that our  
young people will do what  
we want them to, but that  
they can discover what God  
wants them to do and  
become.

– Bishop Donal McKeown

@catholicbishops



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charitable donations were the most generous, with the typical donor giving £1,200, a year.

However, across the UK as a whole, the proportion of the population giving to charity has been falling. Between 2000 and 2018, the proportion of households donating regularly to charity fell from 32% to 26%.

Matt Whittaker, CEO of Pro Bono Economics, said £20bn was given annually by the UK public through philanthropy. He added: “While charity donors in Northern Ireland are leading the way in donations, this research shows that those with the deepest pockets can afford to reach a little further.”  
Courtesy The Belfast Telegraph.

## Christians close to dipping below half of population for first time

**The number of Christians in England is close to falling below 50 per cent of the population for the first time as atheists now account for more than a third of “faith” groups.**

Just over half of the population in England and Wales, some 51 per cent, reported their religion as Christian in 2019 – a decline of nearly 8.3 percentage points since the 2011 census, the last time a comprehensive survey of the nation’s different religions took place.

The results of the most recent population census will be published next year. However, in the most detailed government analysis in more than a decade, the Office for

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National Statistics published data showing that “no religion” (including where not stated) was the second most common response in 2019, rising from 32.3 to 38.4 per cent.

The figures come as the Church of England tries to rebrand itself to attract new worshippers, in what the Archbishop of York, the Most Rev Stephen Cottrell, has dubbed a “simpler, humbler, bolder” vision for the institution’s future after most key measures of church attendance fell by 15 to 20 per cent from 2009 to 2019.

Dave Male, the Church of England’s director of evangelism and discipleship, said: “It’s encouraging that in an age where people are less likely to [class] themselves as ‘Christian’ more than half the population still do.

“We know from research that there is a willingness among younger generations to engage with faith and, for people of all ages, the need for meaning and answers in life hasn’t stopped.”

Religion in British society has had to contend with the growth of secularism, resulting in a generational gulf as younger people are increasingly unlikely to identify with any faith compared with their parents and grandparents. More than half of those aged in their twenties reported having no religion in 2019, with 53.4 per cent of those aged 20 to 29 compared to 27.1 per cent of those in their sixties.

Richy Thompson, the director of public affairs and policy at Humanists UK, said: “[There] are now enough non-religious people that negative prejudices towards us are falling away.”

## Perspective

### **Paisleyism in the DUP has outlasted its founder, but it is now all but dead by Sam McBride**

**When one of Ian Paisley's most astute biographers was attempting to convey the novelty of how the cleric had melded the sacred and the secular to achieve great political power, he had to go back to Cardinal Wolsey in 16th century England and Cardinal Richelieu in France a century later, Sam McBride writes in the Belfast Telegraph.**

The sociologist Steve Bruce noted that no other person in modern Europe has founded a Church and a political party. The phenomenon of Paisleyism shaped half of Northern Ireland's history — disrupting moves to political and ecclesiastical accommodation, provoking counter-reactions, and ultimately morphing as the political side of the movement became the largest political party. Paisleyism even outlasted its founder, but recent events show it to now be all but dead.

For years, the Free Presbyterian Church was an asset to the DUP. Founded by Dr Paisley two decades before he established the party, the fundamentalist Church provided the fledgling DUP with workers, candidates, an organisational structure and a crusading zeal which



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stemmed from a belief that the party was enacting God's will.

It took decades for that relationship to weaken, but by the time Dr Paisley decided in 2007 to share power with Sinn Féin, the Church gave its founder a blunt ultimatum: choose it, or choose government. He chose the latter, leaving his role as moderator of the Church. Within a year, he had lost the party as well, overthrown by a power-hungry machine of his own creation which calculated that the octogenarian was by then an electoral liability.

Since then, Church and party have diverged to the point where if the Church is to be consistent in its attacks on those with whom it disagrees, it will increasingly have to condemn the party which it helped birth. Given the DUP's size, and the way in which it has blended the spiritual and the secular, that rift will have implications for all of Northern Ireland.

Last week it emerged that First Minister Paul Givan, one of the DUP's increasingly small band of Paisleyites, had quietly resigned as a member of the Church. It was a relatively modest media story, in part because the Church is so small. The 2011 census put the Church's adherents at just over 10,000 people — smaller than the Baptists or Pentecostals.

But Mr Givan's decision to act in opposition to his Church's teaching, and the consequences of that decision for him, make this a seminal moment. It indicates that a Free Presbyterian now cannot be First Minister; the inescapable responsibilities of that role clash with too many of the Church's key doctrines. The Church's founder was only

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ejected as the Church's moderator when he became First Minister, but now even membership of the Church is incompatible with the office.

Mr Givan's resignation from the Church came over something which would baffle most present-day DUP voters, but which makes sense in a party steeped in religiosity.

Seven weeks ago, I was sitting with media colleagues in a corner of St Patrick's Anglican cathedral in Armagh when a beaming Mr Givan arrived as one of the guests of honour. As the First Minister was led to his seat, there was no hint of discomfort. With media focus on the absence of the Queen and Irish President Michael D Higgins, the DUP MLA's presence was seen as routine.

But Mr Givan would have known that his presence would have significant personal implications. As one of the DUP's most forthright Free Presbyterians, by that stage there had already been complaints about the fact that he was to attend the ecumenical service.

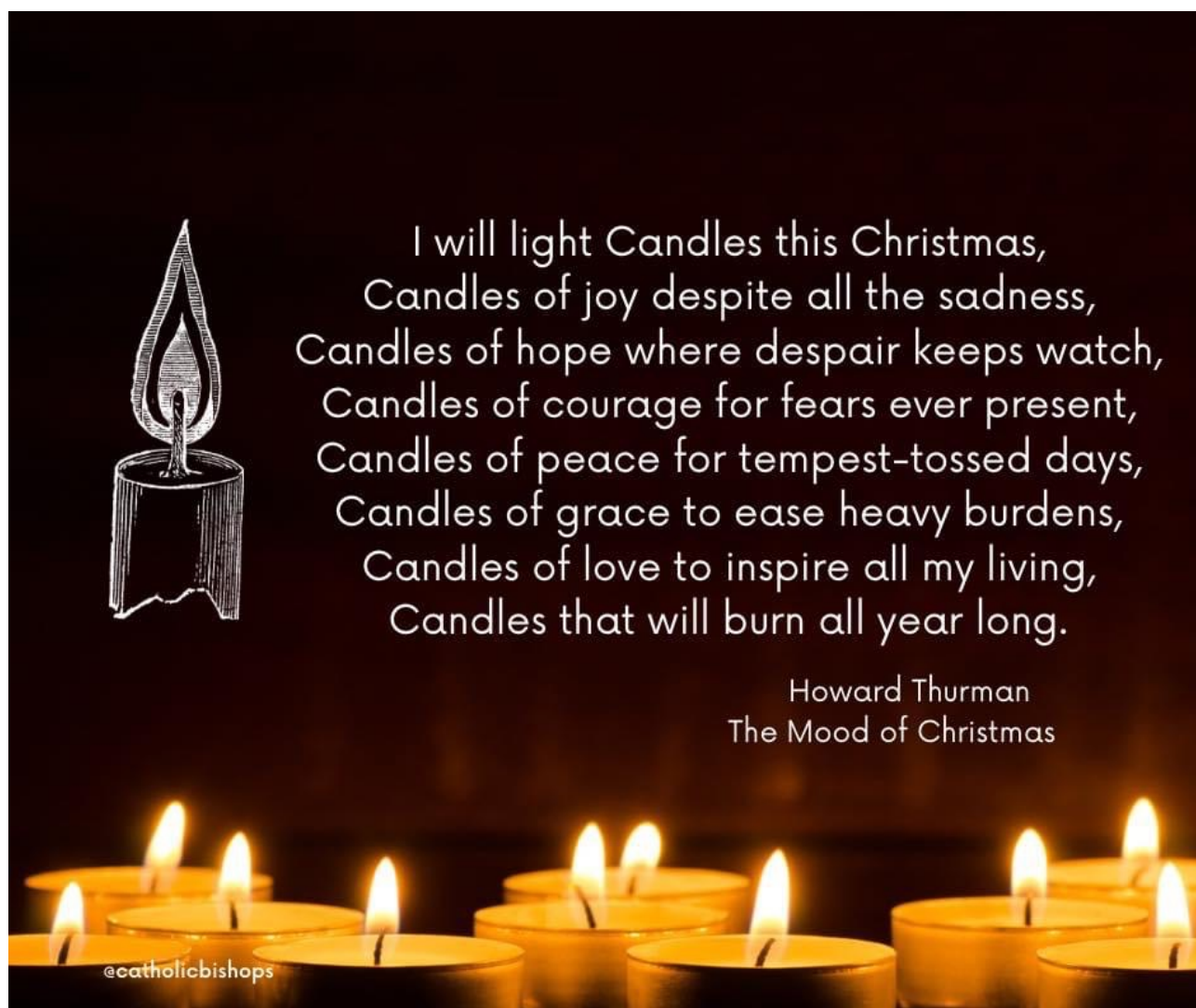
The Church's moderator, the Rev John Armstrong, said that the Church was “grieved” by the event, but that public statement did not cause a re-think by the DUP. To have boycotted the service on religious grounds would have been politically disastrous for a party which seeks to represent the great bulk of unionism.

In the wake of the service, veteran Free Presbyterian minister the Rev Ivan Foster — who in the 1980s was a hardline DUP MLA — denounced Mr Givan's attendance. The Rev Foster, who was jailed alongside Dr Paisley in

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1966 for their role in a controversial protest march to the Presbyterian General Assembly — said that a fellow minister had told him that Mr Givan was “spoken to by his [Church] session about his attendance at the ecumenical service in Armagh and he has since resigned his membership of the Free Presbyterian Church”.

Last week Mr Givan did not deny the accuracy of what was claimed, instead telling the BBC that it was “a private matter and something that I have worked through within my own Church... I don't intend to make any further public commentary on this issue”.





It is remarkable that the Paisleyite influence has endured for so long, even as the DUP has repudiated its founder's amalgam of pulpit and politics.

Much of that is due to the personal way in which party and Church were entwined. In 1982, some 77% of DUP assembly members were Free Presbyterian. By 2014, an academic study of DUP members by Prof Jon Tonge et al found that even after the influx of former Ulster Unionists in the early 2000s, 30% of DUP members were Free Presbyterian. That meant that Free Presbyterians were 50 times more common in the DUP than in the population.

People such as Edwin Poots, Mervyn Storey, Lord Morrow and Tom Buchanan are prominent in both Church and party. When Mr Poots decided not to be First Minister, he may have had other factors in mind, but he was avoiding a position which would force him to choose between two of the central elements of his life.

Christopher Stalford left the Church after being publicly criticised by his minister for attending a GAA match on a Sunday.

Yet there have always been DUP members who wanted to break the link. Declassified government files show that as early as 1982 Sammy Wilson privately told a government official that he hoped the Church's influence on the DUP was lessening. He noted that the Church brought the party no votes.

Mr Wilson had identified the central flaw in Paisleyism: there was an unbridgeable gap between a secular party with

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ambitions of winning votes from the widest possible swathe of the population and a fundamentalist Church which would only ever represent a tiny fraction of voters.

In helping found the party, the Church had helped create something which while a small protest movement could sit easily alongside the Church — but in order to really succeed it would have to act contrary to Church doctrine.

The public perception of the DUP is of a party hoping to push a theocratic agenda at every turn. But that is rarely quite as it seems. Most controversial DUP moral positions — whether on decriminalising homosexuality, keeping the ban on abortion, or blocking gay marriage — have been about attempting to retain the status quo, rather than an attempt to further regulate non-believers' lives.

The Rev William Beattie, a Free Presbyterian minister who was a founding member of the DUP and became the party's deputy leader, once said: “I make it absolutely clear that I will never support the imposition of Free Presbyterian moral standards on the general public. My biggest fear from not being in the South... is that reason and I do not want to see this country and the Free Presbyterian Church attempt to do what the Roman Catholic Church has done in the South.”

But allowing its members to participate in events which the Church regards as sinful is another matter — and that is what is now pushing the two entities apart.

For decades, Ballymena Free Presbyterian Church's minister Rev James Beggs was Dr Paisley's election agent, a personification of how Church and party melded almost indistinguishably. Three years ago the Rev Beggs, who is

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married to Dr Paisley's sister Margaret, quit the DUP over its choice of its first openly gay election candidate.

The previous year a Free Presbyterian preacher told me that two DUP politicians approached him to object to him criticising their party from the pulpit — and he was then stopped from preaching the second part of the address. Another sermon in which he chastised the DUP in characteristically blunt Free Presbyterian terms was removed from the website of the Church where it was preached.

But with its focus elsewhere, the party brushes off such pulpit rebukes.

In fact, two significant sections of the party welcome this clash for opposing reasons. Modernising members hope that a decisive public break with the party's religious roots can free it to become increasingly secular, and thus appeal to a greater number of voters. But some traditionalist members similarly want a moment of conflict, hoping that they can make a last stand which will reverse the party's liberalisation.

That clash may be just weeks away. At the weekend a senior DUP source, who appeared to be acting with authorisation, briefed The Sunday Times that up to a third of the party's MLAs may not stand for re-election. They insisted it would not be a purge, but said it would mean “new faces that will be more representative of wider Northern Ireland society than ever before”. That is likely to mean a dramatic drop in Free Presbyterian representation in the Assembly, and perhaps candidates to whom the Church will object.



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While wholly logical for a party with aspirations to represent all unionists, that process is not without risks. It is likely to see the DUP become increasingly fractured. Free Presbyterianism provided the party a unique glue; many of its members socialised together through the Church, viewed the world through a shared prism, intermarried and respected the sincerity of each other's positions in debate.

Even if the Free Presbyterian Church no longer represents the DUP at prayer, that does not inevitably mean its members will be more socially liberal. Jim Wells is not a Free Presbyterian, but is now the party's most outspoken social conservative.

But the weaker the link with Free Presbyterianism becomes, the more those individuals will be just one voice among many in a party which has decided to cast off its atypical religious roots. As they lose internal debates, more traditionalists will leave, thus accelerating the party's change.

Sir Jeffrey Donaldson is a conservative evangelical Christian whose authorised biography says that “his idea was not to use [politics] as a vehicle for personal advancement, but as an avenue for upholding, and demonstrating, in a public and practical way, Christian values and beliefs”.

But DUP sources suggest that while individuals such as Sir Jeffrey will continue to vote against abortion or a ban on all forms of gay conversion therapy, the party is likely to take no position on many such matters, instead designating them

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as conscience votes on which members can vote as they please.

Paisleyism shaped the DUP, and through it shaped Northern Ireland. But its dying embers are now barely visible in a party which has moved beyond its founder's ideology — but hasn't founded a sufficiently cohesive alternative philosophy around which to unite its increasingly divided factions.

Courtesy of Sam McBride, first published in the Belfast Telegraph 11/12/2021

## Poem for today

### When all the others were away at Mass by Seamus Heaney

When all the others were away at Mass  
I was all hers as we peeled potatoes.  
They broke the silence, let fall one by one  
Like solder weeping off the soldering iron:  
Cold comforts set between us, things to share  
Gleaming in a bucket of clean water.  
And again let fall. Little pleasant splashes  
From each other's work would bring us to our senses.

So while the parish priest at her bedside  
Went hammer and tongs at the prayers for the dying  
And some were responding and some crying  
I remembered her head bent towards my head,  
Her breath in mine, our fluent dipping knives-  
Never closer the whole rest of our lives.

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