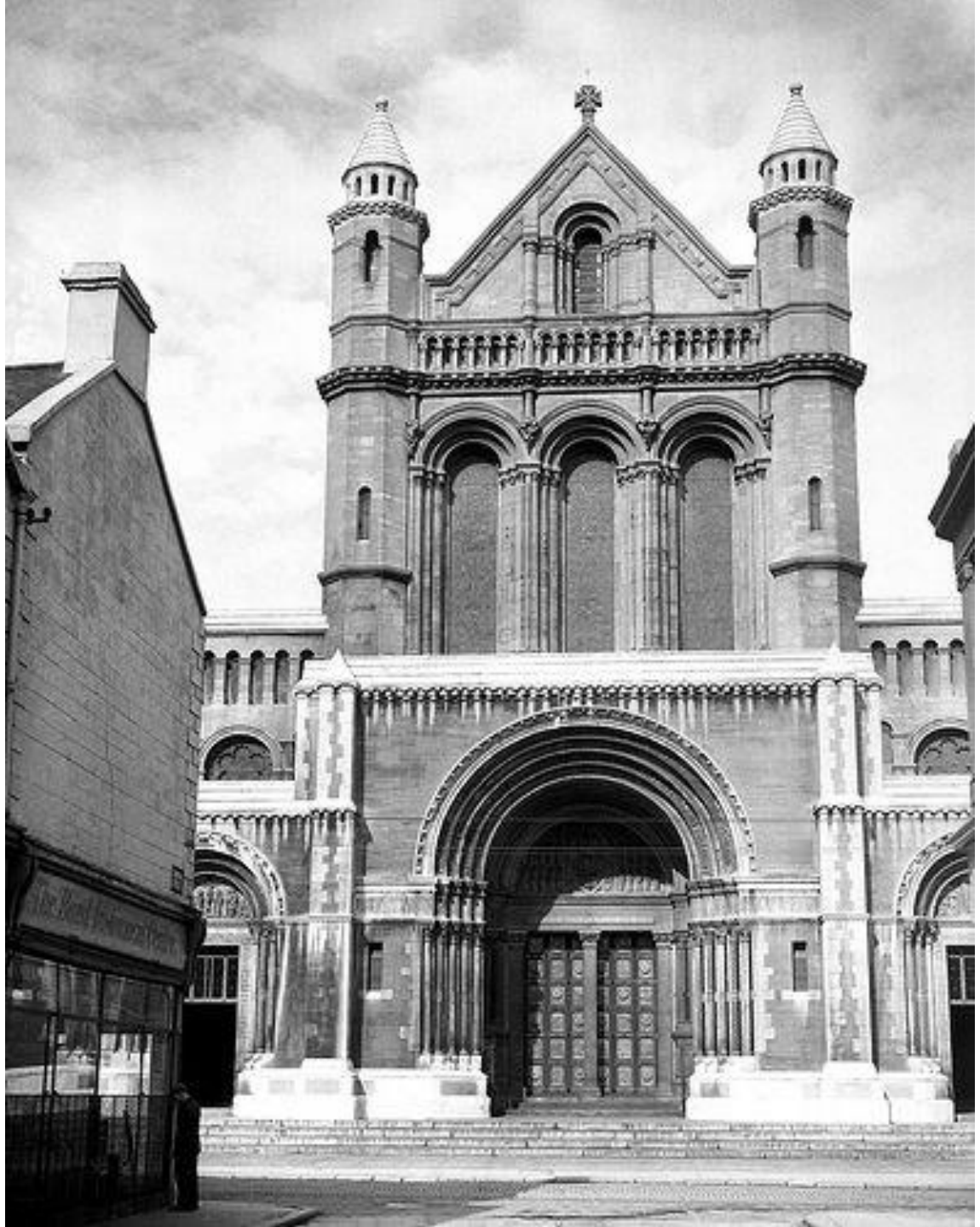


Church and religion in Belfast, 1798 to 1914 [OLE3039]

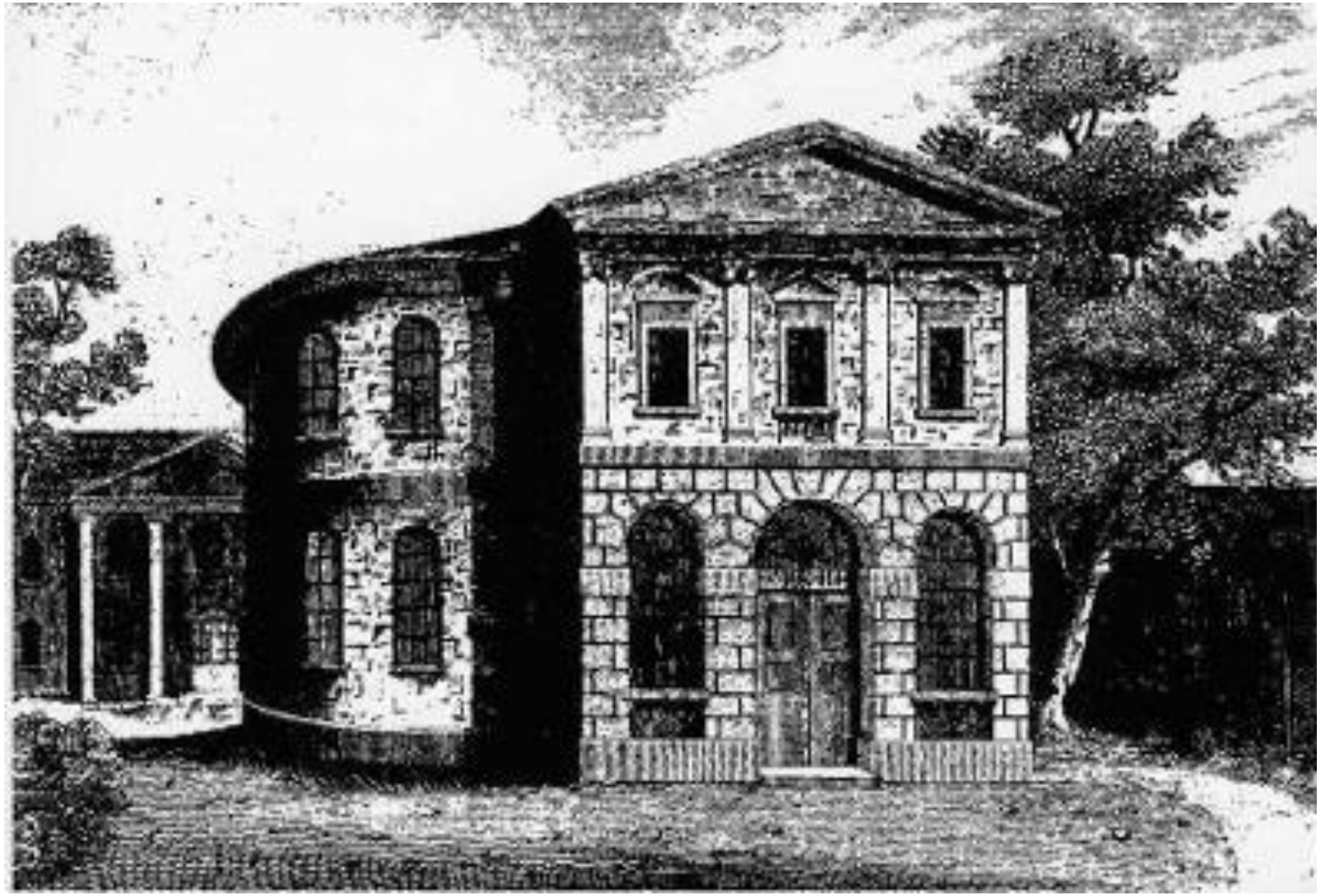
15 October 2026

Contents

- Purpose
- The churches during the century
- Religious activism
- People’s experience of religion

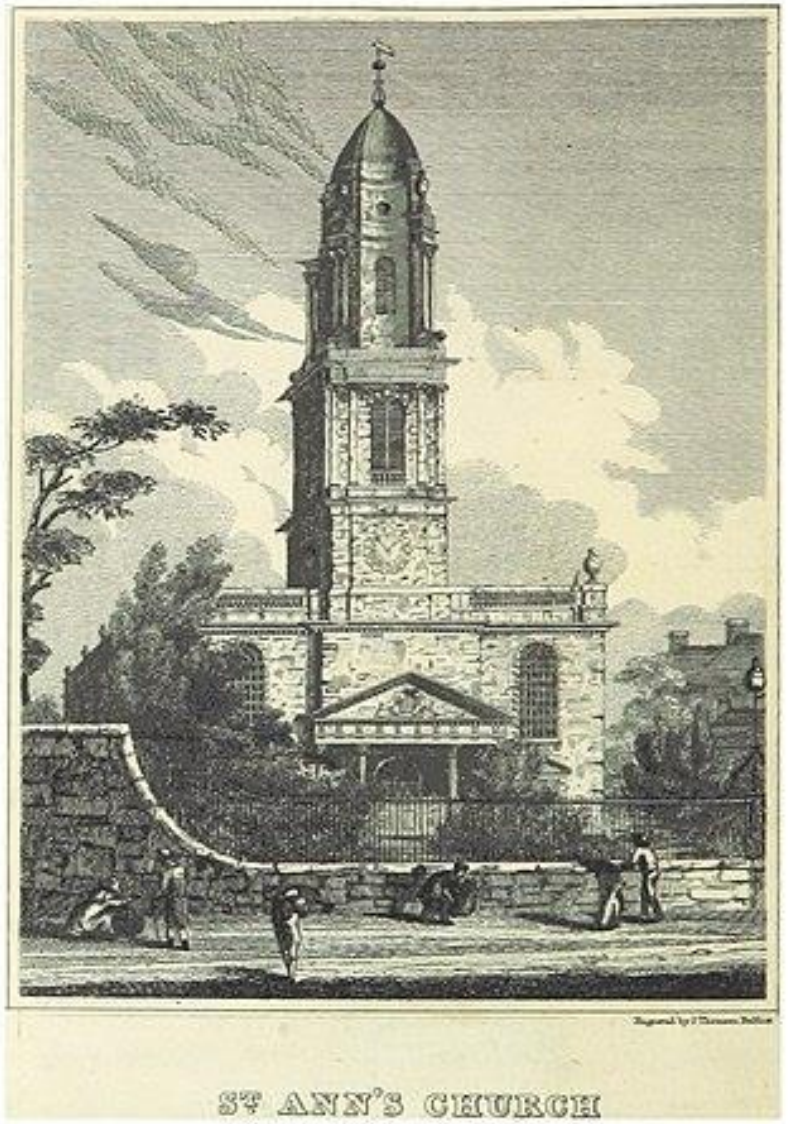


Purpose



Objectives

- To explore the broad theological positions throughout the century
- Explore how churches expanded and changed in Belfast over the century.
- Consider what impact religion and the church had on people's lives in Belfast.

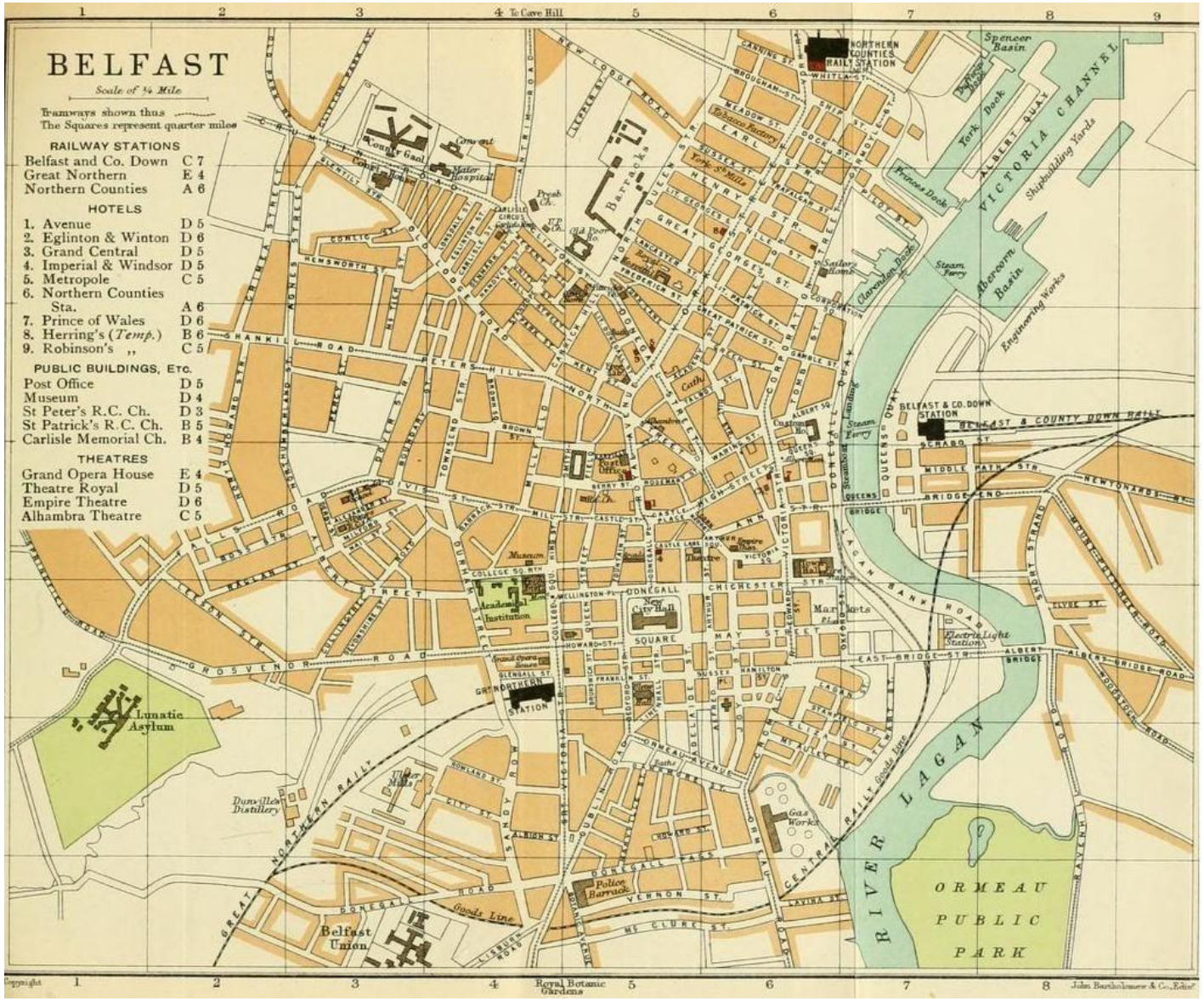


The expansion of places of worship

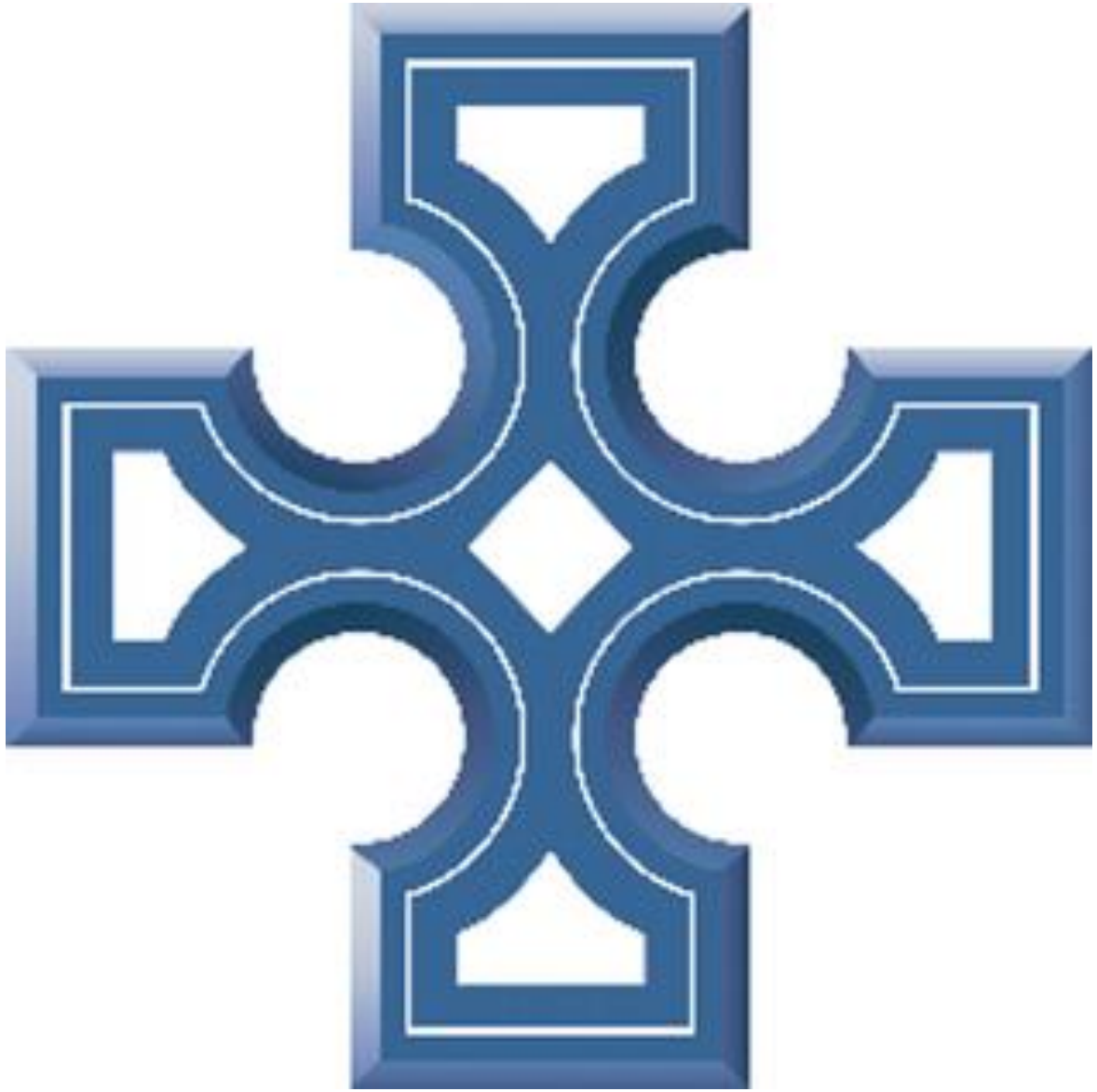


Nature and extent of church expansion

- 1800, estimated to be one Catholic Church, Two Church of Ireland, Three Presbyterian.
- In 1833, Commissioners on Public Instruction reckoned there were 22,078 Catholics, 17,942 Church of Ireland members, 25,939 Presbyterians in Belfast.
- In 1900, Belfast had over 200 ‘non-Catholic’ places of worship, 19 Roman Catholic churches and one synagogue.
- Churches expand due to:
  - Population rise
  - Industrialisation and urbanisation
  - Suburbanisation

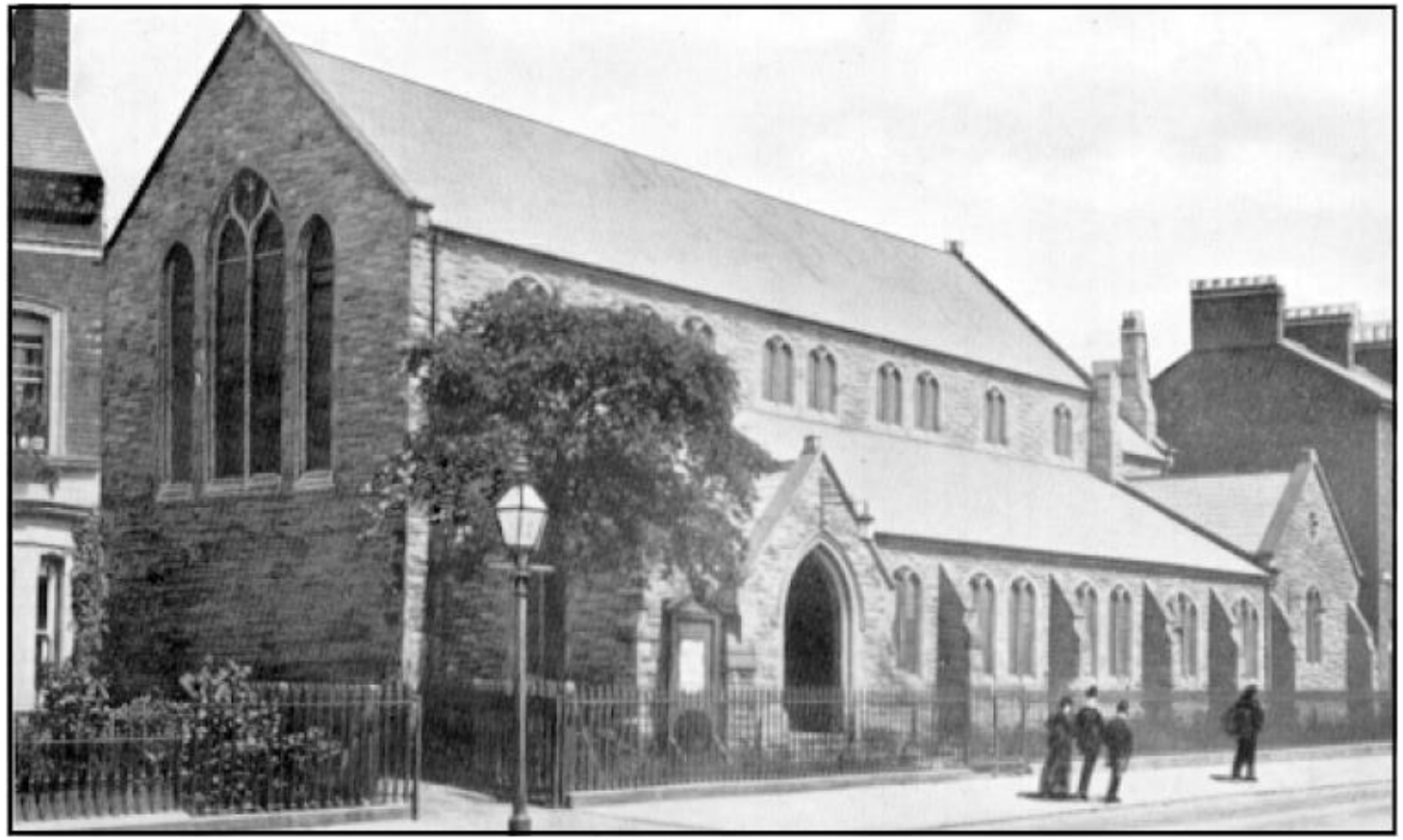


Development of the Church of Ireland



The Magdalene Asylum & Episcopal Chapel, Donegall Pass

- Opened 1839 as Ulster Magdalene Asylum and Episcopal Chapel.
- Accommodate 763 people; 100 pews rented generating £402pa.
- Damaged by fire in 1898, rebuilt to accommodate 900.
- Connected to the Church:
  - 1st Irish Company of the Boys' Brigade originated from the Church
  - Charlotte Street Hall, erected in 1870.
  - Magdalene National School
  - Ulster Magdalene Asylum
- Source: St Mary Magdalene Parish Church, Donegall Pass, Belfast, Church of Ireland, Diocese of Connor, A history, 1839-2010,



All Saints' University Street, Belfast

Church moved to site in October 1887, local church St Mary Magdalene Church, in Donegall Pass, could no longer accommodate all the people living in it's vicinity.

All Saints' made separate parish in 1890.

First church in University Street was a temporary iron building, the 'Iron Church' building seated 750 people, cost £700 to purchase, erect and equip and was the largest iron structure of it's kind in Ireland.

Current All Saints' church built in 1898 to accommodate 1000 people for £8,000.

Built in the Early English Gothic Style, chancel added in 1906.

Source: http://www.ascbelfast.com/our-story



St John's Church Of Ireland, Malone Road

- 1839 congregation formed, probably in temporary building
- 1842 building on site of current McCraken Presbyterian church.
- 1886 church too small to meet local population; six years of debate about enlarge or build a new church.
- Current St John's consecrated 1894; building of English Decorated Gothic style.
- No tower; funds runout.



St Annes, Donegall St

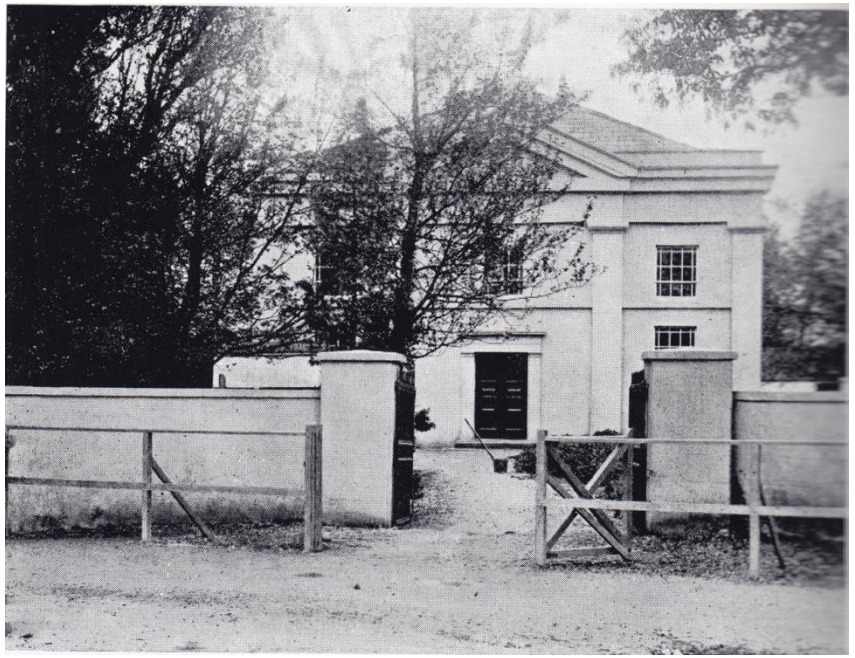




Development of the Presbyterian Church

Presbyterian
CHURCH IN IRELAND

Malone Presbyterian Church, Lisburn Road

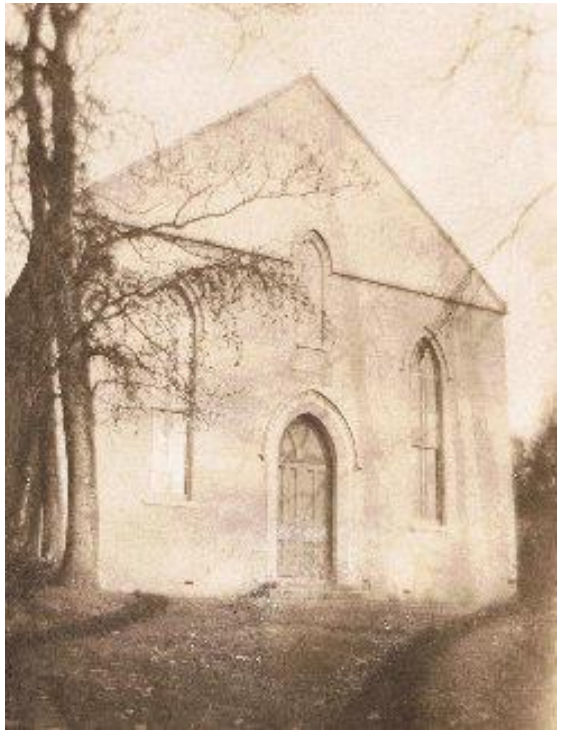


- 1839, first church opened by Dr Henry Cooke, was ‘subscribing’.
- 1836-1883, Rev Joseph Mackenzie was the 1st minister. He built Balmoral Cemetery, where he himself was to lie buried, along with Cooke and many other Presbyterian notables.
- 1857 National School attached to the church
- 1889-1912, Rev Andrew J. Wilson became minister. Introduced a Sunday School.
- Church rebuilt in 1899.
- Source: https://www.malonepresbyterian.org/history-of-malone/



Gilnahirk Presbyterian Church

- Erected 1797
- Rebuilt 1845
- Extended with tower 1910
- Source: https://www.gilnahirkpresbyterian.org/about%20us.html



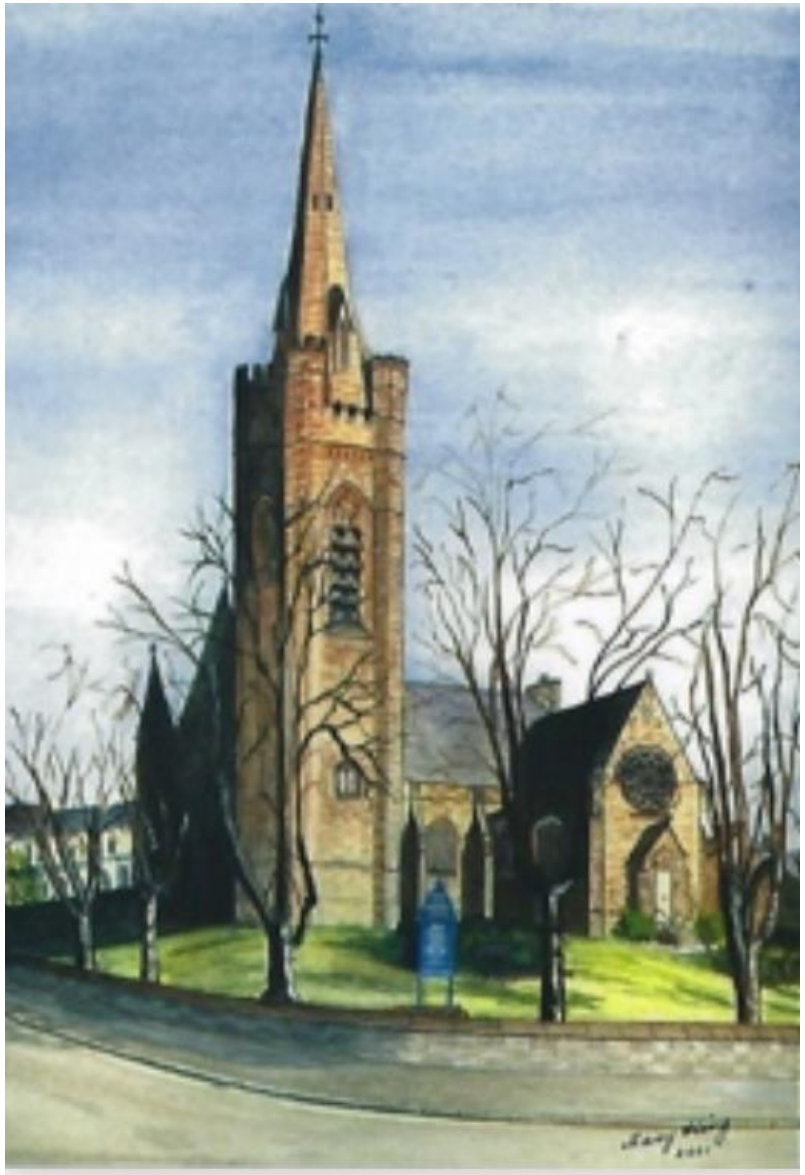






Fisherwick Presbyterian Church, Malone Road

- Congregation of Fisherwick was founded in 1823 as Fisherwick Place Church and was based in what is now the Presbyterian Church in Ireland's headquarters, Church House, in the centre of Belfast.
- New church building was opened in 1901 on Malone Road/Chlorine Gardens to move closer to the congregation.
- Church is in the neo-Gothic style, unusually for a Presbyterian church it is cruciform in shape.
- Source: https://www.fisherwick.org/new-page



Development of the Catholic Church



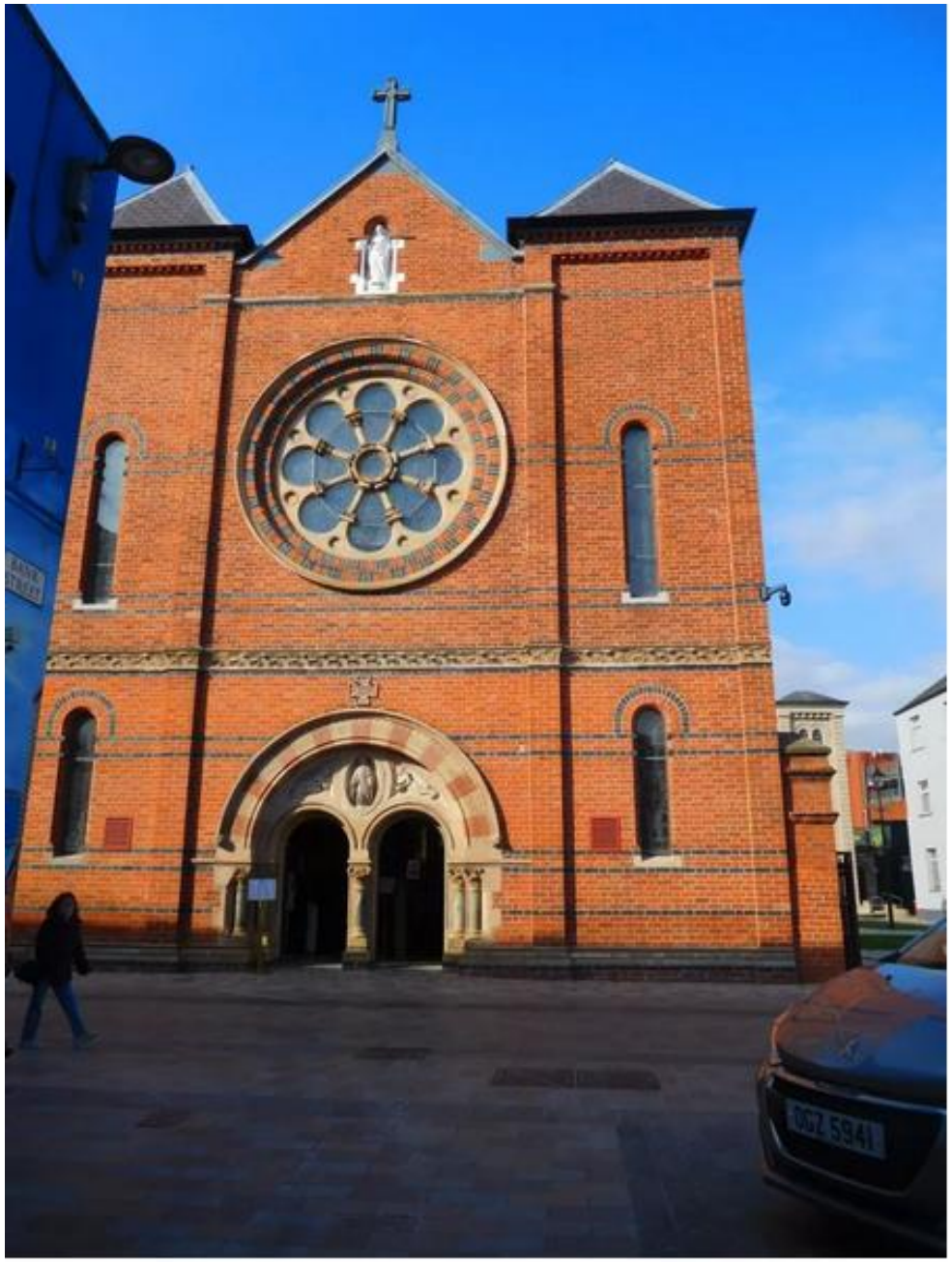
St Mary's Church

Built in 1784, first Catholic Church in Belfast.

A group of Catholics leased a gateway and house in Belfast's Crooked Lane (now Chapel Lane) "in trust for the congregation of Roman Catholics" at a rental of £4.11s per annum.

Funded with contributions from the Presbyterians of Belfast.

On Sunday30th May 1784, Fr Hugh O'Donnell celebrated the first mass in the new church. The Irish Volunteers formed a guard of honour outside the church, led by Captain Waddell Cunningham.



St Patrick's Church, Donegall Rd

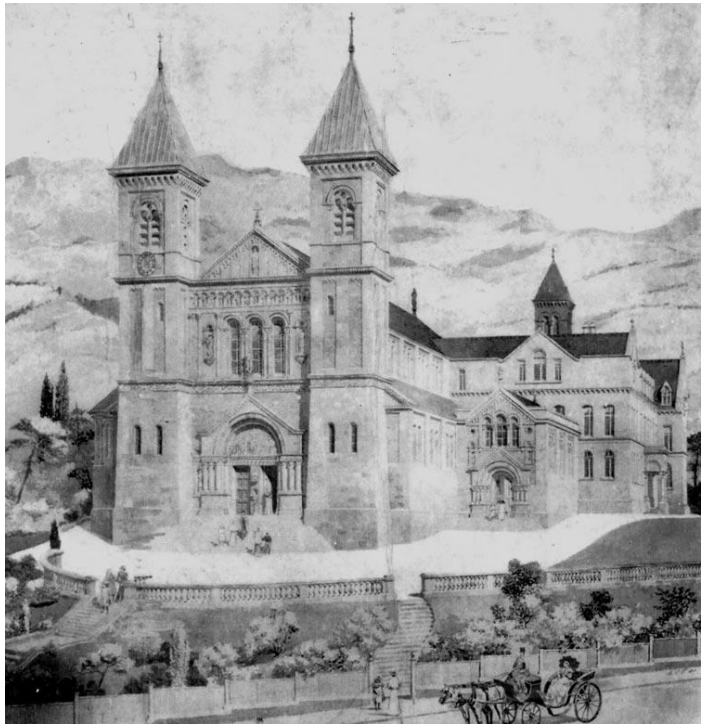


St Malachy’s



Holy Cross Parish, Ardoyne

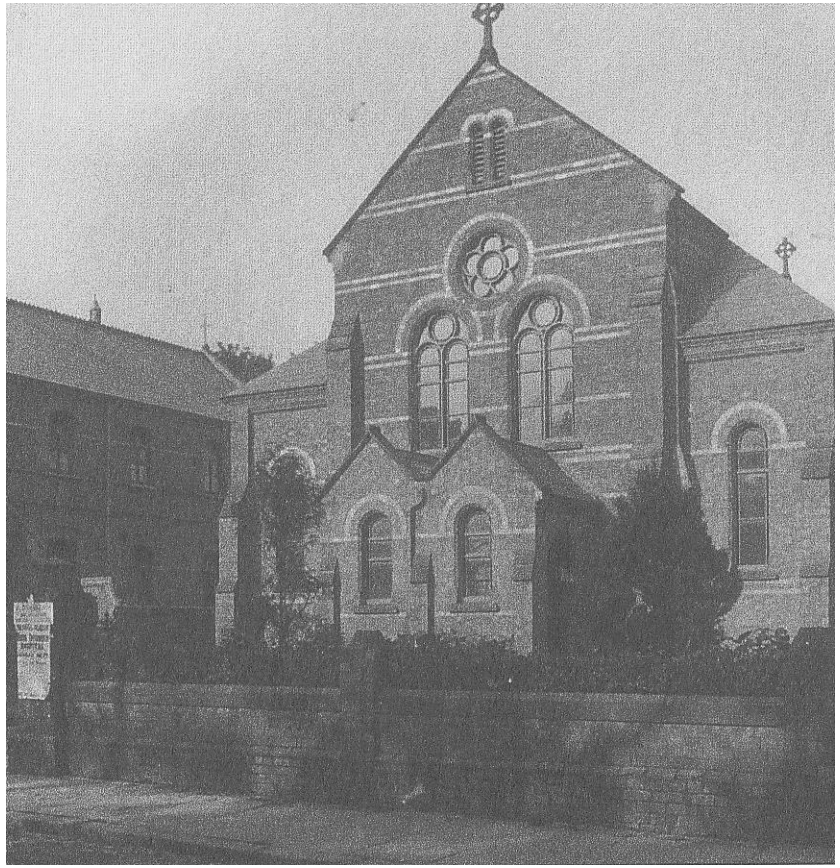
- Mills opened up in area: William Ewarts, 1845; and the “Rosebank” and “Brookfield” mills which both came into the area in 1850.
- The Society of St. Vincent De Paul had erected a schoolhouse in February 1852, but around 1865, the bishop changed the use of the schoolhouse into a church.
- 1868, Passionists opened a retreat.
- 1868, first church opened.
- 1902, new Holy Cross opened
- Source: http://www.holycrossparishbelfast.com/History.htm





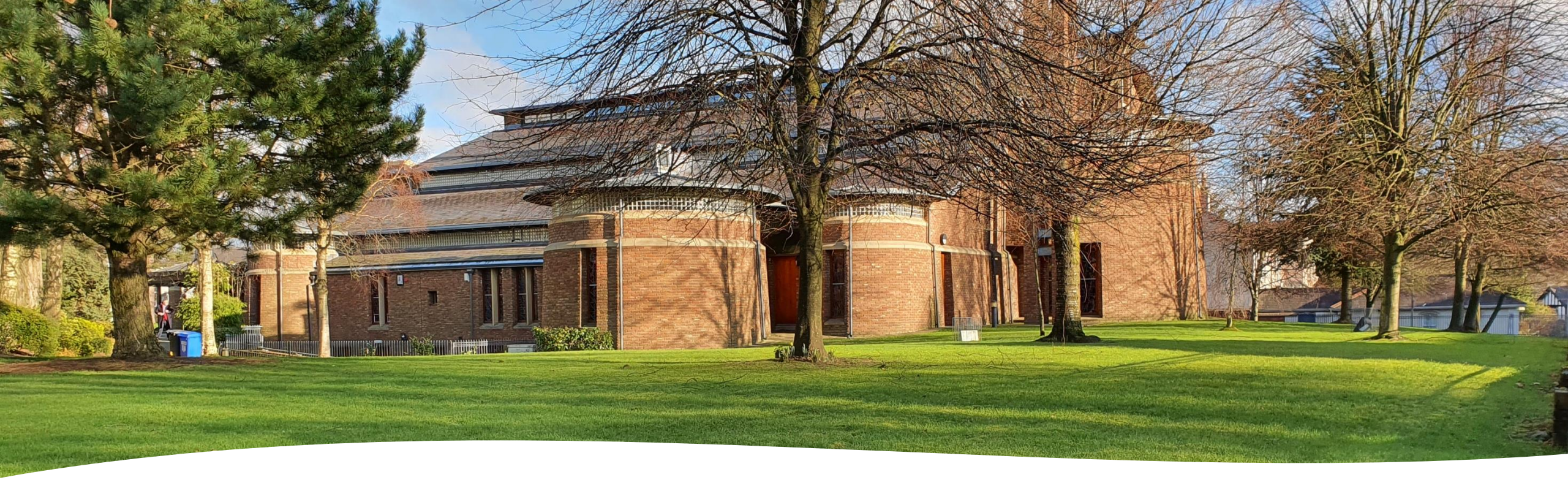
St Brigid's Church, Derryvolgie Avenue

- As Belfast expanded southwards, the Catholic domestic staff in the large houses found the journey to the nearest church too long. In 1889 the bishop of the diocese leased a plot of land at Derryvolgie Avenue, and in 1891 erected a house part of which became an oratory, and part of which accommodated two priests
- Two years later, St Brigid's Church was built beside it. The boundaries of the parish which were established soon afterwards have not altered since: the parish was enclosed by a line from the old central railway station along Botanic Avenue and the Lagan to Shaw's Bridge, and thence through the Queen's playing fields and Balmoral Golf course across Stockman's Lane and along the railway tracks to the junction with the central railway at Shaftesbury Square.
- The curates were also responsible for overseeing the religious training of Catholic children in the Workhouse School, and in 1898 there were no less than 124 Catholic girls and 103 boys on its rolls. In the twentieth century these figures dropped significantly; by 1915 the number of Catholic girls had declined to 21 and Catholic boys to 36.
- 1902 St Bride' ;s School was opened. Children who had been obliged to walk to the schools of St Malachy's quickly transferred and by the following year there were 102 on the rolls. By 1912 that figure had increased to 132 and by 1920 to 161.
- Source https://www.stbrigidsparishbelfast.org/parish-info/history/



Interior of old St Brigid's





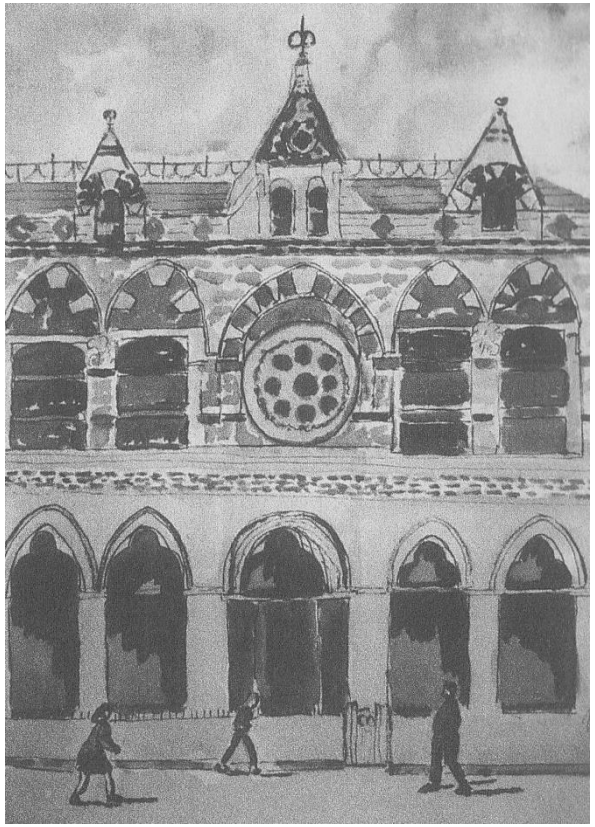
St Brigid’s today

Development of Jewish places of worship



Jewish community and worship

- Jews in Belfast dates from 1652, and a "Jew butcher" was mentioned in 1771, suggesting some semblance of a Jewish community at that time.
- Jewish population in 1901 was put at 763.
- Synagogue congregation in 1900 put at 78.
- Two synagogues on Annesley Street (1904–1964) and Great Victoria Street (1871–1904),
- Otto Jaffe, Lord Mayor of Belfast, was life-president of the Belfast Hebrew Congregation, which worshipped at the Great Victoria Street synagogue.

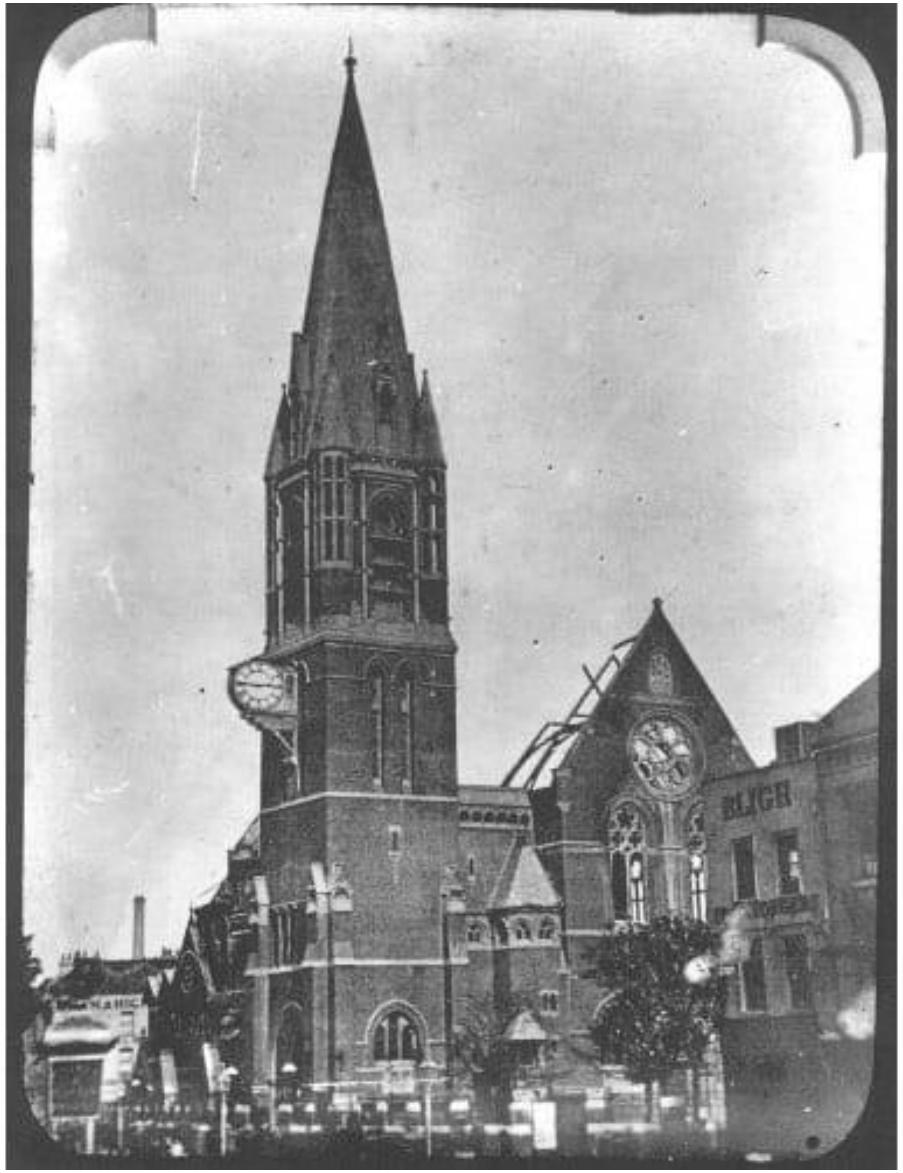


First Synagogue building on Great Victoria St, 1871



Annesley Street Synagogue, 2022

The church during the century



Who is who?

- **Catholics -** They believe they are the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church founded by Jesus disciple St Paul. Based on transnational demoninational hierarchy of the pope, cardinals and bishops.
- **Anglicans** – Protestants that accept the Reformation, reject Rome, believe they are 'reformed' (true) church, accept bishops/hierarchy, associated with English establishment. Varying views on ritual/liturgy
- **Presbyterians** – Protestants that accept the Reformation but reject Rome/hierarchy/Anglicanism/ritual. Favour practicing congregationalist church governance, in which each congregation independently and autonomously runs its own affairs.
- **Methodists.** Protestants that derive their doctrine of practice and belief from the life and teachings of John Wesley. George Whitefield and John's brother Charles Wesley.
- **Baptists –** Protestants that profess Christian believers only can be baptized Baptist churches also generally subscribe to the doctrines of soul competency (the responsibility and accountability of every person before God), sola fide (salvation by faith alone), sola scriptura (scripture alone as the rule of faith and practice) and congregationalist church government.



Religious relations around 1800

Member of the First Presbyterian church and protestants in Belfast had made contributions for the construction of the Catholic church of St Marys in 1784.

Liberal Protestants in 1818 at a meeting in the Brown Linen Hall called for a total repeal of the Penal Laws against Catholics.

1783

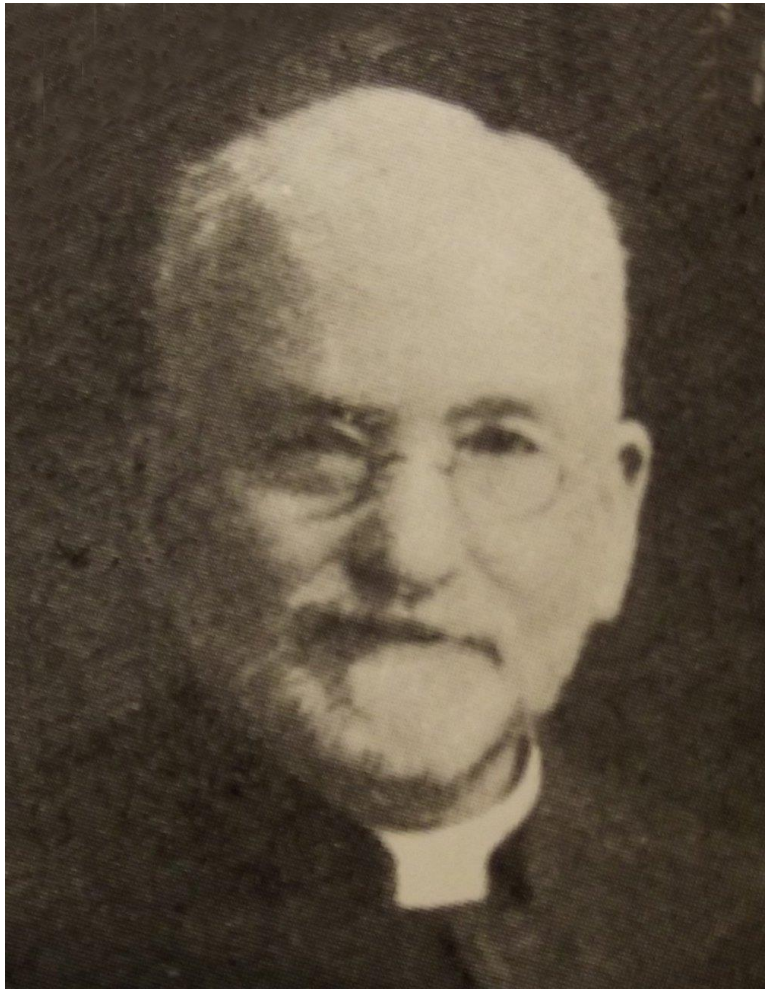
1816

1818

1825

the Second Presbyterian Church granted the congregation of St George the use of their church for services while the new church was being built.

Dr Henry Montgomery entertained the Catholic Bishop of Down and Connor in 1825.



Religious composition of Belfast

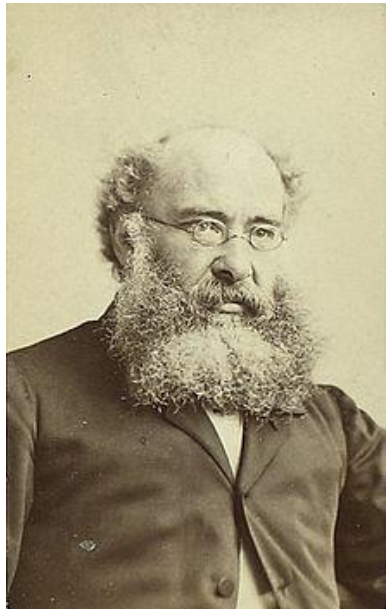
Table 3: Religious Denominations in Belfast, 1757–2001

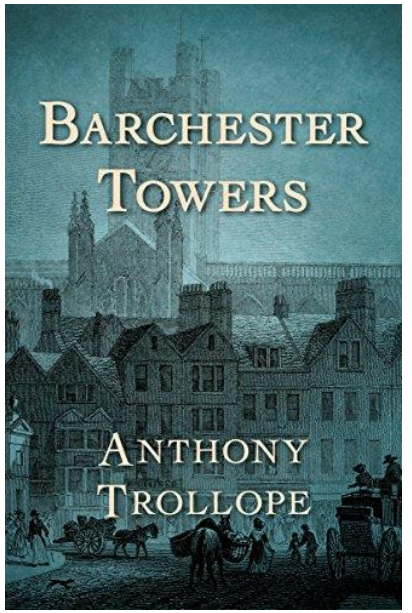
	Church of Ireland	Presbyterian	Catholic	Other
1757			6%	
1808			16%	
1831	27%	39%	33%	1%
1861	25%	35%	34%	6%
1901	30%	34%	24%	12%
1951	30%	30%	26%	14%
2001	14%	16%	42%	28%

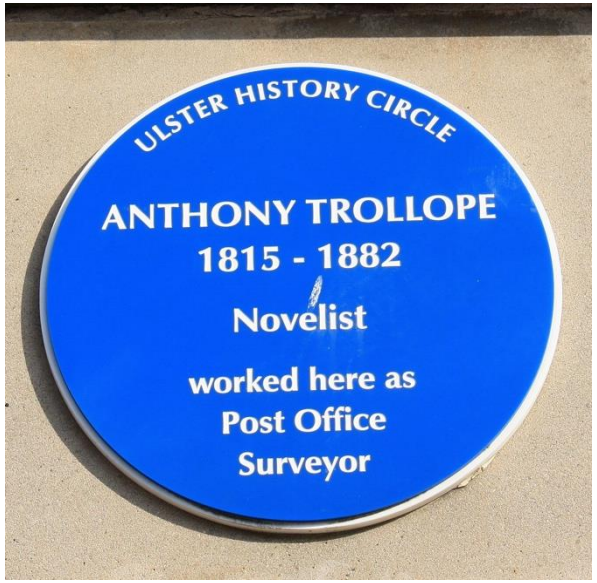
Source: 1757, 1808: contemporary estimates cited in Ian Budge and Cornelius O'Leary, *Belfast: Approach to Crisis* (London: Macmillan, 1973), p. 32; 1831: calculated retrospectively from census enumerator's lists for *First Report of the Commissioners of Public Instruction* (BPP 1835 (45) xxxiii), p. 216a; 1861–1951: W.E. Vaughan and A.J. Fitzpatrick, *Irish Historical Statistics: Population 1821–1971* (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1978), pp. 58, 64, 70; 2001: census.

Anglican church: Hi vs low

- Anthony Trollope, English novelist wrote about the hi & dry church vs low church conflict in the Church of England in his Barchester series of books
- Worked as a civil servant in the Customs House.







Oxford movement

- Its main leader was John Henry Newman (1801-1890), a fine preacher, who, with his friends, was at the heart of a new High Church spiritual Revival movement, the High Church being the wing of the church very attached to ritual, liturgy and the Prayer Book.
- Newman insisted on the apostolic succession within the Church of England and, in 1841, demonstrated that the 39 Articles, the very foundation of Anglicanism, could also be interpreted from a Catholic point of view.
- This gave rise to a deep controversy within the church obliging Newman to resign and, in 1845, to convert Catholicism.
- The movement survived but concentrated more on ritual – it also introduced liturgical practices which had much in common with Catholicism. Supporters were called “Anglo-Catholics”.



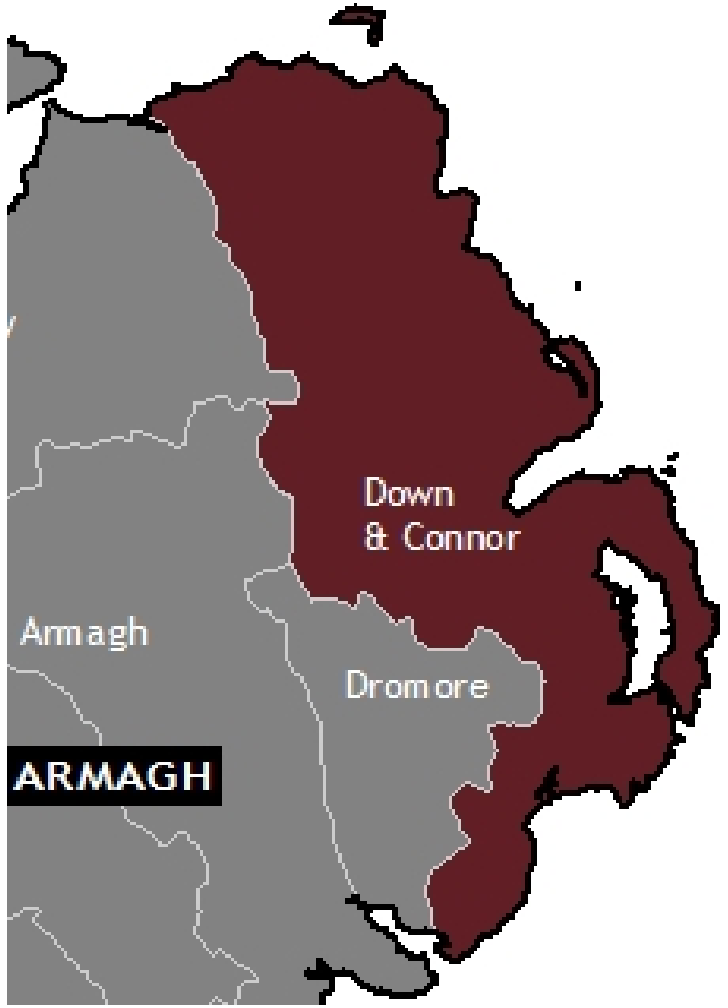
The Mant Controversy

- Alexander Mant was consecrated as the Bishop of Down and Connor, a diocese in Northern Ireland, in 1823.
- He was known for his liberal and evangelical theological views, which differed from the more conservative High Church views held by many in the Church of Ireland.
- Mant's theological views, particularly his emphasis on evangelicalism and his support for the Irish Church Missions to Catholics (an organisation aimed at converting Catholics to Protestantism), led to tensions within the Church of Ireland.
- Many clergy and church members in his diocese were more aligned with High Church Anglicanism.



Resistance and Controversy

- A significant number of clergy and laity in Down and Connor diocese resisted Mant's leadership and theological direction. They accused him of promoting views they considered unorthodox and divisive.
- **Legal Battles:** The Mant controversy spilled over into the legal arena, with lawsuits and disputes over property and church governance. Mant's opponents sought legal remedies to challenge his authority.



Impact on the Church of Ireland

- The Mant controversy highlighted the theological divisions within the Church of Ireland and exacerbated tensions between evangelical and High Church factions. It also raised questions about the governance and authority of bishops within the church.
- In 1846, Bishop Mant resigned his position as Bishop of Down and Connor due to the ongoing disputes and controversies. His resignation marked the end of the Mant controversy, but it left a lasting impact on the Church of Ireland in Belfast and the broader Anglican community in Ireland.



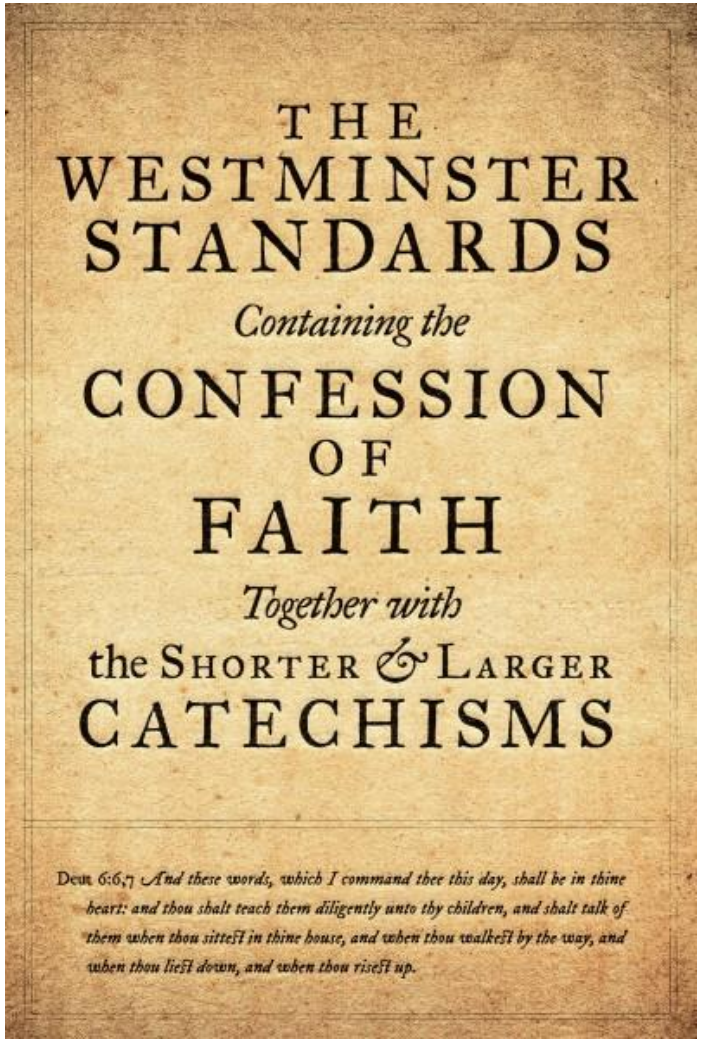
The Evangelicals

- Towards 1850, about a third of the Anglican clergy were Evangelicals.
- The movement became even more powerful when many Evangelical bishops were nominated, although this did lead to a certain amount of friction in some dioceses.
- The Evangelicals achieved enormous progress in social reform ; they fought against alcoholism and prostitution ; they also set up an education system to help the poor.
- A major missionary society was started which worked throughout the British Empire, and then the Bible Society which enabled the Bible to be read all over the world thanks to its translation into many local dialects.
- However, their strict, moralistic attitude, reinforced by the example of Queen Victoria, went too far and caused an adverse reaction against them by some people.



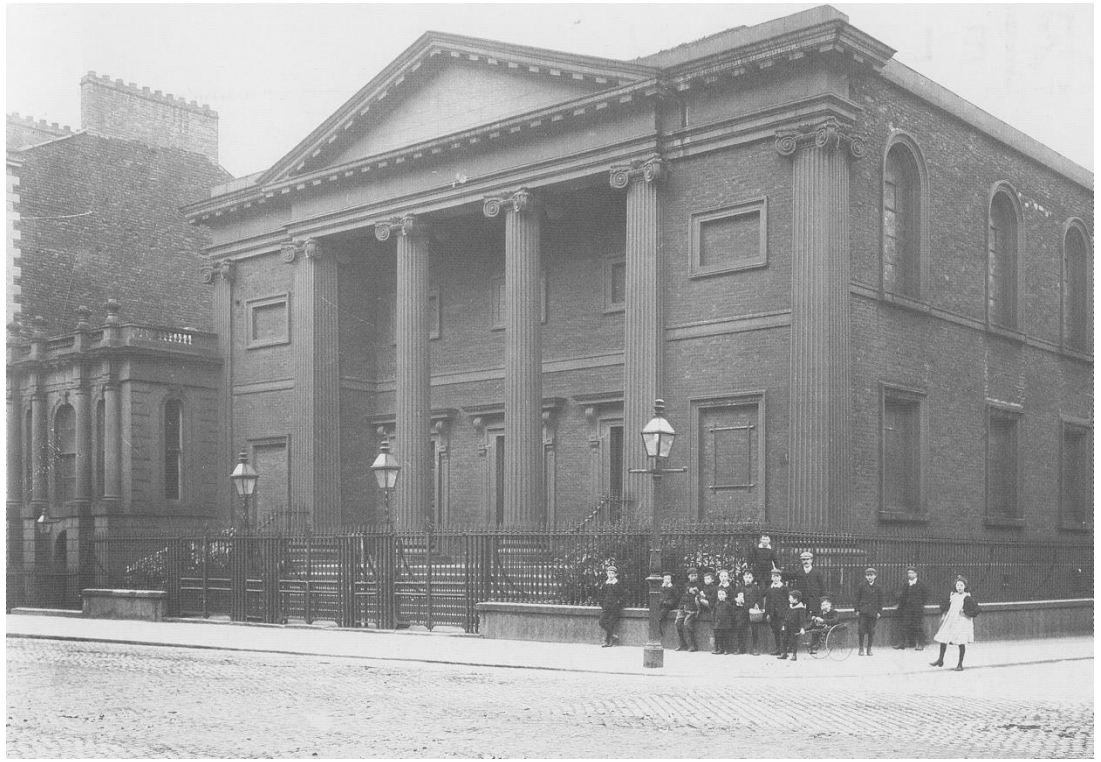
Presbyterians: Old Lights and the New Lights

- Dispute about subscription to the Westminster Confession.
- In 1643, the English Parliament [puritan, anti monarchial] called upon "learned, godly and judicious Divines" to meet at Westminster Abbey in order to provide advice on issues of worship, doctrine, government and discipline of the Church of England
- It produced the Westminster Confession in 1649.
- For more than three hundred years, various churches around the world have adopted the confession and the catechisms as their standards of doctrine, subordinate to the Bible.
- Split the Synod of Ulster when 17 non-subscribing ministers joined the Remonstrant Synod in 1830
- Split healed in 1840 when General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland was formed



Non-Arian, Old Light, subscribers to the Confession Presbyterians

- Westminster Confession of Faith states that the sole doctrinal authority is Scripture, and it agrees with and restates the doctrines of the Trinity and of Christ from the creeds of the early church.
- The doctrine of the eternal decree (predestination) is that “some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death,” and yet “neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of creatures.”
- Seen as conservative, dogmatic and worshipers of the old ways.



May St Presbyterian Church, 1902

Arian, New Light, non-subscribers to the Confession Presbyterians

- Seen as liberal, using their conscience, education and judgement to interpret the word of god.
- Some were Arianists. Arianism is a Christological doctrine first attributed to Arius, a Christian presbyter in Alexandria, Egypt.
- Arian theology holds that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, who was begotten by God the Father with the difference that the Son of God did not always exist but was begotten within time by God.

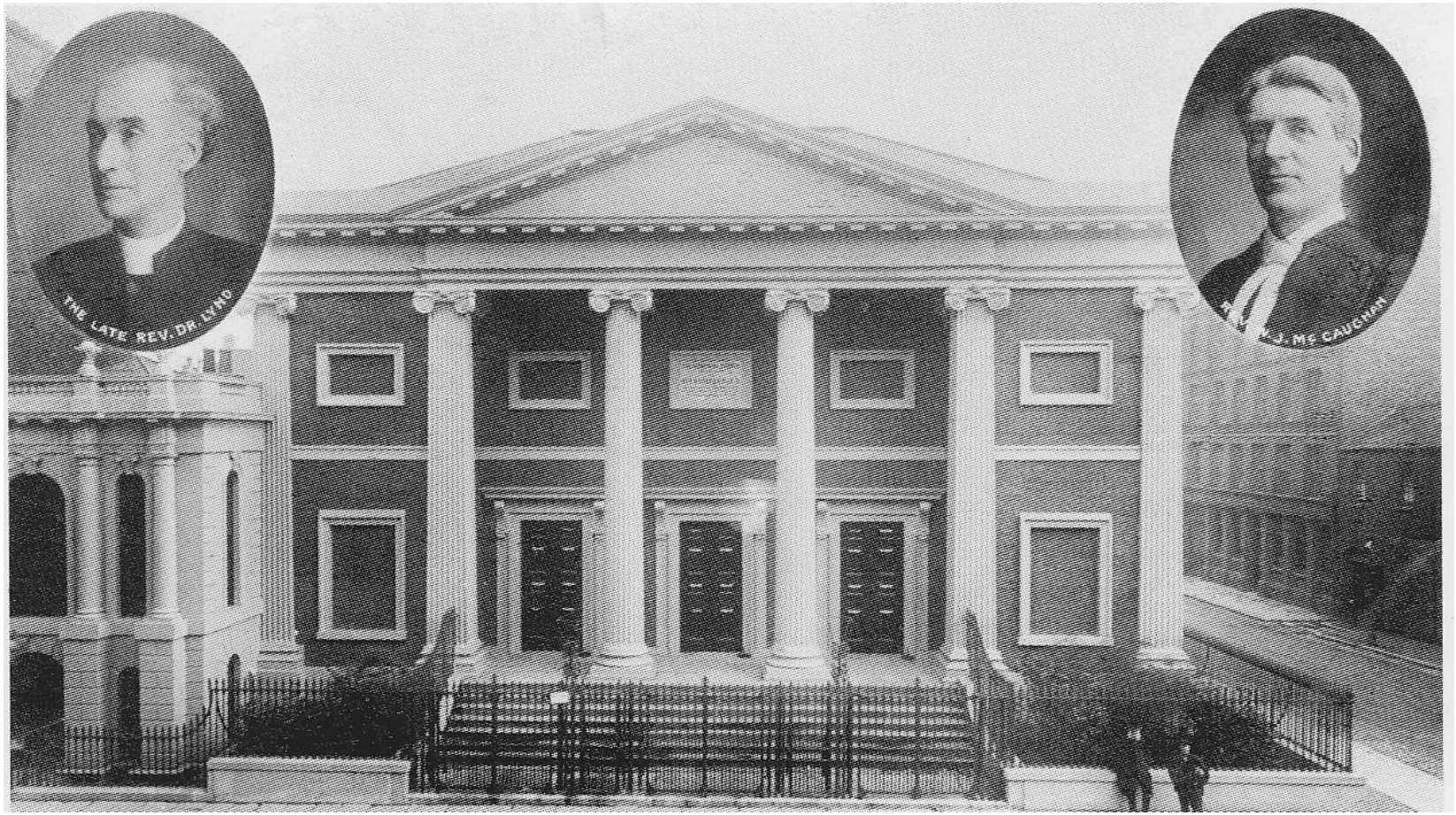


Rev Henry Cooke

- Youngest son of John Cooke, tenant farmer of Grillagh, near Maghera, County Londonderry; born on 11 May 1788.
- Matriculated at Glasgow College in November 1802.
- Cooke's first settlement was at Duneane, near Randalstown, County Antrim, where he was ordained on 10 November 1808.
- Cooke was an old light, non Arian Subscriber to the Westminster Confession.
- Minister at May Street Presbyterian Church, opened 18 October 1829.
- Died on 13 December 1868.



May Street Presbyterian Church (note plaque)



Dr Henry Cooke stokes the fires

- When a branch of the Catholic Association was formed in Belfast in 1824, Dr Henry Cooke, Presbyterian minister, said there was growing feeling against Catholic emancipation as the ‘common people think of the year 1641’.
- At Synods at
  at Strabane (1827), Cookstown (1828), and Lurgan (1829), Cooke persuaded them to adopt the Confession.



Cooke honoured in Belfast





Earl of Belfast statue, erected in 1855, replaced by Henry Cooke in 1876 on an ‘orange occasion’.

Why growing anti-Catholic feeling?

- Experience of the United Irishmen; Cook had lived through this.
- Growing political importance of Catholics in Ireland with Emancipation and Great Reform Act.
- Rising migration from the countryside.
- Religious opposition to Catholicism.
- Sectarian riots and conflict in Belfast during 1820s



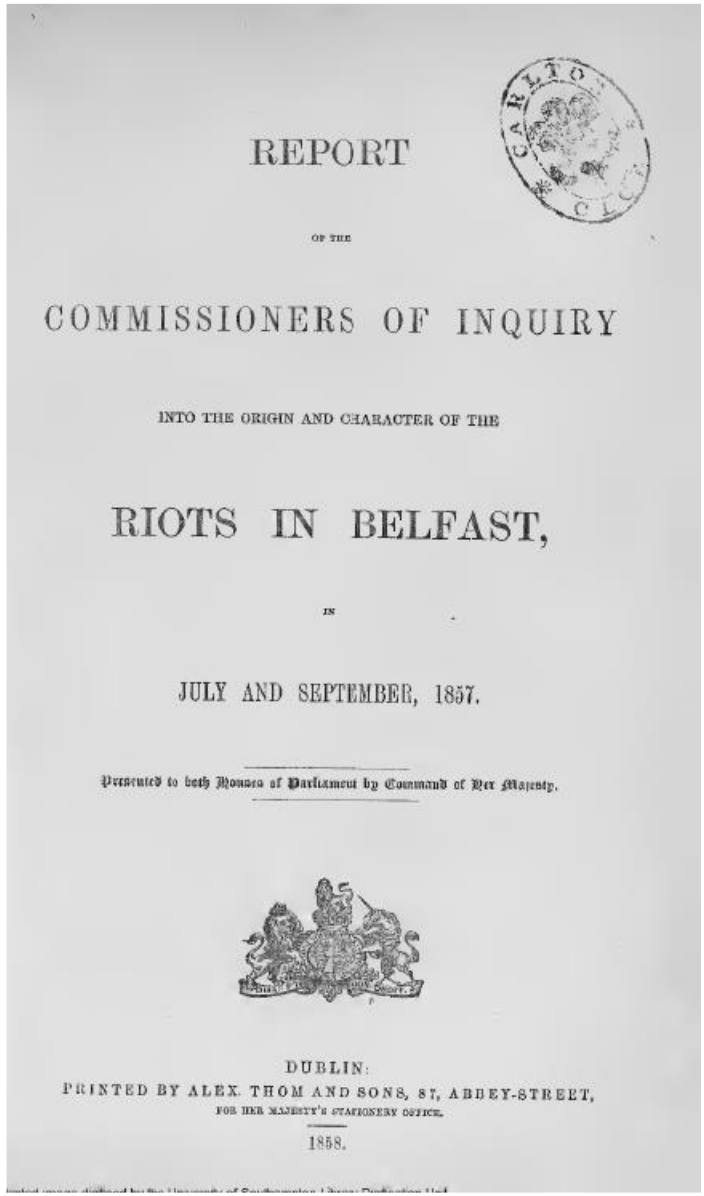
Dr Hugh Hanna

- Born in Dromara, County Down in 1821
- Studied at Bullick's Academy in Belfast before becoming a draper.
- He was inspired by Josias Wilson to become a Sunday school teacher, then a full-time teacher at a religious school.
- During this period, he studied at the Belfast Academical Institution.
- Stanch anti-Catholic, Home Ruler and Conservative.
- In 1847, he decided to become a minister of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. He began missionary work in north Belfast in 1851, founding a congregation in Berry Street, which moved to St Enoch's in Carlisle Circus in 1872.
- He died in 1892.



1857 Riots

- 13 to 23 July 1857, riots ensured between Sandy Row and The Pound.
- Methodist ministers attacked, Methodist church wrecked on the Falls.
- One girl shot, many injured.
- Lots of property damaged
- Parliamentary investigation



REPORT

OF THE

COMMISSIONERS OF INQUIRY

INTO THE ORIGIN AND CHARACTER OF THE

RIOTS IN BELFAST,

IN

JULY AND SEPTEMBER, 1857.

Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of Her Majesty.

DUBLIN:
PRINTED BY ALEX. THOM AND SONS, 87, ABBEY-STREET,
FOR HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE.

1858.

Was Hanna to blame for the 1857 riots?

Rev. Hugh Hanna, 7869.

Mr. Bindon, 1837.

Capt. Dyer.

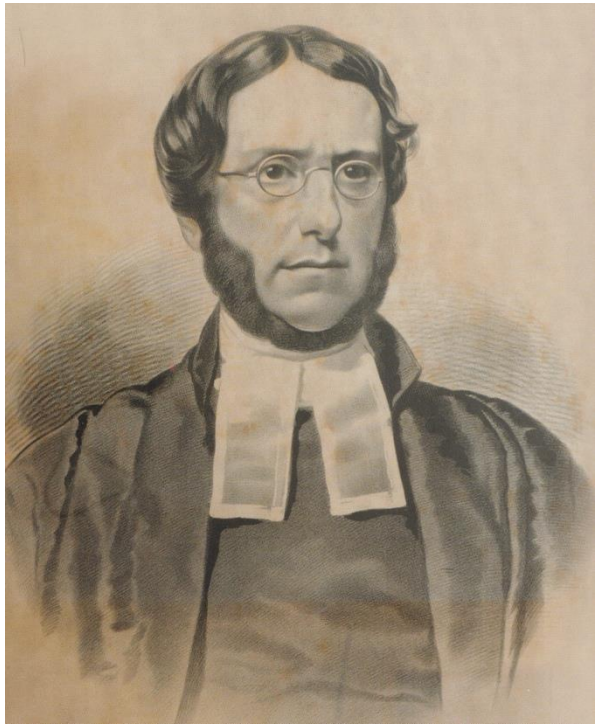
The clergymen of the Church of England having so withdrawn in September, the Rev. Mr. Hanna, (a Presbyterian clergyman) resolved to exercise the right, notwithstanding the advice of the magistracy, the example set by the clergymen of the Established Church, and the almost certainty of a scene of conflict, violence, and perhaps bloodshed; and accordingly on Sunday, the 6th September, one of the most disgraceful riots that occurred in Belfast, and one of the most alarming in its extent over the whole town, took

Hanna: a factor, not the factor

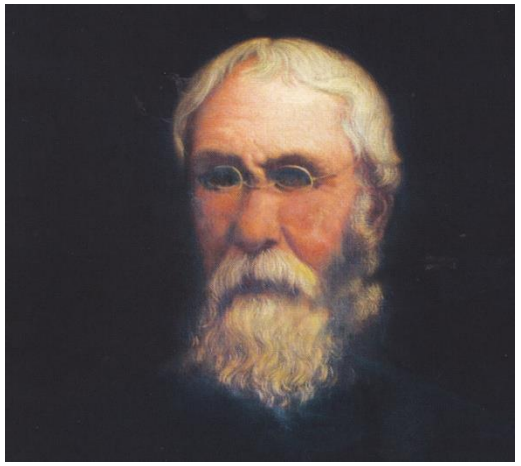
- Preaching probably inflamed opinions but emotions already high through Orange marches.
- Number of services between 1851-55 increased x7.
- Hanna not only preacher who spoke outdoors; Thomas Drew and William Macillwaine, both Church of Ireland also did so.



William McIlwaine (1807 - 1880), minister of St George's Church, Belfast.



- Curate from 1830 to 1880
- He was a classics and English scholar and was a member of the board of the Linen Hall Library.
- Evangelical: very anti Oxford movement in 1840s; belief in open air preaching; heavily anti-Catholic.
- Later life, more tolerant of Catholicism.



The Battle for St Clements'

- 1890s, St Clements run by Rev. William Peoples, who was 'high church'.
- Services at St Clements's were subject to protests and interruptions by radical Presbyterians and members of the Protestant Association.
- The Belfast Protestant Association was a populist evangelical political movement founded by **Arthur Trew**, a former shipyard worker, who had become an evangelical Protestant preacher and made fiercely anti-Catholic speeches on the steps of Belfast Customs House.



ANTI-RITUALISTIC DEMON-
STRATION IN BELFAST.

ST. CLEMENT'S CHURCH.

FURTHER SCANDALOUS SCENES

THE SERMON STOPPED.

POLICE CLEAR THE BUILDING

Further problems…

- In 1901, Trew was sentenced to twelve months' hard labour after he incited his supporters to riot in opposition to a Roman Catholic Corpus Christi procession in the city.
- The management and curate of St Georges supported Peoples and his stance St Clements but his provoked protests and a mob outside St Georges.
- The then curate of St Georges, Hugh Murphy and colleagues were mobbed and assaulted on their way to the tram.



A report in the paper…

Rev Peoples knelt down, but as soon as he did so there was great booing and hooting…At the close of the service a scene of almost indescribable confusion took place. The rowdies who formed the major part of the congregation cheered and yelled, and hundreds clambered pell-mell over the pews in expectancy of seeing a fight. The crowd outside pelted the church with missiles of all kinds resulting in windows being broken. A missile aimed at the Rector missed and struck the churchwarden, breaking his nose! Eventually a large force of police arrived in an effort to contain the situation…



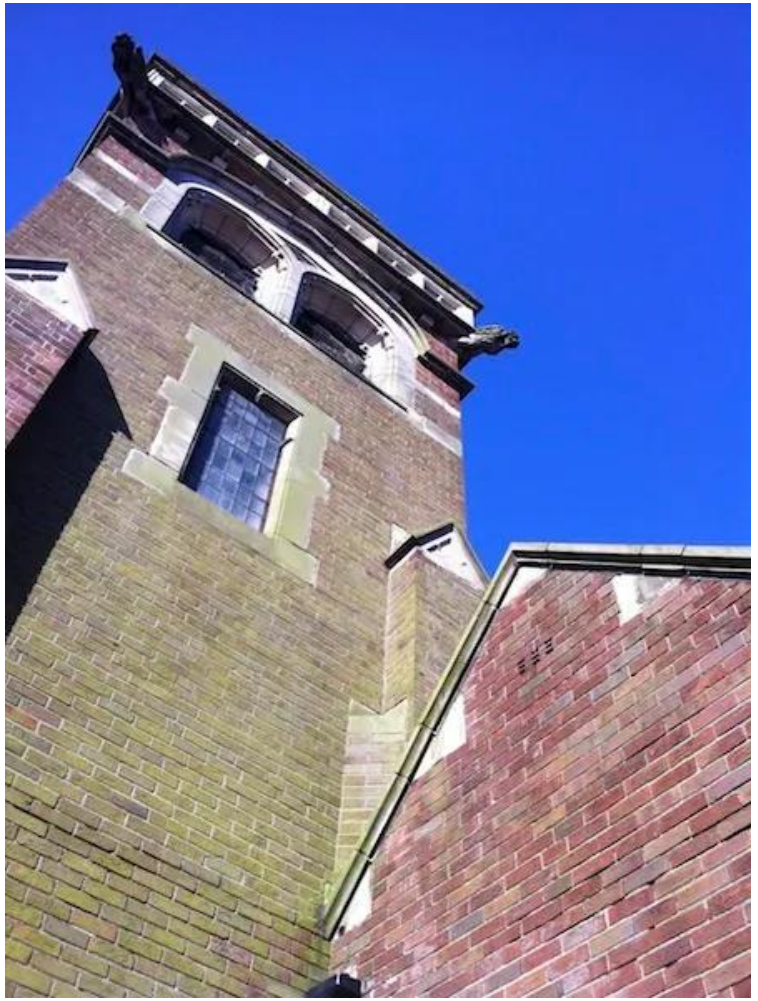
Extent of the disturbance…

- November 1898: St. Clement's Church….was again, besieged by anti-ritualist crowds.
- January 1899: Another anti-ritualistic demonstration was organised by the Belfast Protestant Association. It took place on Queen's Road to demand the removal of the Reverend William Peoples…from St. Clement's Parish Church. About four hundred people attended the demonstration, which passed off peacefully.



Further trouble…

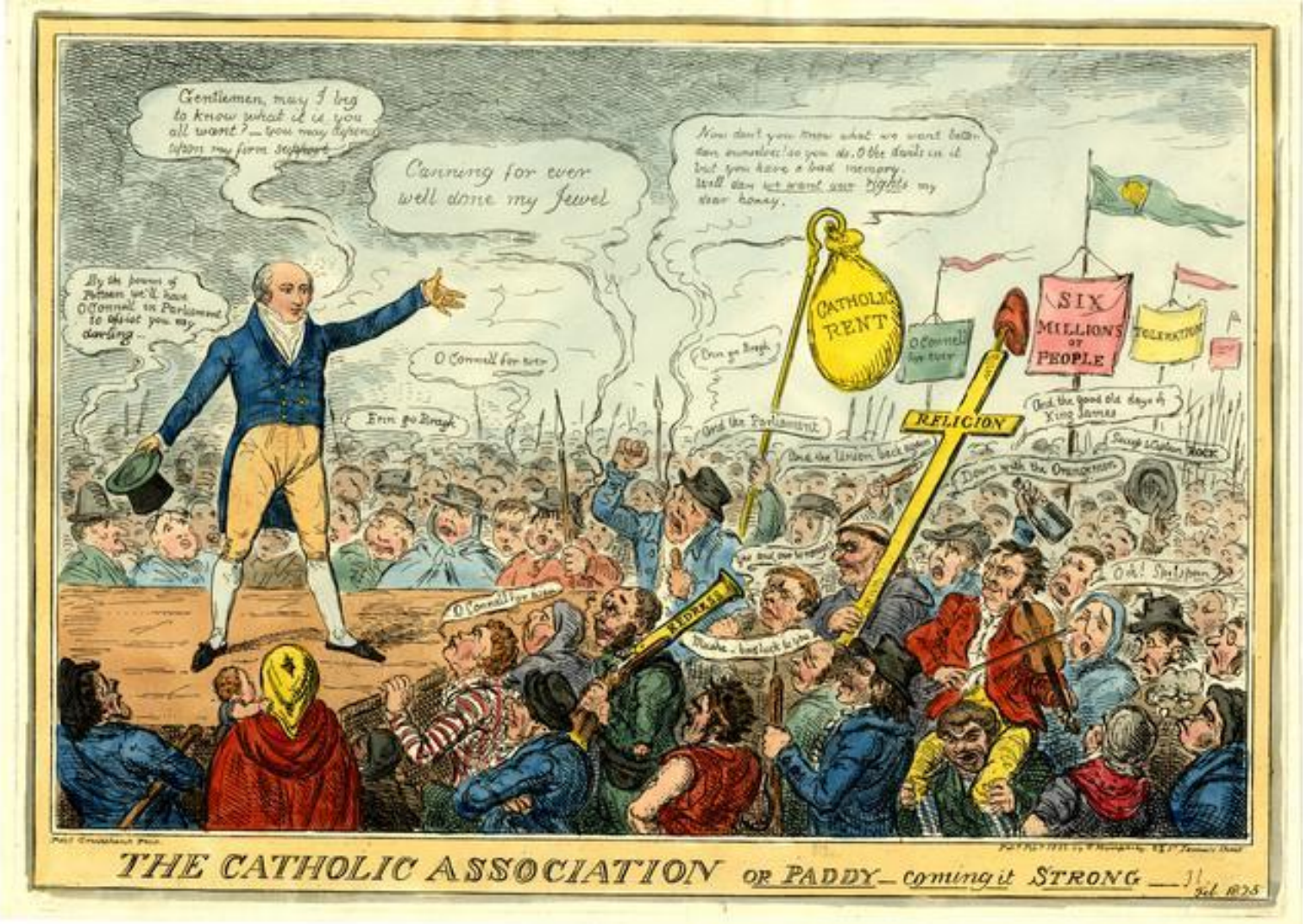
- January 1899: Samuel Mills of 28 Flour Street summoned Margaret Anderson of 32 Foxglove Street for assaulting him in St. Clement's Church. James McNary of 65 Bright Street, Mountpottinger, who is the churchwarden of St. Clement's Parish Church, summoned William Johnston of 4 Annette Street for being guilty of riotous behaviour in St. Clement's Church.
- March 1899: Further disturbances occurred in St. Clement's Parish Church.
- April 1899: St. Clement's Church, Beersbridge Road has been closed due to anti-ritualist disturbances.



Religious activism

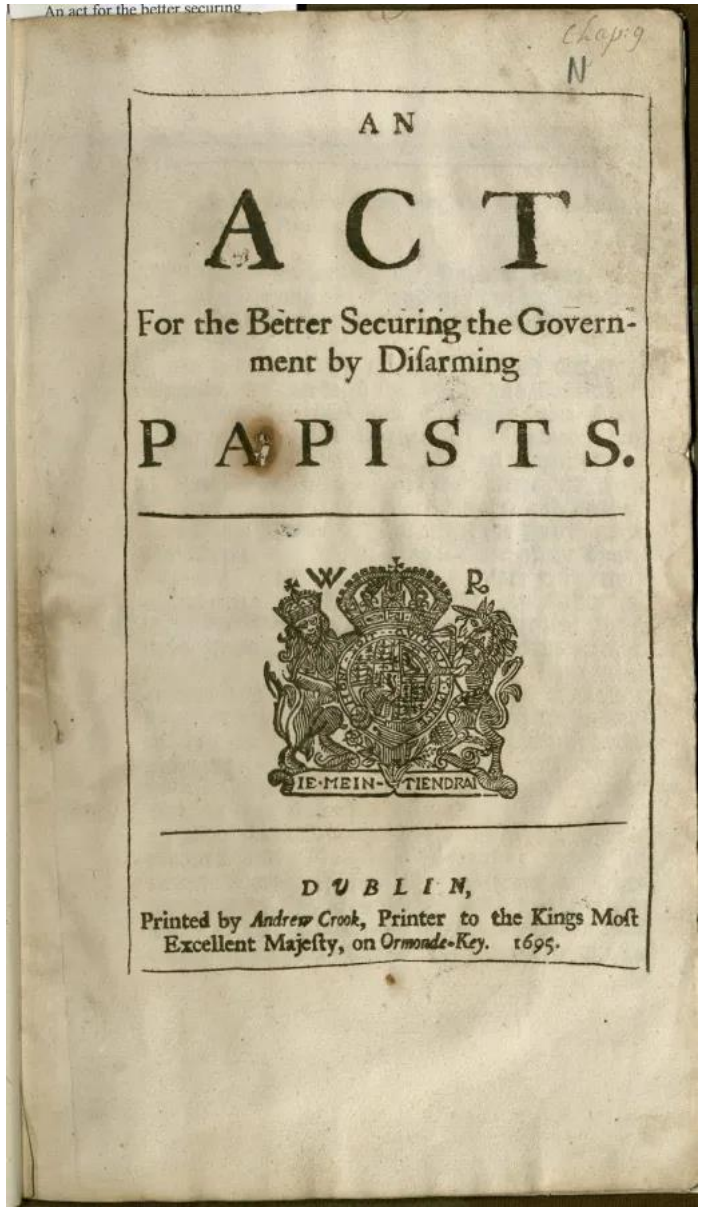


Catholic Emancipation



Penal Laws

- The Penal laws were imposed on 17th century Ireland (then a single country) to force Irish Catholics and Protestant dissenters to accept the established Church of Ireland.
- The laws enabled a wide range of provisions to penalise those Catholics/ dissenters refusing the surrender their beliefs.
- Catholic churches were confiscated and given to the Anglican Church of Ireland their lands were confiscated.
- Catholics & dissenters were forced to pay “Recusant Fines” for non-attendance at Anglican services.


An act for the better securing

Chap: 9

N

AN

ACT

For the Better Securing the Government by Disarming

PAPISTS.

W P

IE·MEIN-TIENDRAI

DUBLIN,

Printed by *Andrew Crook*, Printer to the Kings Most Excellent Majesty, on *Ormonde-Key*. 1695.

Catholic Emancipation, 1829

The Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829, also known as the Roman Catholic Relief Act 1829, was a significant piece of legislation in the United Kingdom. It brought about several important changes:

- Catholic Voting Rights
- Catholic Eligibility for Parliament
- Catholic Relief from Certain Religious Penalties



Preaching and collecting the Rent

- Many priests preached in favour of Catholic Emancipation.
- Catholic Association set up by Daniel O'Connell in 1823.
- Comprised of the middle-class elite: the annual subscription amounting to a guinea.
- The ‘Catholic Rent’ was a one penny subscription that was to be paid monthly to the Catholic Association in Ireland.
- Collected at Mass.



Sabbatarianism



Promoting morality amongst bakers

October 1842: The Reverend Dr. Cooke has issued a petition with regards to the Belfast baking industry and ‘Sabbath profanation’ for baking on a Sunday.



April 1856:

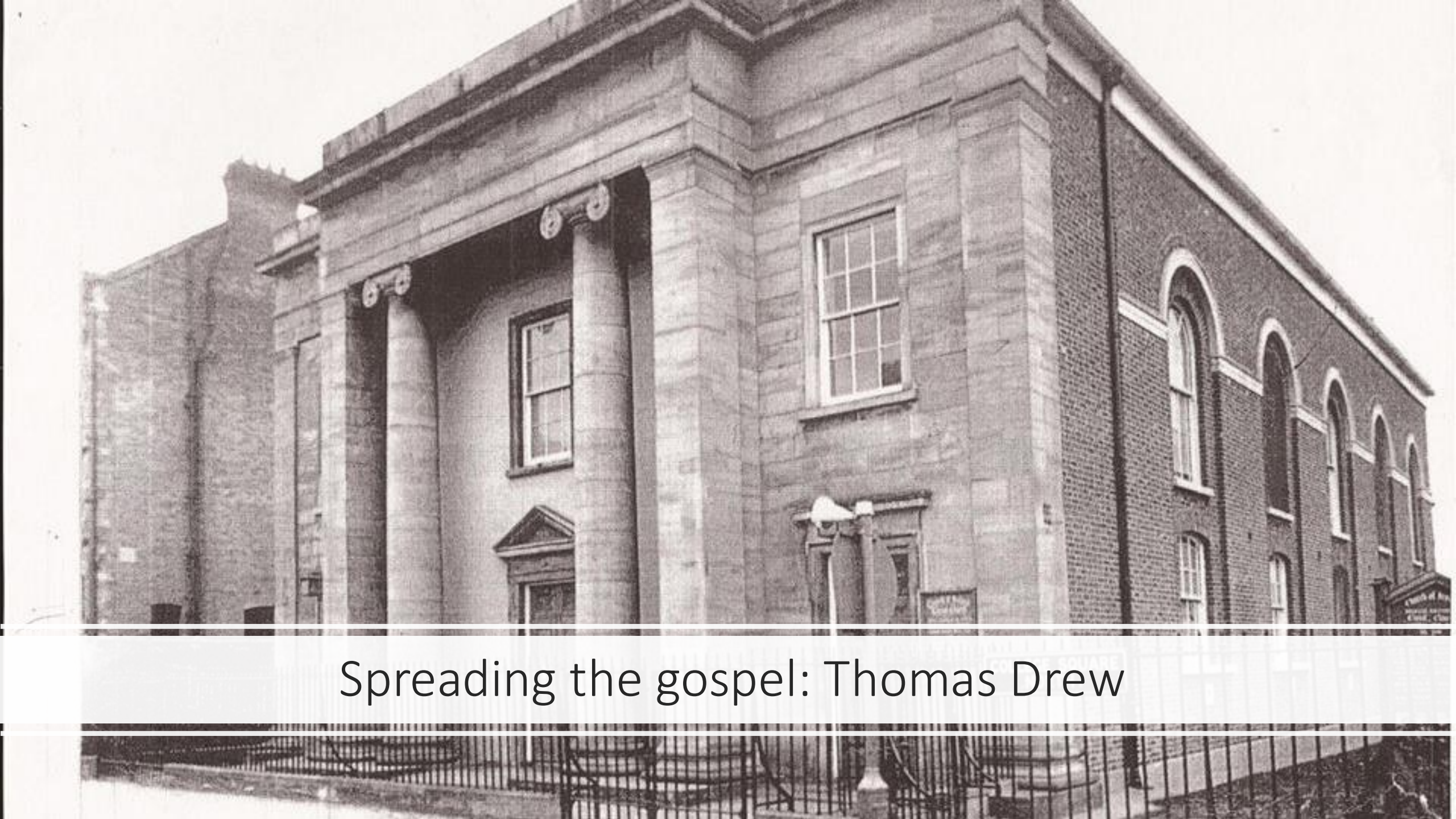
William John Lavery complained that four bakers in the employment of Mr. Rice and three in the employment of Mr. Grubb had violated the Sabbath by working on Sunday nights. The bakers were fined five shillings. In their defence they said that they had to work on Sundays because their customers were complaining that the bread sold on Mondays was sour.



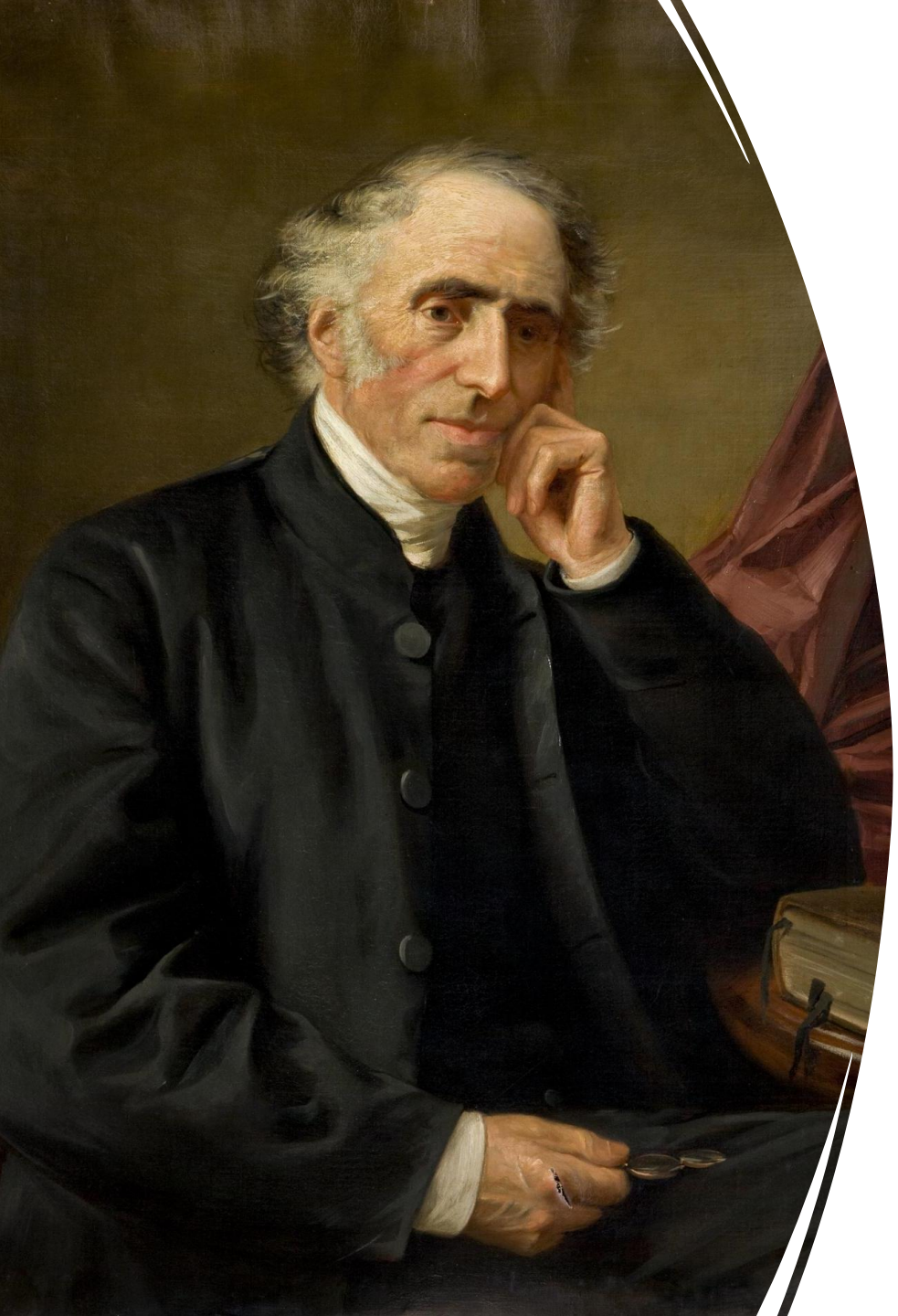
Campaigning against the ‘Sunday Trap’

April 1844: Five hundred and ninety people visited Botanic Gardens on Sunday despite the Reverend Dr. Cooke’s admonishment that to do so was against God’s will to keep the Sabbath day holy.



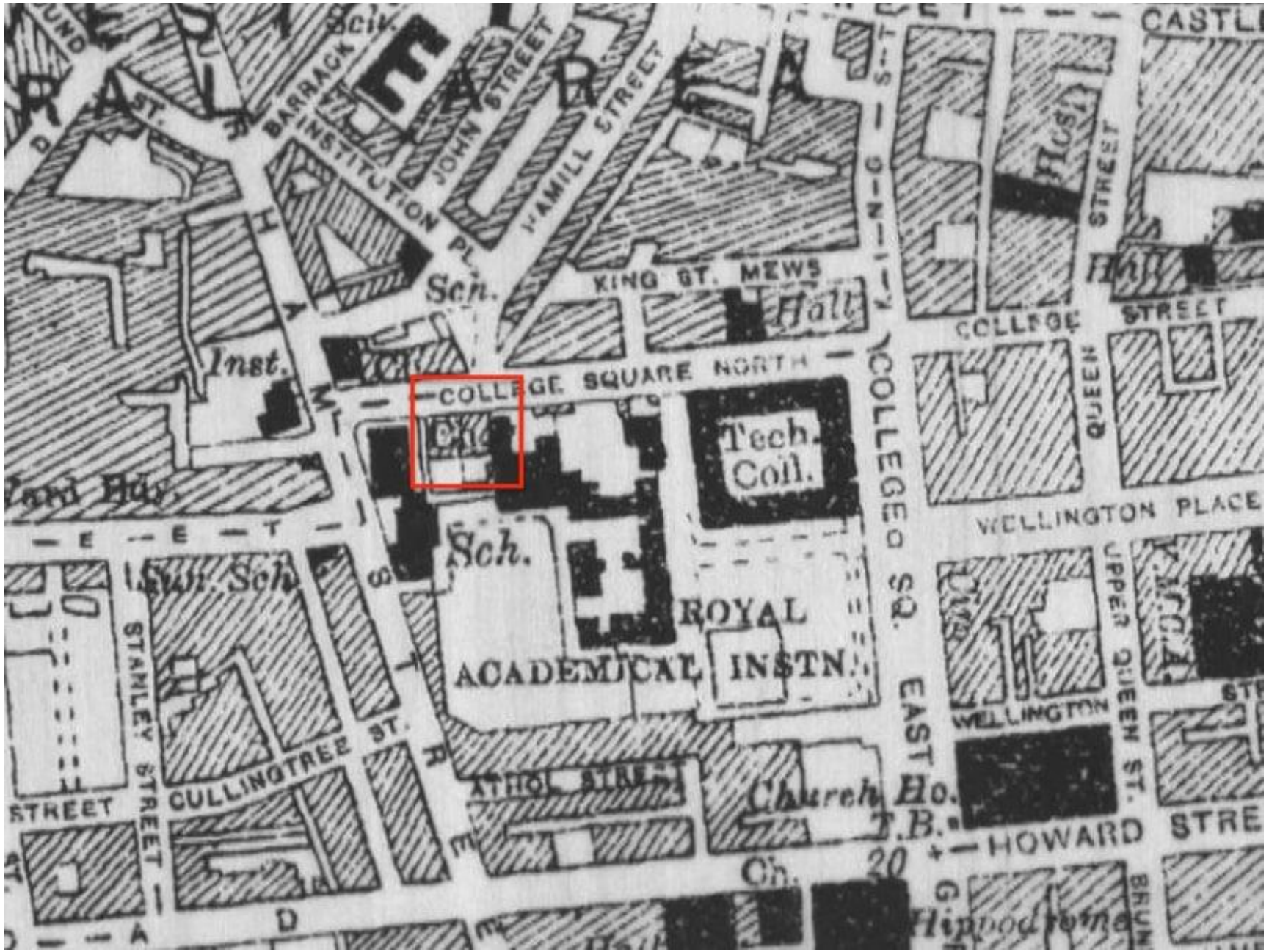


Spreading the gospel: Thomas Drew



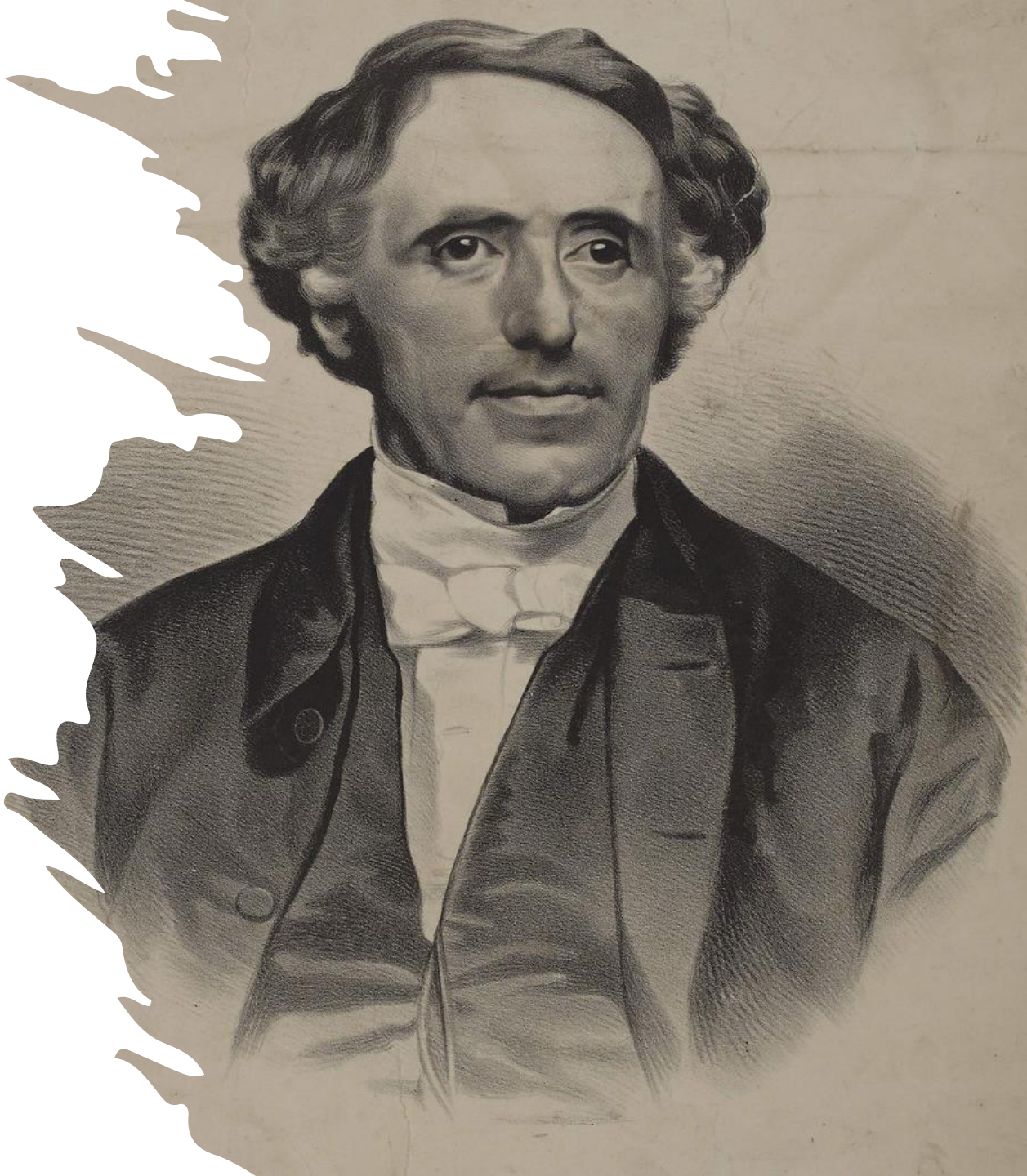
Who Was Thomas Drew?

- Thomas Drew was born in Limerick, Ireland, in 1800.
- He was an evangelical Protestant minister in the Church of Ireland.
- He studied at Trinity College Dublin and was ordained in 1827.
- He became known for his strong anti-Catholic views and support for Protestant political activism.
- He played an important role in shaping religious and political divisions in Victorian Belfast.


BARRACK
INSTITUTION PL
JOHN STREET
HAMILL STREET
KING ST. MEWS
Sch.
Hall
Inst.
COLLEGE SQUARE NORTH
COLLEGE
QUEEN
STREET
Tech.
Coll.
WELLINGTON PLACE
Sch.
ROYAL
ACADEMICAL
INSTN.
COLLEGE SQ. EAST
UPPER QUEEN ST.
WELLINGTON
STANLEY STREET
CULLINGTREE
ST.
ATHOL STREET
Church
Ho.
T.B.
HOWARD
Ch.
Hippodrome

Drew's Early Life and Religious Work

- Drew began his ministry in Broughshane, County Antrim.
- He established Sunday schools and organised clothing distribution and poor relief.
- He supported Protestant organisations and charities.
- He opposed Catholic emancipation and helped establish the Ballymena Brunswick Constitutional Club.
- His religious beliefs strongly influenced his political activities.



Drew's Arrival in Belfast

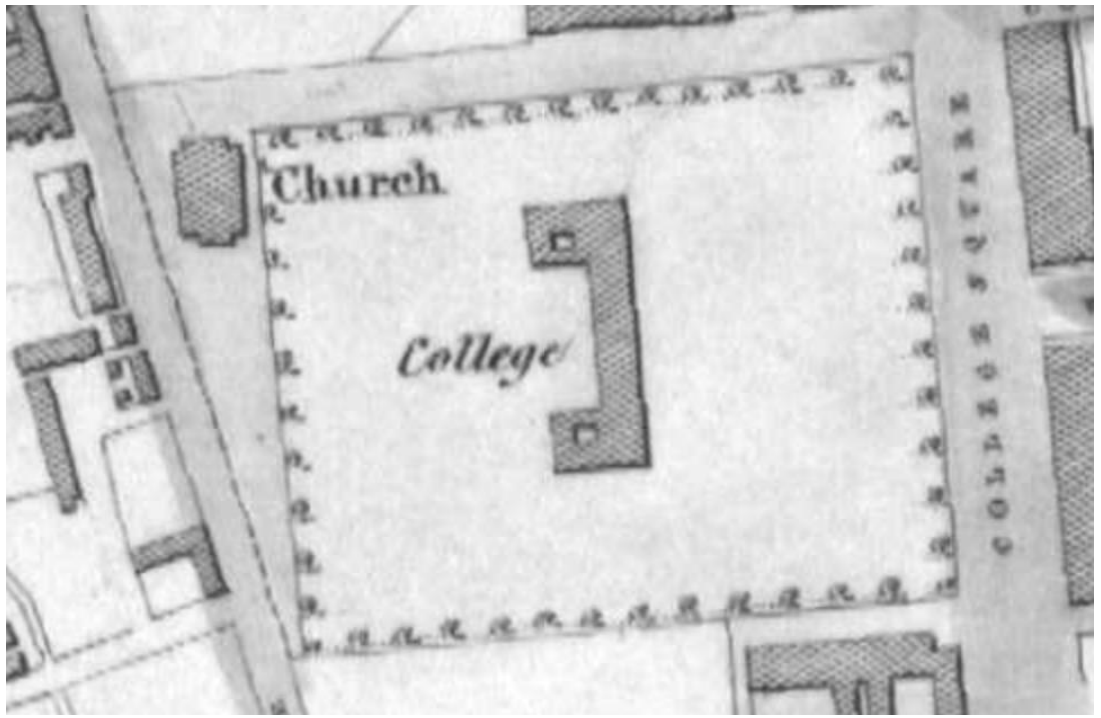
- In 1833, Drew became minister of Christ Church in Belfast.
- Christ Church was situated between the mainly Protestant Sandy Row and Catholic Pound areas.
- His congregation consisted largely of working-class Protestants.
- He worked to make the church an important part of everyday community life.
- His ministry helped strengthen Protestant identity in Belfast.



CHRIST CHURCH, COLLEGE SQUARE.

Drew's Influence on the Community

- Drew organised Sunday schools, libraries, concerts and religious activities.
- He encouraged cooperation between working-class and middle-class Protestants.
- His church provided education, charity and social support.
- These activities strengthened relationships within the Protestant community.
- However, his ministry also contributed to growing divisions between Protestants and Catholics.



Drew's Religious and Political Beliefs

- Drew believed Protestantism represented true Christianity.
- He strongly opposed the Catholic Church and its influence in Ireland.
- He encouraged Protestants to defend their religion and political interests.
- His speeches often portrayed Catholicism as a threat to Protestant society.
- His preaching helped reinforce existing anti-Catholic attitudes.



The Controversial Sermon of 12 July 1857

- On 12 July 1857, Drew delivered a controversial sermon at Christ Church.
- The sermon was attended by Orangemen and their families.
- Orangemen wore Orange sashes and lilies inside the church.
- Drew criticised the Catholic Church and accused Irish Catholics of historical disloyalty.
- He urged Protestants to stand against what he presented as the threat of Catholicism.
- The sermon increased religious and political tensions in Belfast.



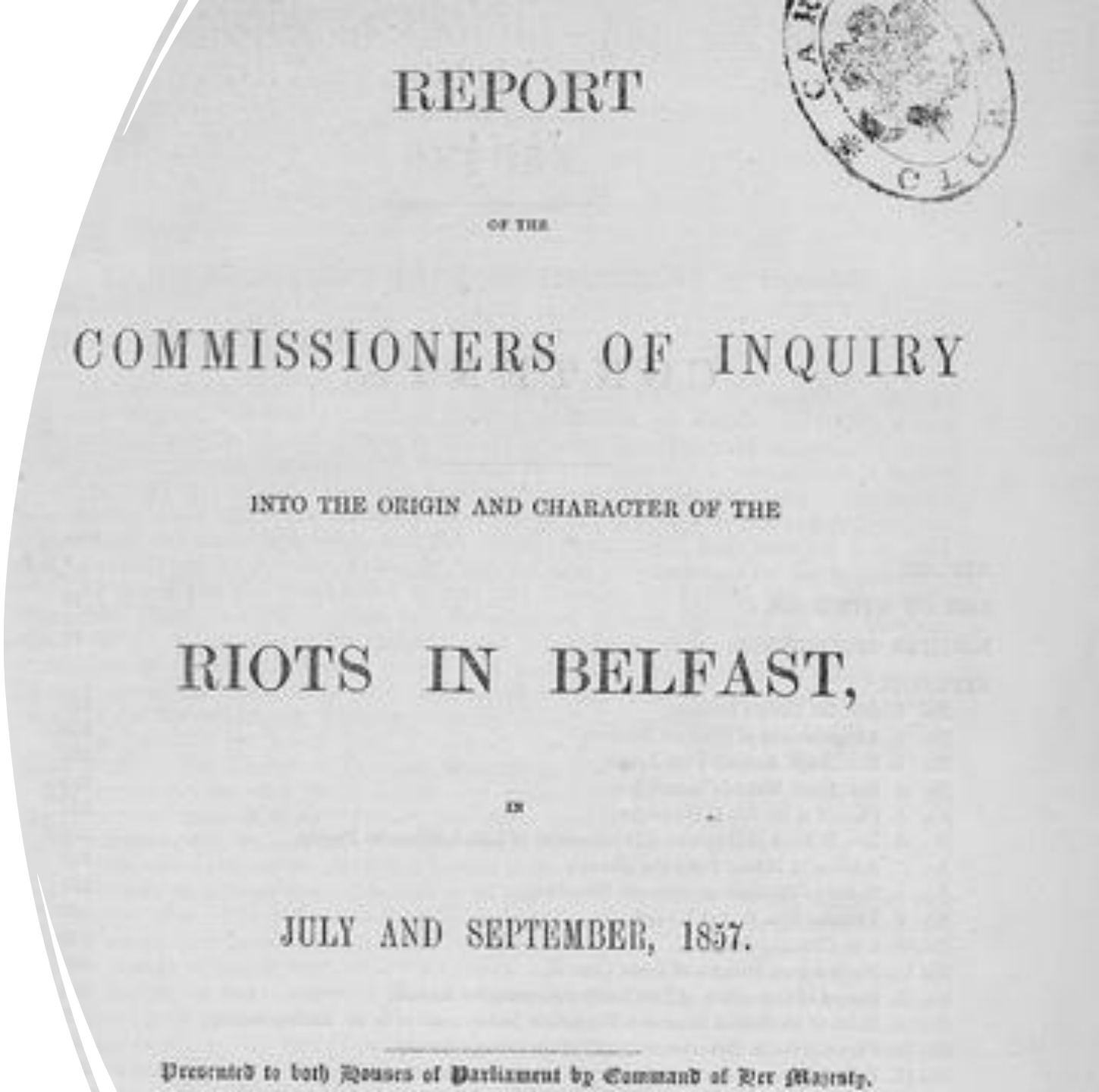
The Belfast Riots of 1857

- Following Drew's sermon, Belfast experienced serious sectarian riots.
- Violence occurred between sections of the Protestant and Catholic communities.
- The riots caused widespread destruction and increased religious hostility.
- Drew's sermon contributed to tensions but was not the sole cause of the violence.
- The riots demonstrated how religious divisions could develop into violent conflict.



The Government's Response

- The government established a commission to investigate the Belfast riots.
- Its report was published in February 1858.
- The report blamed Orangemen and their July celebrations for contributing to the unrest.
- Although Drew was not directly named, his sermon was indirectly implicated.
- Despite the controversy, Drew repeated his July sermon shortly after the report appeared.


REPORT

OF THE

COMMISSIONERS OF INQUIRY

INTO THE ORIGIN AND CHARACTER OF THE

RIOTS IN BELFAST,

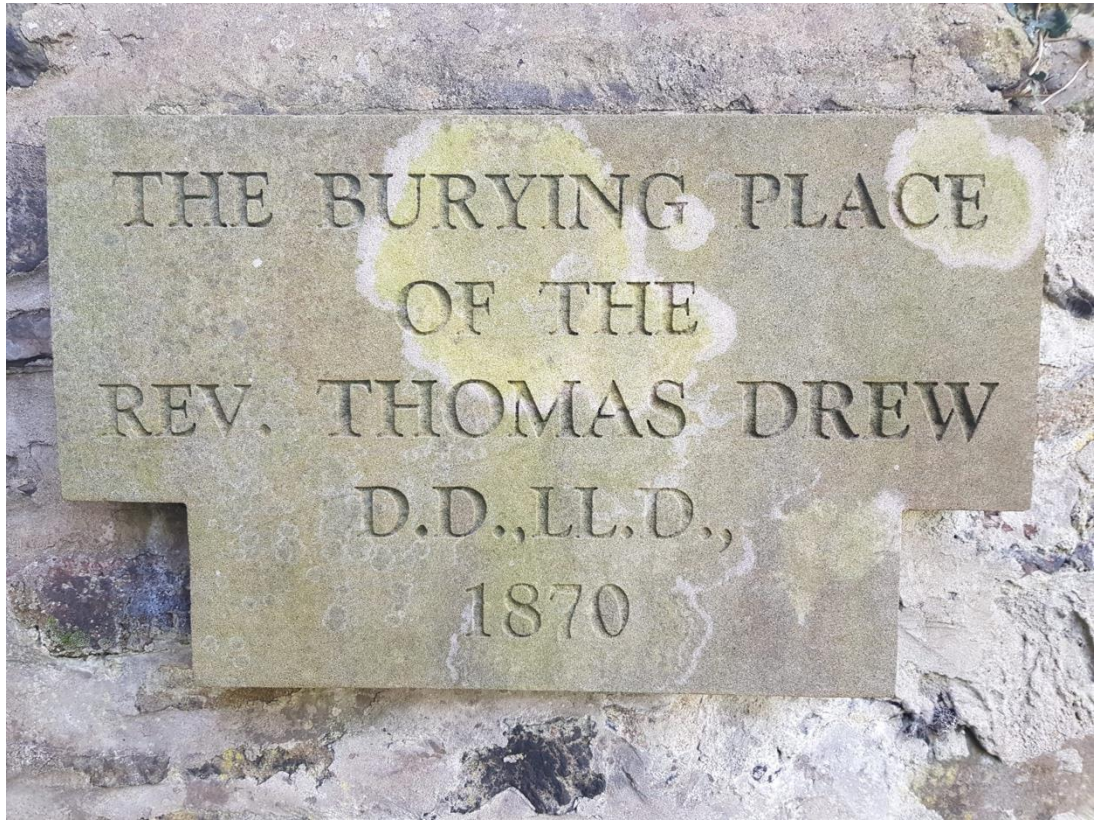
IN

JULY AND SEPTEMBER, 1857.

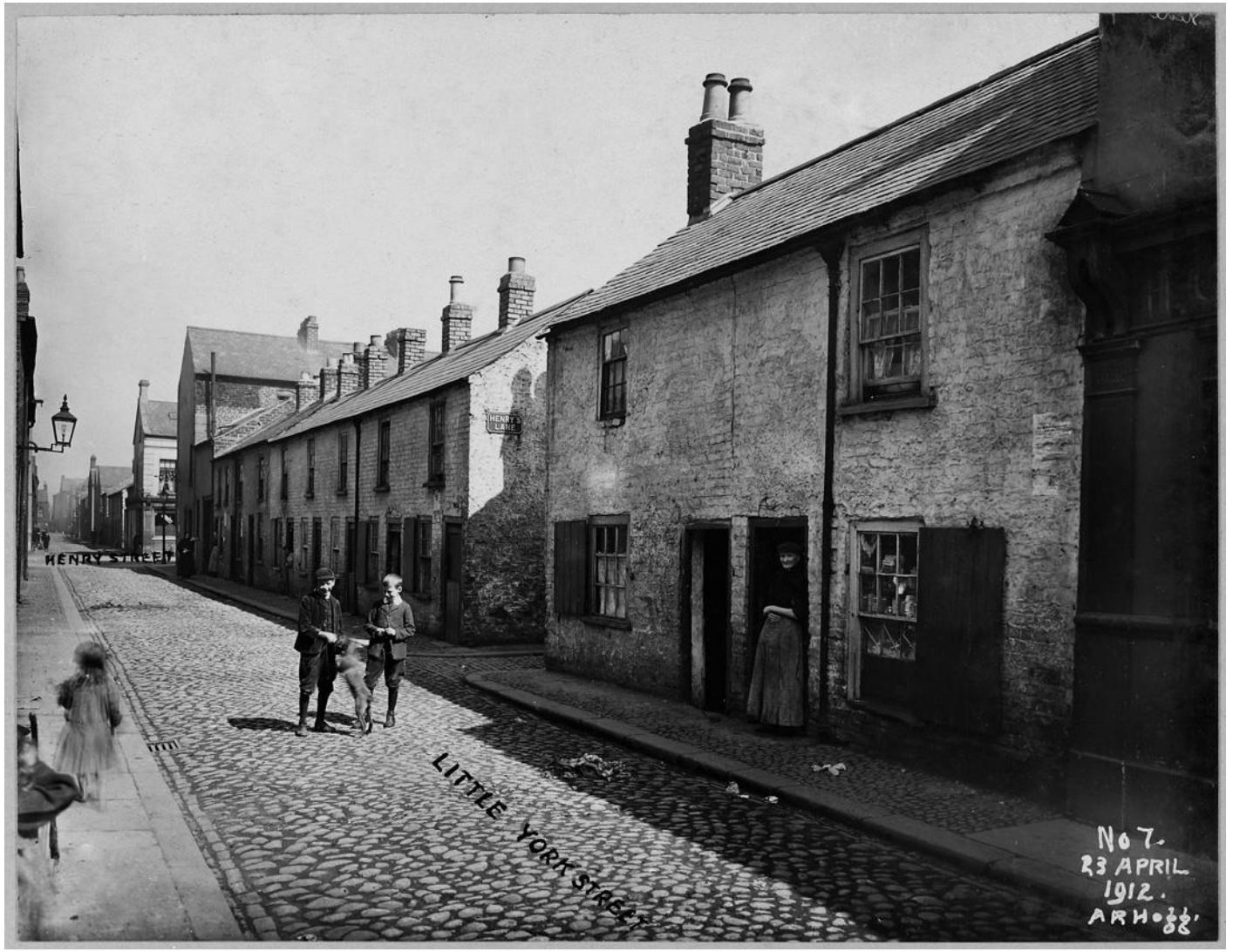
Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of Her Majesty.

How Influential Was Thomas Drew?

- Drew was an influential religious and political figure within Belfast's Protestant community.
- His sermons helped reinforce existing Protestant beliefs and prejudices.
- He did not create sectarian divisions but contributed to strengthening them.
- His influence came from his ability to organise communities and legitimise their existing attitudes.
- His preaching helped make religious identity an important part of political and community life.

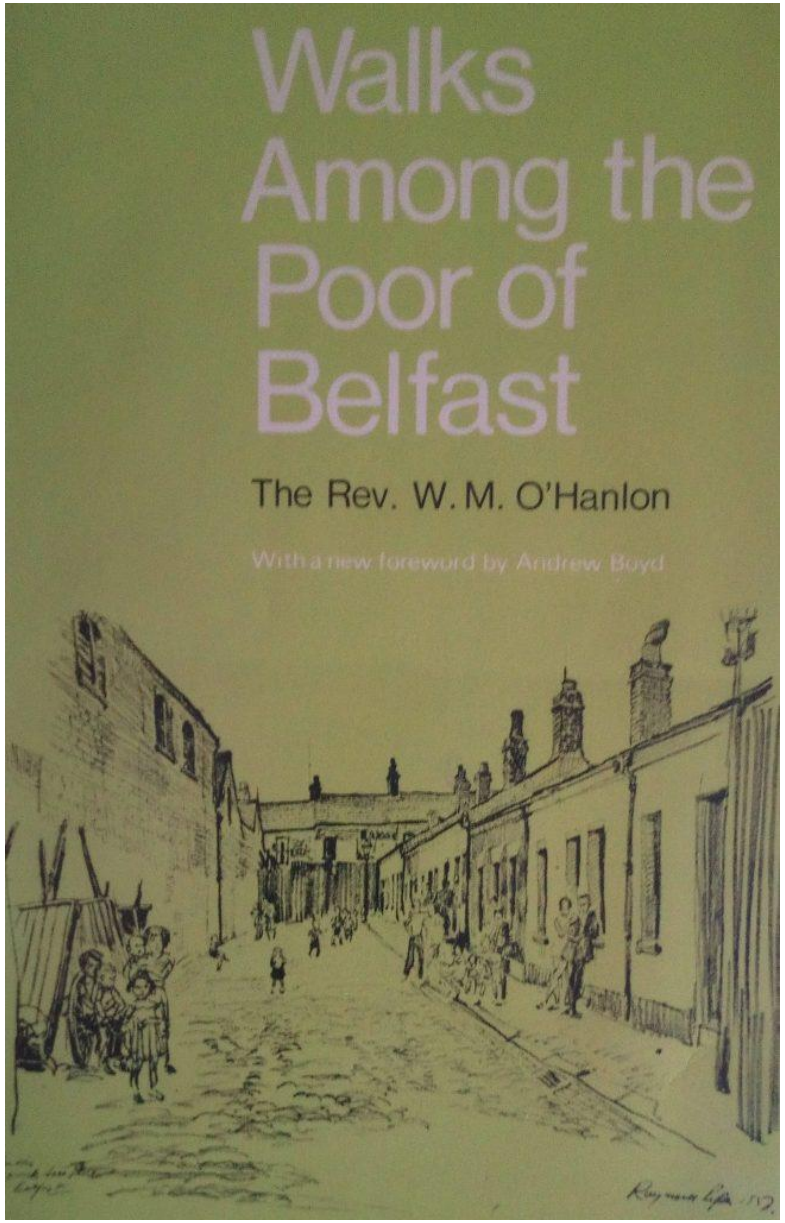


Anti poverty



William Murphy O'Hanlon

- Born 1809, Newry. Father barrister.
- While Parents in India, O'Hanlon was schooled at Creighton's boarding school.
- School run by Rev. George Hamilton, independent church member.
- O'Hanlan trained as a vicar. Ordained in 1837 and became minister at Hollinghead Church, Chorley Lancashire.
- O'Hanlon was appointed minister of the Congregational Church in Donegall Street.
- 1854, O'Hanlon was recalled to England; becoming a pastor in Barnley. Died in 1855.



LETTER I.

SIR,—Permit me to call the earnest attention of the more affluent, respectable, and especially the Christian public of Belfast, to the deplorable condition of the poor who inhabit the back streets, courts, and alleys, of our rapidly extending and populous town. Amid the perhaps unavoidable conflicts of party and opinion, it is somewhat refreshing to feel, that this is a subject, which, while second to none in its bearing upon our welfare as a community, may yet be pursued apart altogether from sectarian principles, either in religion or politics.

It has often struck me, how little either the idle or the busy, as they move along the great thoroughfares of our cities and towns, seem to know or think of the social misery, vice, and squalid poverty, which lurk in obscure dens, within, it may be, a few hundred yards of these more open ways. And it is extraordinary, how many years we may inhabit a particular locality, and yet never once penetrate the dark and noisome haunts which lie in our immediate neighbourhood. My conviction is, that there is enough of benevolence in most minds to lead them to set on foot some methods

Salvation Army

- Founded in East London in 1865 when Methodists, William and Catherine Booth.
- The Booths ‘preached and lived out a doctrine of practical Christianity — soup, soap and salvation — to encourage both social and spiritual transformation among society’s most vulnerable and marginalised people’ [website].
- The organisation adopted a quasi-military structure with officers and members wearing a military-style uniform in 1878.



Tackling poverty in Belfast

- 1895: 1,000 volunteers and between 6,000 to 10,000 ‘adherents’ (Belfast News-letter, 22.10.1895)
- December 1904:
  - 1,800 ‘free breakfasts’ given out in 1 week in December of that year (Belfast Weekly News, 8.12.1904).
  - In Ballymacarrett, over Xmas, given 15,000 ‘free breakfasts’ (BNL, 3.2.1904)



Campaigning Against Animal Cruelty



Activity in Belfast

- June 1845: Belfast Society for the Protection of Animals met in the Methodist Chapel, Donegall Square East.
- April 1847: The annual meeting of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals was held in Fisherwick Place Presbyterian Meeting House

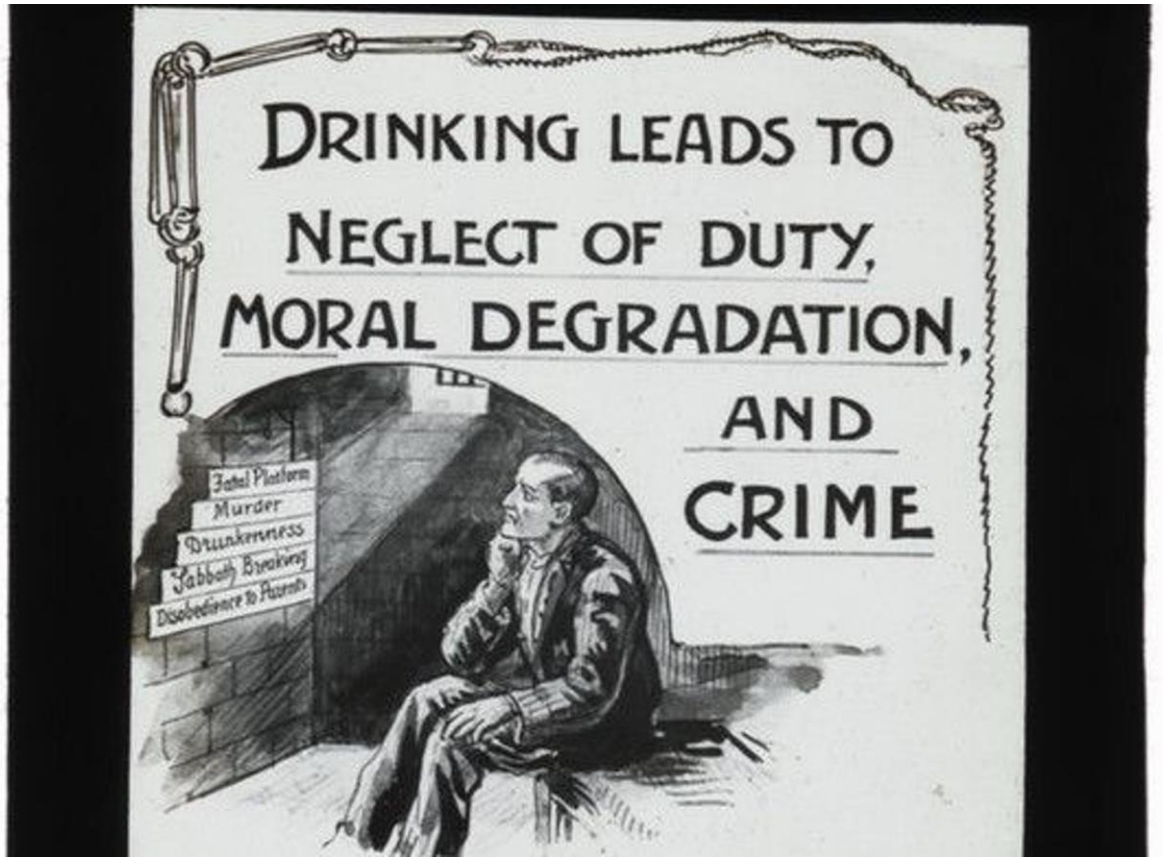


Temperance


STEP 1.
A glass with a Friend.
STEP 2.
A glass to keep the cold out.
STEP 3.
A glass too much.
STEP 4.
Drunk and riotous.
STEP 5.
The summit attained
Jolly companions
A confirmed drunkard.
STEP 6.
Poverty and Disease.
STEP 7.
Forsaken by Friends.
STEP 8.
Desperation and crime.
STEP 9.
Death by suicide.
LITH. & PUB. BY N. CURRIER,
33 SPRUCE ST. N.Y.
THE DRUNKARDS PROGRESS.
FROM THE FIRST GLASS TO THE GRAVE.

Campaigning by the church

- June 1844: A temperance soiree was held in the Methodist Chapel, Ballynafeigh.
- September 1846: The **Very Reverend Dr. Spratt** held a temperance meeting at Wellington Place, attended by over 4,000 people. Upwards of seven hundred people took the pledge. Over the past two days at least 5,000 individuals have knelt and pledged avoidance of all intoxicating liquors.



Temperance activism

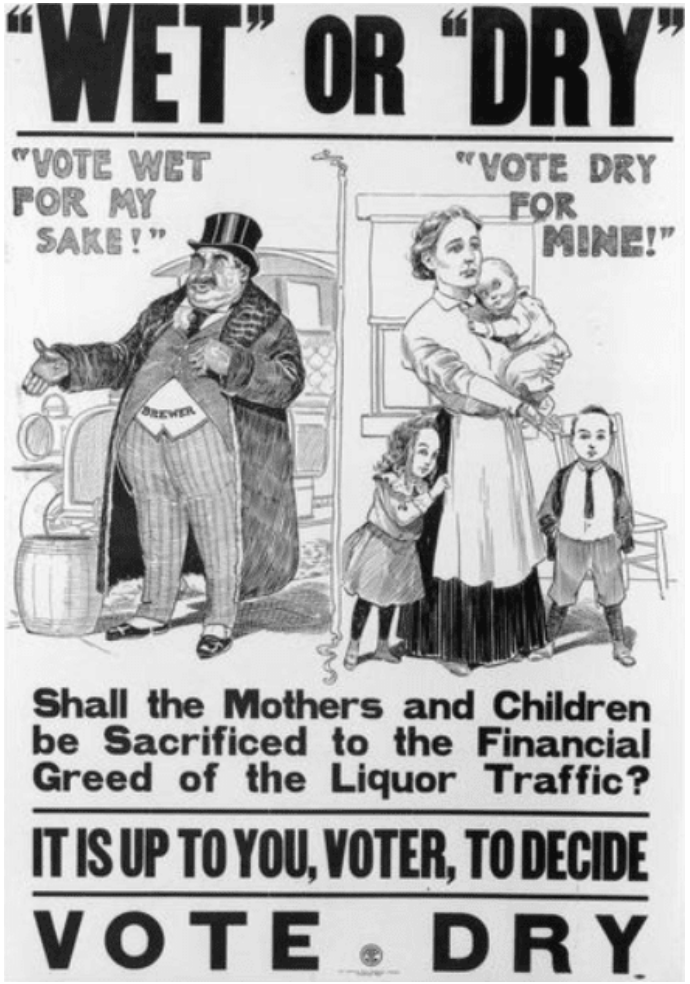
- October 1846: The Very Reverend Dr. Spratt has returned to Belfast and held another successful meeting at which there were 2,000 people in attendance.
- October 1849: A meeting was held in the Reverend Nelson's church, Donegall Street, to hear a deputation from the Scottish Temperance League.
- April 1881: A temperance meeting was held in the Wesleyan Schoolhouse, Andersonstown.



A WOMAN'S LIQUOR RAID.—HOW THE LADIES OF FREDERICKTOWN, O., ABOLISHED THE TRAFIC OF ARDENT SPIRITS IN THEIR TOWN.—

Arthur Hill Thornton's campaign

- 1853:Verstry meeting of St Anne's, Arthur Hill Thornton, pointed out that the need for 20 overseers of public houses as authorised by acts of parliament.
- Magistrates appointed Thornton and colleagues to oversee pubs.
- Massive reduction in pubs:
  - 1847 – 554 pubs in Belfast
  - 1853 – 889
  - 1853 - 726

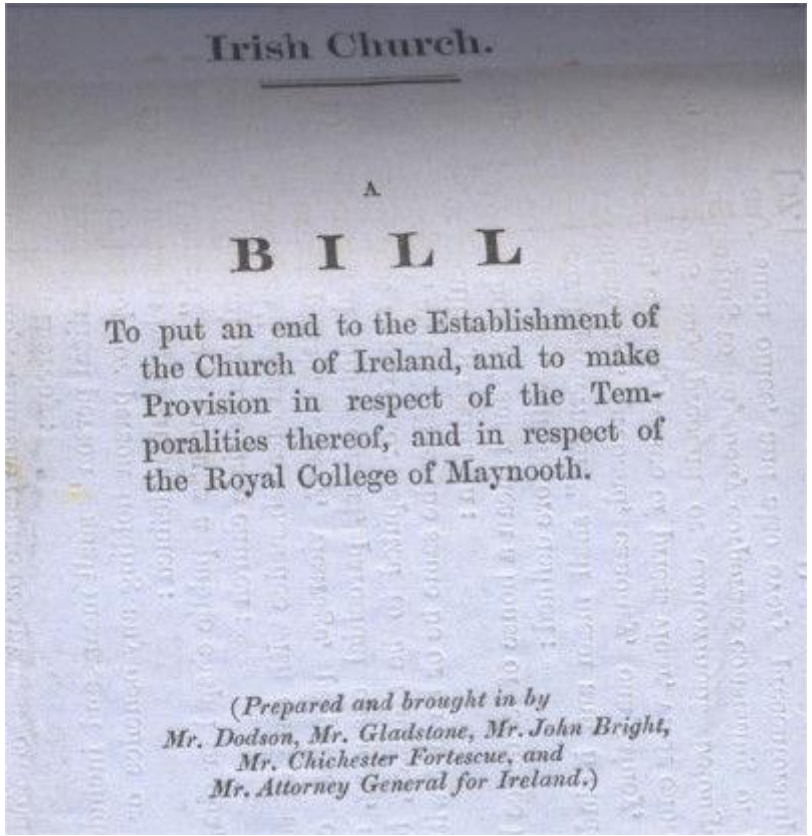


Campaign against the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland



The Irish Church Act 1869

- The Act meant the Church of Ireland was no longer entitled to collect tithes from the people of Ireland.
- It also ceased to send representative bishops as Lords Spiritual to the House of Lords in Westminster.
- Existing clergy of the church received a life annuity in lieu of the revenues to which they were no longer entitled: tithes, rent charge, ministers' money, stipends and augmentations, and certain marriage and burial fees.



Irish Church.

A

BILL

To put an end to the Establishment of the Church of Ireland, and to make Provision in respect of the Temporalities thereof, and in respect of the Royal College of Maynooth.

(Prepared and brought in by Mr. Dodson, Mr. Gladstone, Mr. John Bright, Mr. Chichester Fortescue, and Mr. Attorney General for Ireland.)

Reaction in Belfast

June 1869: The ‘great Protestant demonstration’ to protest against Gladstone’s Irish Church Bill, took place in the Botanic Gardens. A very large crowd of between 20-25,000 people turned out. According to the Belfast newspapers, it was essentially an Orange demonstration in honour of Mr. Johnston, M.P.



Laundries



Magdalene Laundries

- Magdalene Laundries operated 18th–20th century
- First opened in London, 1758 (Protestant)
- Expanded to Ireland (1767), later spread to USA, Canada, Australia
- Mostly Catholic-run by 19th century
- Supposedly “rescuing” women, but often punitive and abusive



Purpose

- Targeted “fallen women”: prostitutes, unmarried mothers, orphans, petty offenders
- Institutions offered penitence through prayer and hard work
- Residents worked unpaid in laundries or sewing workshops
- Framed as charitable but functioned as penitentiary workhouses
- Strict regimes harsher than prisons in many cases



Donegall Pass Institution (Ulster Magdalene Asylum)

- Founded 1839 by Church of Ireland in Belfast
- Known as Ulster Magdalene Asylum and Episcopal Chapel
- Designed Gothic-style by Sir Charles Lanyon
- Provided shelter, instruction and compulsory laundry work
- Operated until 1916 as a laundry, chapel still active as St Mary Magdalene Church



Ulster Presbyterian Penitentiary (Edgar Home)

- Originated in 1816, became Presbyterian-run in 1839
- Located on Brunswick Street, later Ormeau Road
- Residents: “fallen women” or “victims of seduction”
- Required to stay two years, with religious and vocational training
- Renamed Edgar Home (1892), closed 1926



Catholic Good Shepherd Convent (Ballynafeigh, Belfast)

- Established 1867 by Good Shepherd Sisters at Bishop Dorrian's invitation
- Functioned as reformatory and laundry for "fallen" women
- Strict discipline, forced labour and abuse widely reported
- Part of wider Catholic Magdalene system in Ireland
- Chapel became Good Shepherd Parish Church in 1980; laundry closed in 1982.

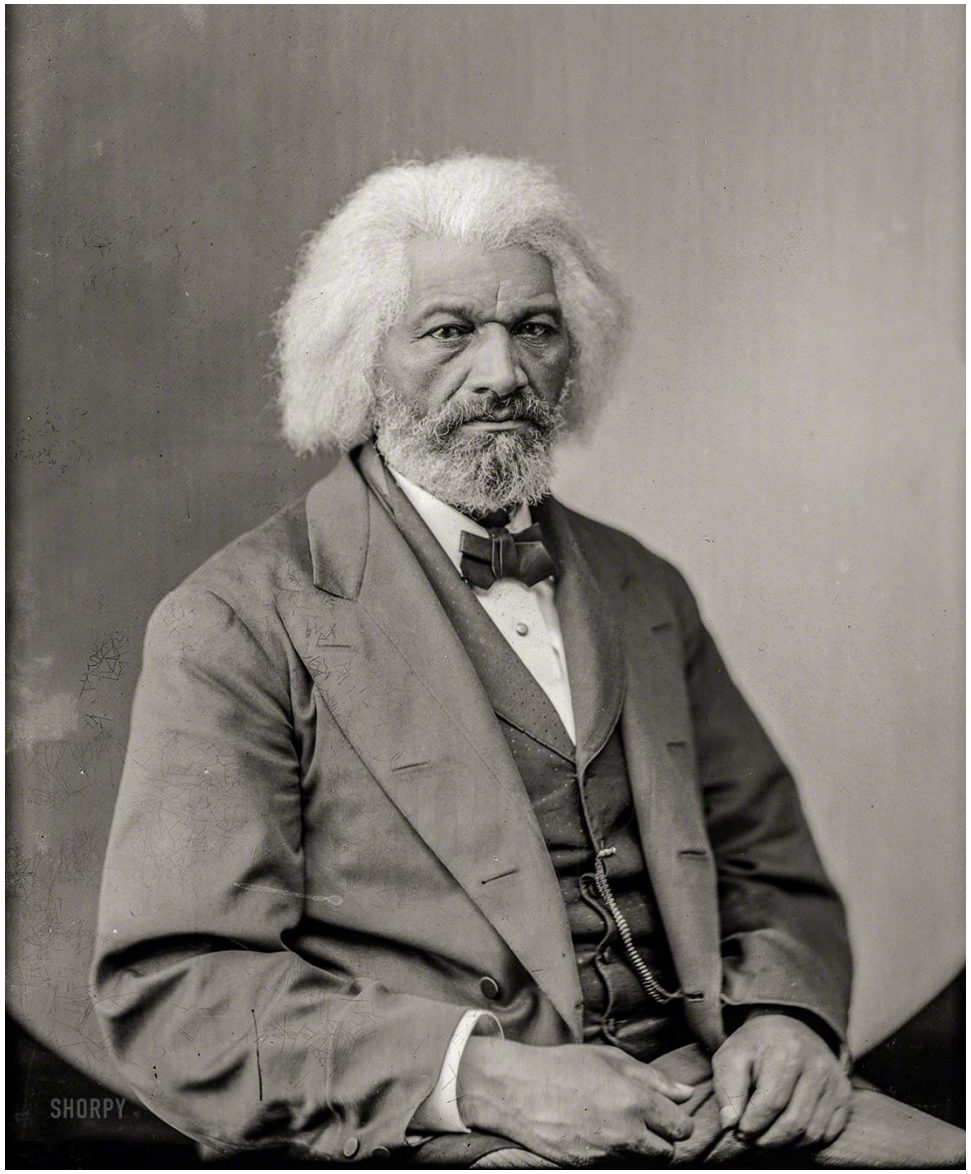


Anti slavery



Anti slavery agitation

- Significant engagement by Anglican padres, Presbyterian ministers and Catholic priests.
- Shared platforms to campaign together and campaigned from the late 1770s to the 1850s.



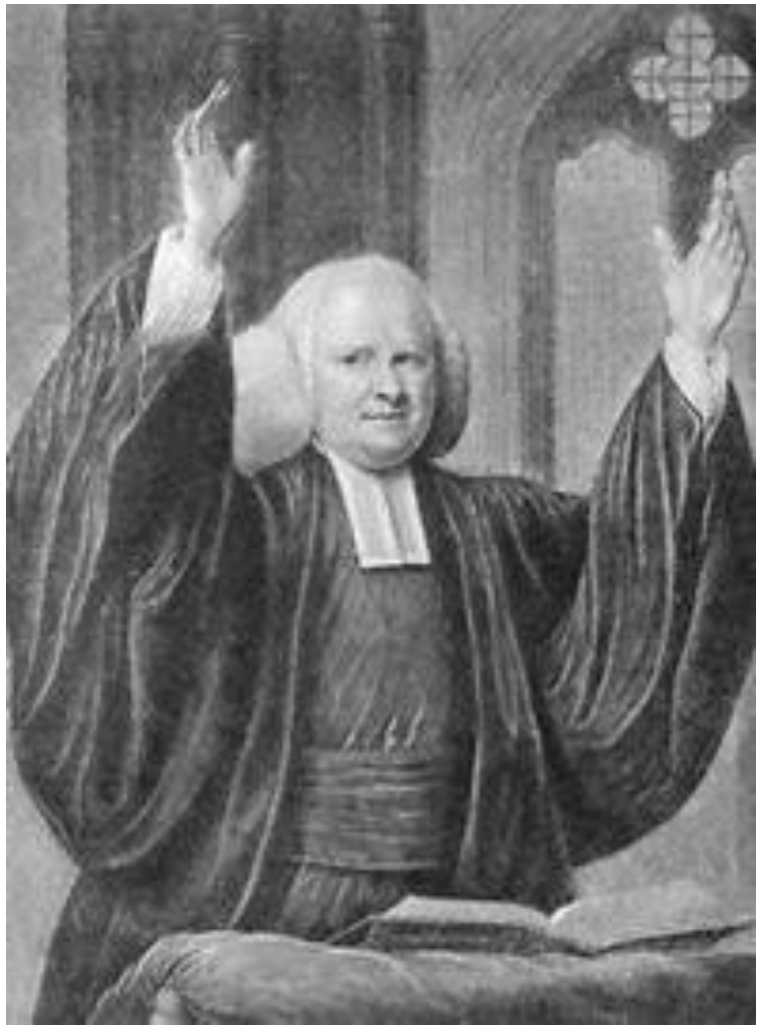
Sermons: Reverend Samual Barber

In 1779, Barber called the slave trade:

“That horrible degradation of human nature”

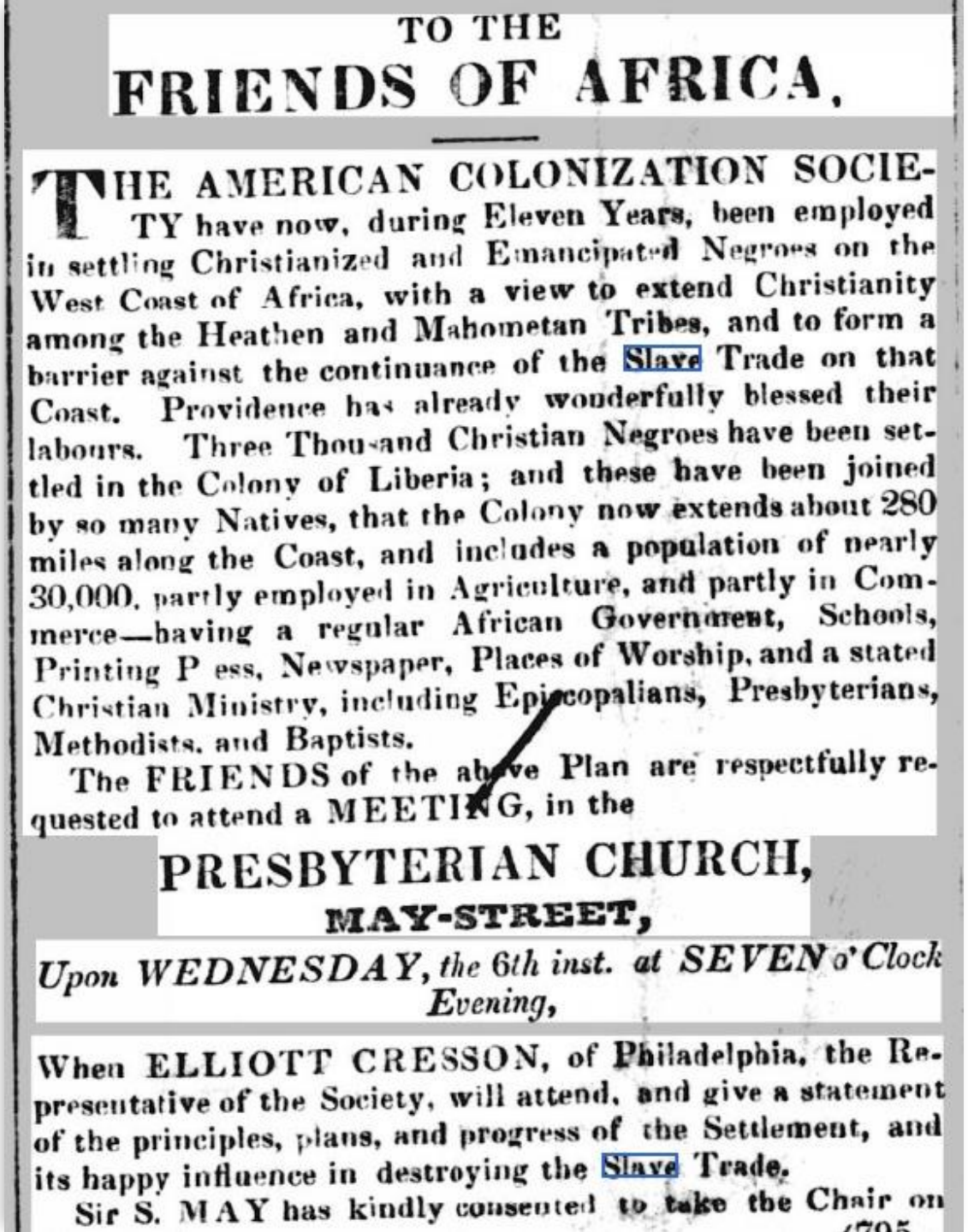
Later he said that:

“[a good Christian]…shall act not only as reasonable creatures…but disengaged likewise from the imperious dictates of depraved nature (the worst of slavery) he shall enjoy a perfect un-interrupted peace of mind and secure a blessed mansion… “



Churches and halls used for anti slavery meetings

- Established in 1816 by Robert Finley.
- Originally named the Society for the Colonization of Free People of Color of America until 1837.
- Aimed to encourage migration of freeborn blacks and emancipated slaves to Africa.
- Meeting at May Street Church (Henry Cooke)



TO THE

FRIENDS OF AFRICA,

THE AMERICAN COLONIZATION SOCIETY have now, during Eleven Years, been employed in settling Christianized and Emancipated Negroes on the West Coast of Africa, with a view to extend Christianity among the Heathen and Mahometan Tribes, and to form a barrier against the continuance of the Slave Trade on that Coast. Providence has already wonderfully blessed their labours. Three Thousand Christian Negroes have been settled in the Colony of Liberia; and these have been joined by so many Natives, that the Colony now extends about 280 miles along the Coast, and includes a population of nearly 30,000, partly employed in Agriculture, and partly in Commerce—having a regular African Government, Schools, Printing P ess, Newspaper, Places of Worship, and a stated Christian Ministry, including Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Methodists, and Baptists.

The FRIENDS of the above Plan are respectfully requested to attend a MEETING, in the

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

MAY-STREET,

Upon WEDNESDAY, the 6th inst. at SEVEN o'Clock Evening,

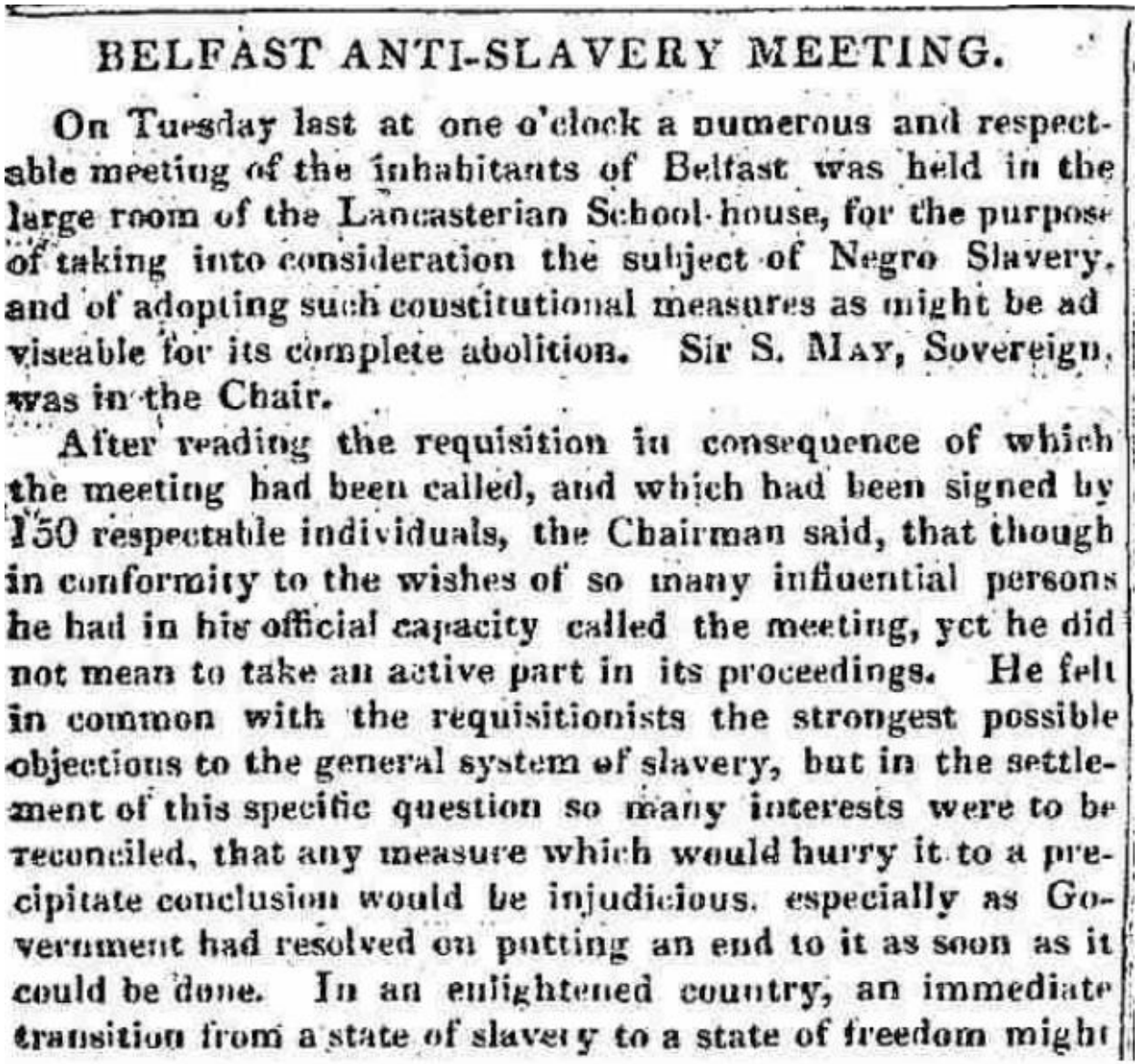
When ELLIOTT CRESSON, of Philadelphia, the Representative of the Society, will attend, and give a statement of the principles, plans, and progress of the Settlement, and its happy influence in destroying the Slave Trade.

Sir S. MAY has kindly consented to take the Chair on

Formation of the Belfast Anti Slavery Society

Foundation meeting of BASS was held on 14 September 1830 and attended by:

- Rev. Dr Crolly, RC bishop
- Rev Thomas Dix Hincks, Presbyterian minister
- Rev Prof William Bruce, Presbyterian minister



BELFAST ANTI-SLAVERY MEETING.

On Tuesday last at one o'clock a numerous and respectable meeting of the inhabitants of Belfast was held in the large room of the Lancasterian School-house, for the purpose of taking into consideration the subject of Negro Slavery, and of adopting such constitutional measures as might be advisable for its complete abolition. Sir S. May, Sovereign, was in the Chair.

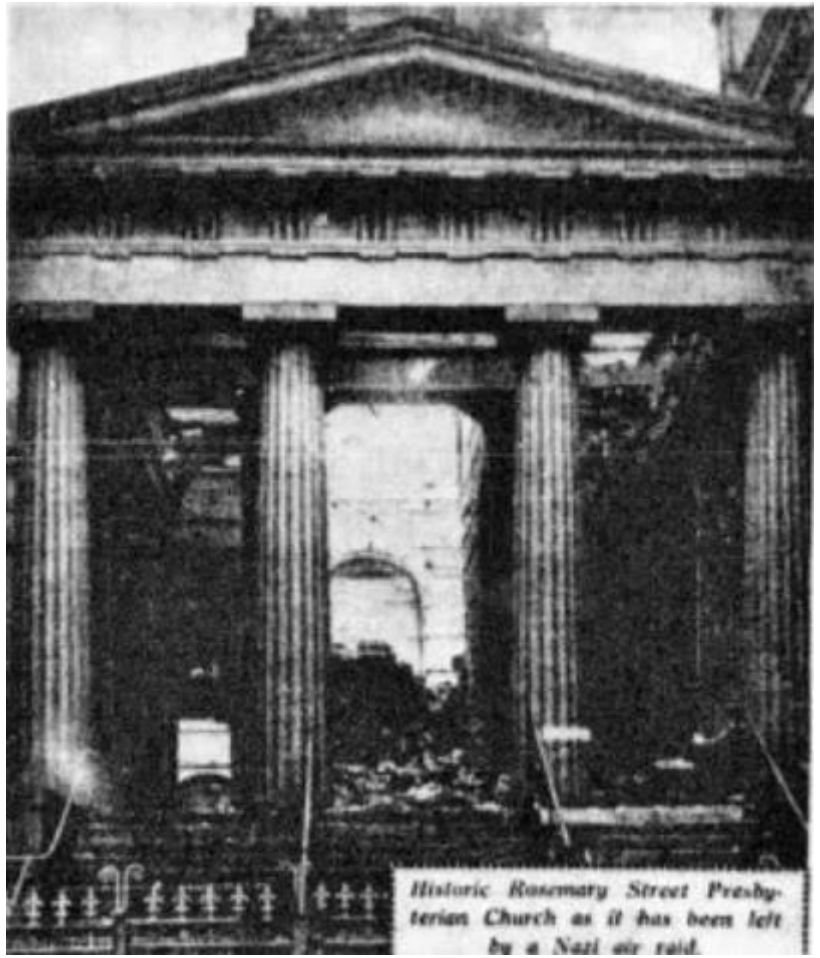
After reading the requisition in consequence of which the meeting had been called, and which had been signed by 150 respectable individuals, the Chairman said, that though in conformity to the wishes of so many influential persons he had in his official capacity called the meeting, yet he did not mean to take an active part in its proceedings. He felt in common with the requisitionists the strongest possible objections to the general system of slavery, but in the settlement of this specific question so many interests were to be reconciled, that any measure which would hurry it to a precipitate conclusion would be injudicious, especially as Government had resolved on putting an end to it as soon as it could be done. In an enlightened country, an immediate transition from a state of slavery to a state of freedom might

Friday, 12 December 1845, Rosemary Street Church

1. "That Christians of every denomination are in duty bound solemnly to protest against the existence of slavery, as repugnant to the Word of God, contained in the Old and New Testaments."

2. "That we trust the various Churches of Great Britain and Ireland will inform those of their own persuasion, in the United States of America, who retain slaveholders in their communion, that, if they continue to tolerate such iniquity, they are unworthy of being enrolled among the followers of Christ, as they act so contrary to the spirit of His Gospel."

3. "That the following gentlemen (with power to add to their number)—F. A. Calder, James B. Ferguson, Robert J. Bell, John Arnold, Samuel Edgar, Edwin Blow, Maxwell Sanders, John Boyd, and James Standfield, Esqrs.—form a deputation, to wait on the several Ministers in Belfast, to obtain their assent, by signature, to the Resolutions passed at this Meeting; and report the result of their application to a Meeting to be held on the return of Mr. Frederick Douglass from Birmingham."



Third Presbyterian Church, 1941

8 July 1846, Primitive Wesleyan Chapel, Donegall Place



At this meeting Douglass again presented:

‘another opportunity of exposing the infamous system of slavery as it exists in America. More than usual interest was attached to the proceedings, in consequence of the General Assembly [of the Presbyterian church in Ireland] holdings its annual meeting in town…the meeting was large and highly respectable’.

At the meeting and speaker were:

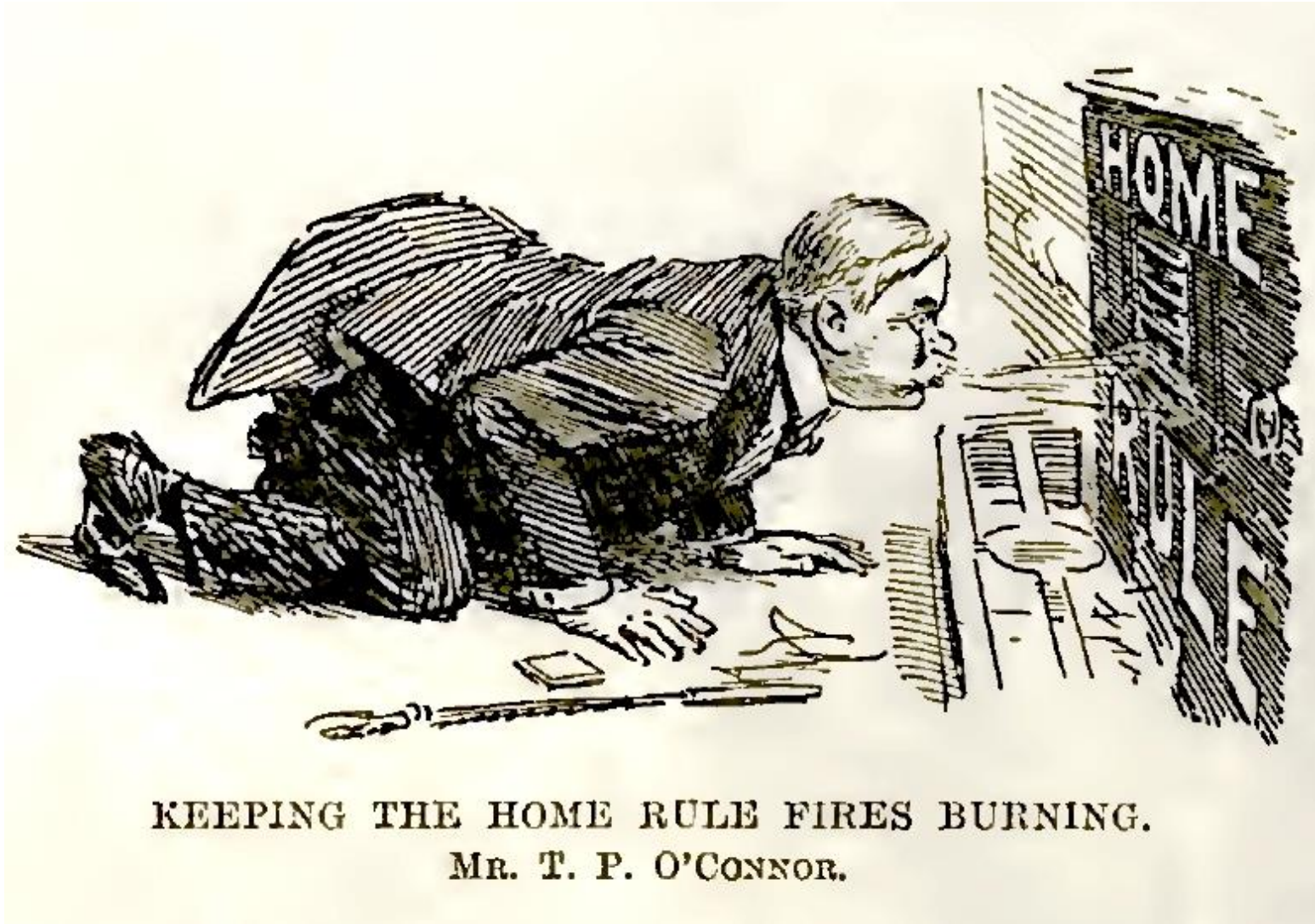
Rev. Thomas Drew, Church of Ireland preacher

Rev. Dr John Edgar, Presbyterian Preacher, Armagh.

Rev. Isaac Nelson, Presbyterian Preacher, Minister of Donegall Presbyterian School.



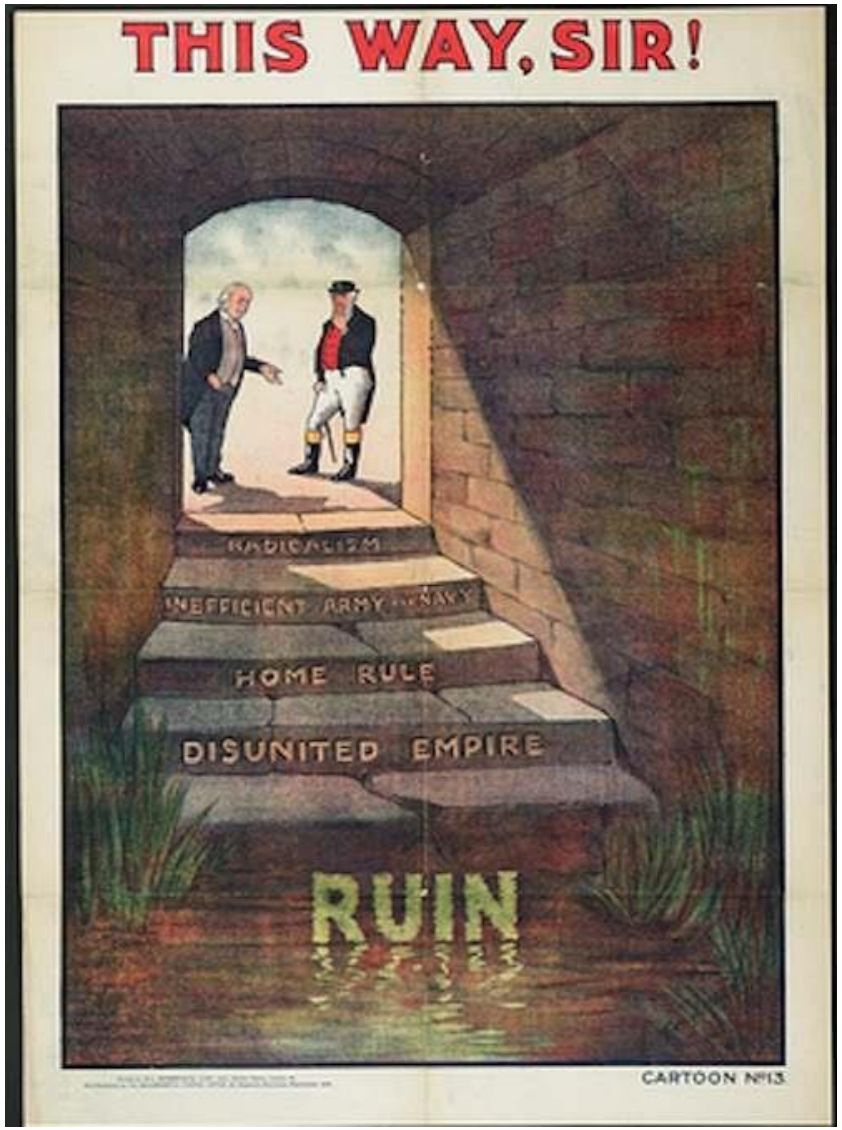
Anti Home Rule



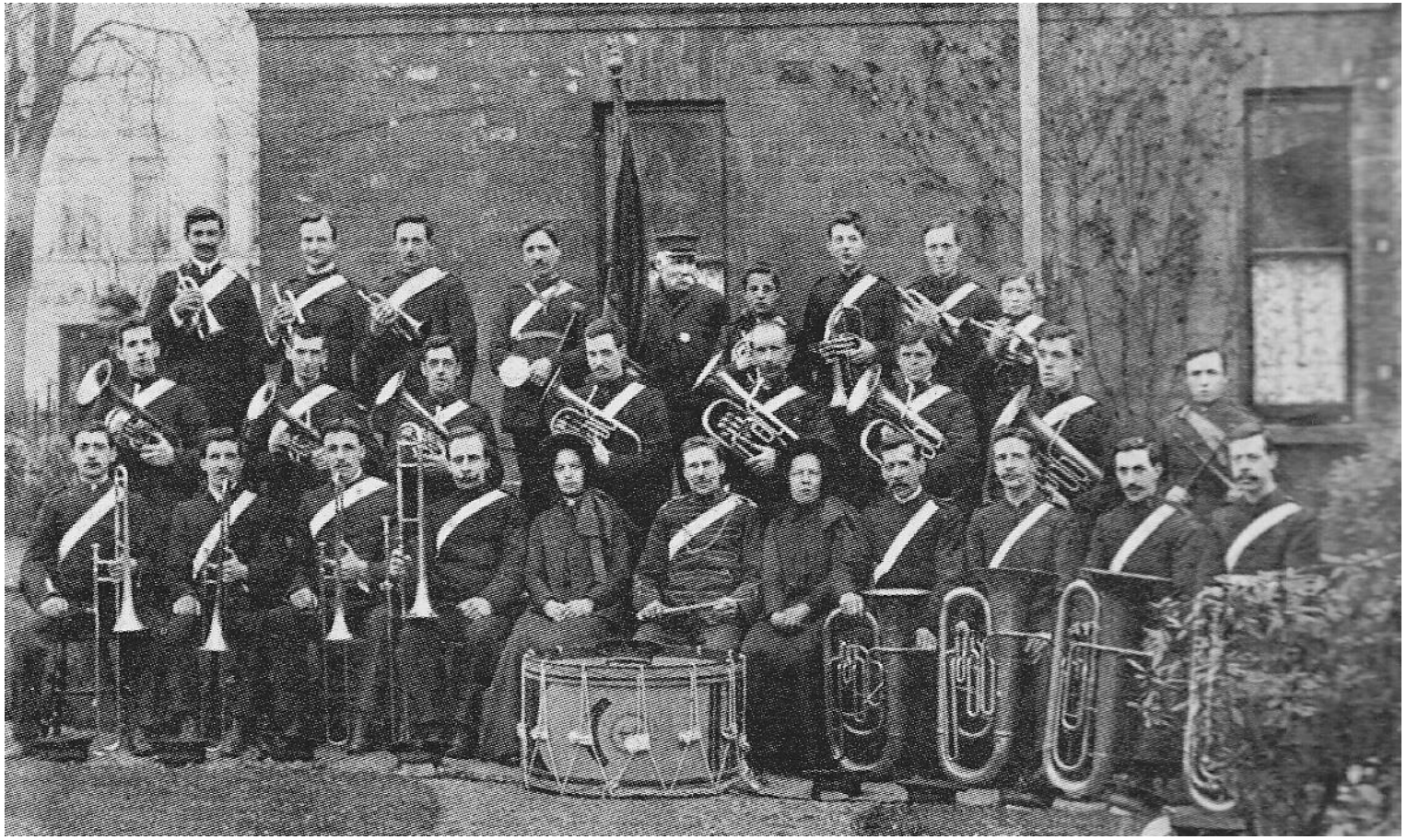
KEEPING THE HOME RULE FIRES BURNING.
MR. T. P. O'CONNOR.

Activism

- March 1912: The Methodists of Ireland held protests against Home Rule at five meetings throughout Belfast. There announced five resolutions of protest, which were repeated at each meeting.
- Many protestants thought Home Rule was ‘Rome Rule’



People's experience of religion and religion's impact on their lives



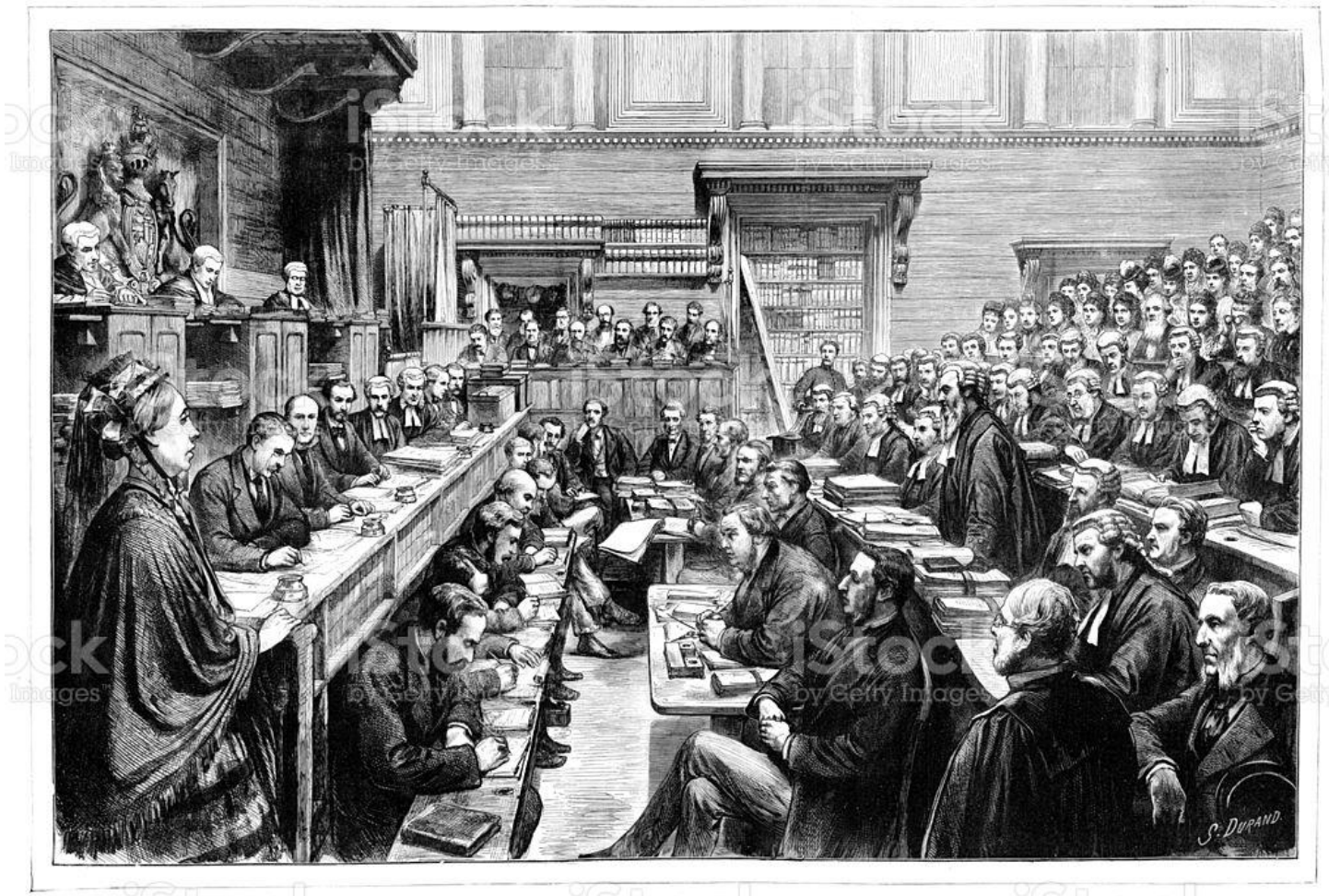
Influences on early life

- Religious days: St Patrick's Day, Our Lady's Day, etc
- School: churches ran schools (we'll deal with this when we talk about education)
- Community identity and cohesion
- Identity: religion connected with politics and constitutional questions (we'll talk about that next week)



Religion as a source of intercommunity friction

- June 1841: John McIntosh was charged with the use of inflammatory expressions in George's Lane, for posting a slip of paper at Mr. Johnston's' address to the electors of Belfast, with the words 'To Hell With The Pope' printed on it. He was bailed to keep the peace.
- April 1880: John Donaldson was charged with having been disorderly, by cursing the Pope in Durham Street. A fine of 40 shillings and costs was imposed.



THE TRIAL OF THE TICHBORNE CLAIMANT—GENERAL VIEW OF THE COURT DURING THE EXAMINATION OF MISS MARY ANN LOADER

Church based youth organisations



Boys’ Brigade

- Founded in Glasgow by Sir William Alexander Smith on 4 October 1883.
- Connected to the Presbyterian Church
- Aimed at "The advancement of Christ's kingdom among Boys and the promotion of habits of Obedience, Reverence, Discipline, Self-respect and all that tends towards a true Christian manliness."
- Achieve this through the use of a semi-military discipline and order, gymnastics, summer camps and religious services and classes.



By 1910…

- There were about 2,200 companies connected with different churches throughout the British Empire and the United States, with 10,000 officers and 100,000 boys.
- 1st unit established in Belfast was the 1st Irish (1st Belfast) BB Company in the Charlotte Street Mission Hall under the leadership of Mr. William McVicker.



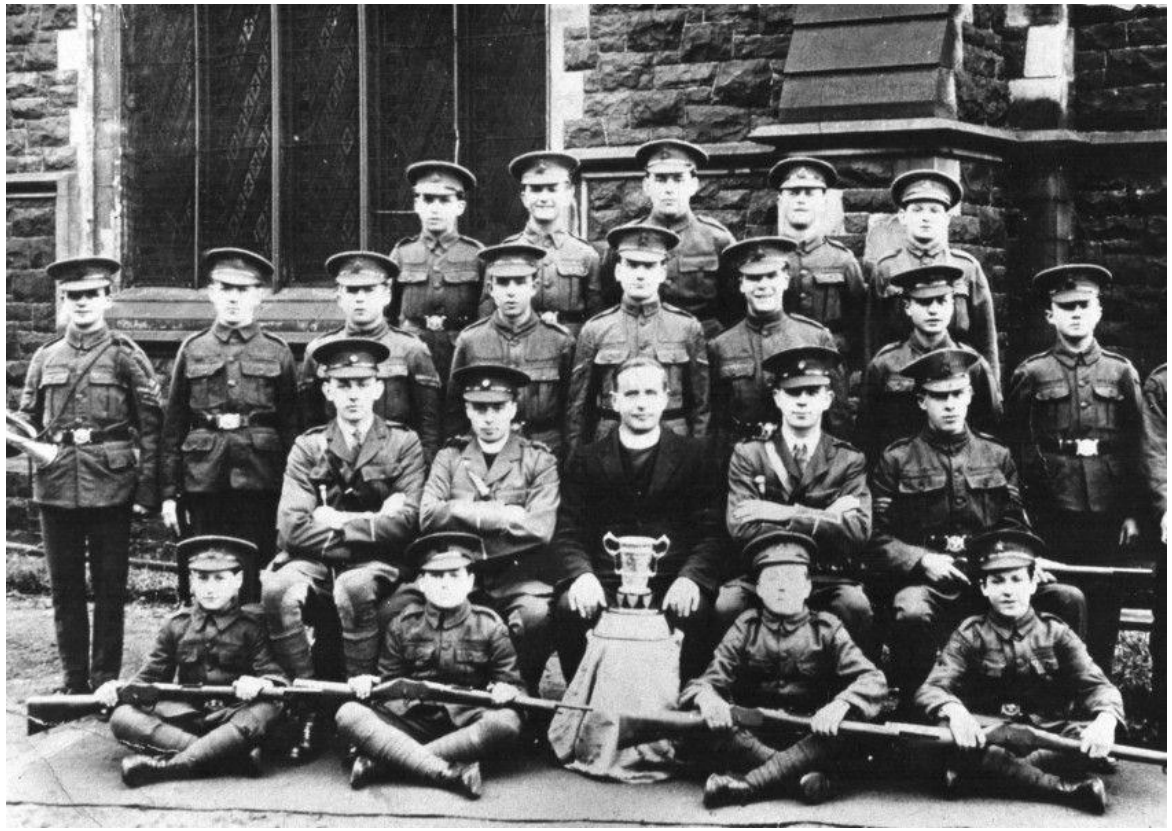
Girls’ Brigade

- Began in Sandymount Church, Dublin in 1893 by Miss Margaret Lyttle.
- Purpose: ‘the extension of Christ's Kingdom among girls’ through Bible study and physical training.
- 1897: Annual Inspection of Belfast companies held at May St Hall.



Church Lads' Brigade

- Church of Ireland uniformed youth organisation
- The Church Lads' Brigade was founded 11.11.1891 in London by Walter Mallock Gee.
- Christ Church, Leeson Park, Dublin, was the Pioneer Company in Ireland, enrolled in 1893.
- St Luke's, Belfast, was the first company in what is now Northern Ireland, enrolled in 1895.

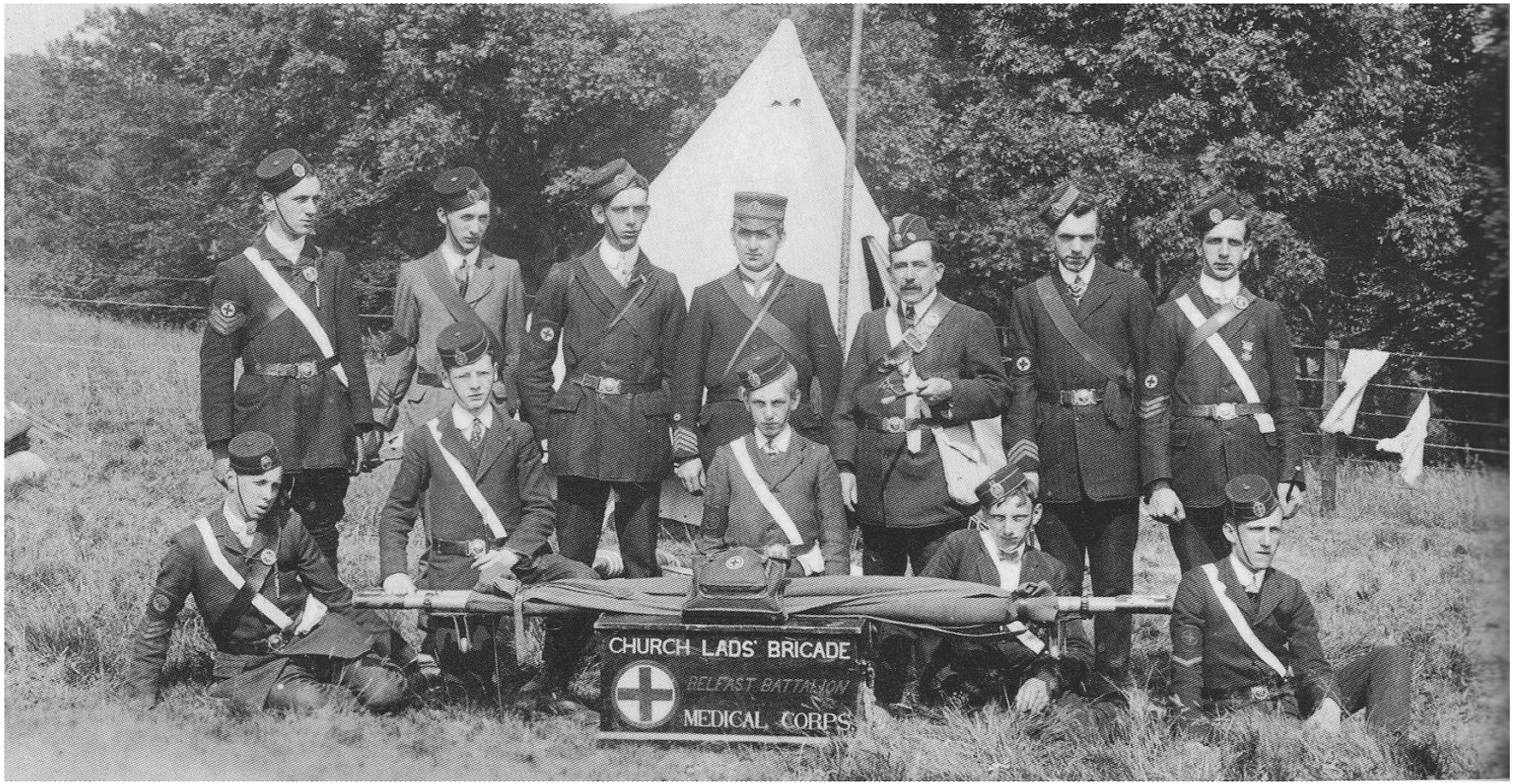


Church Girls' Brigade

- The Church Girls' Brigade began in London in 1901 as the Church Red Cross Brigade.
- Its founder was Rev Thomas Milner, assisted by his wife, Florence Nightingale Milner. In 1911, the words 'Red Cross' had to be dropped so the name changed to the Church Nursing and Ambulance Brigade.
- It became the Church Girls' Brigade in 1922. The first company in Ireland opened in 1929 for St. Barnabas', Belfast.



Belfast Battalion of the Church Lad's Brigade, 1909



YMCA

- Founded by was founded by George Williams in 1844.
- He was a London draper who was typical of the young men drawn to the cities by the Industrial Revolution.
- He was concerned about the lack of ‘healthy activities’ for young men in major cities that were not pubs or brothels.
- YMCA’s purpose was of "the improving of the spiritual condition of young men engaged in the drapery, embroidery, and other trades."
- It promoted evangelical Christianity in weekday and Sunday services, whilst promoting good sportsmanship in athletic contests in gyms and sports.

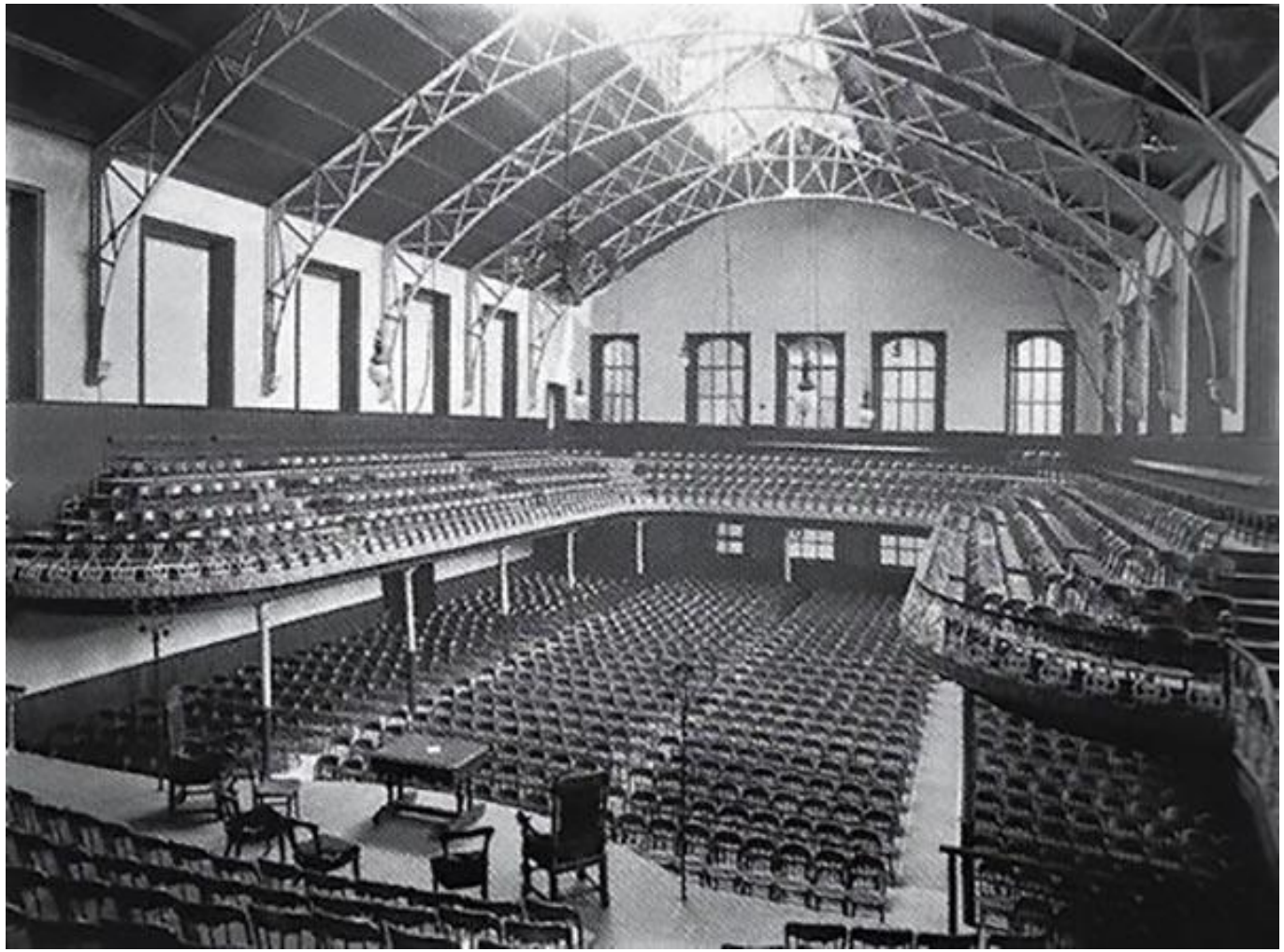


YMCA, Wellington Place, Belfast

Wellington Flute Band



Wellington Place YMCA hall



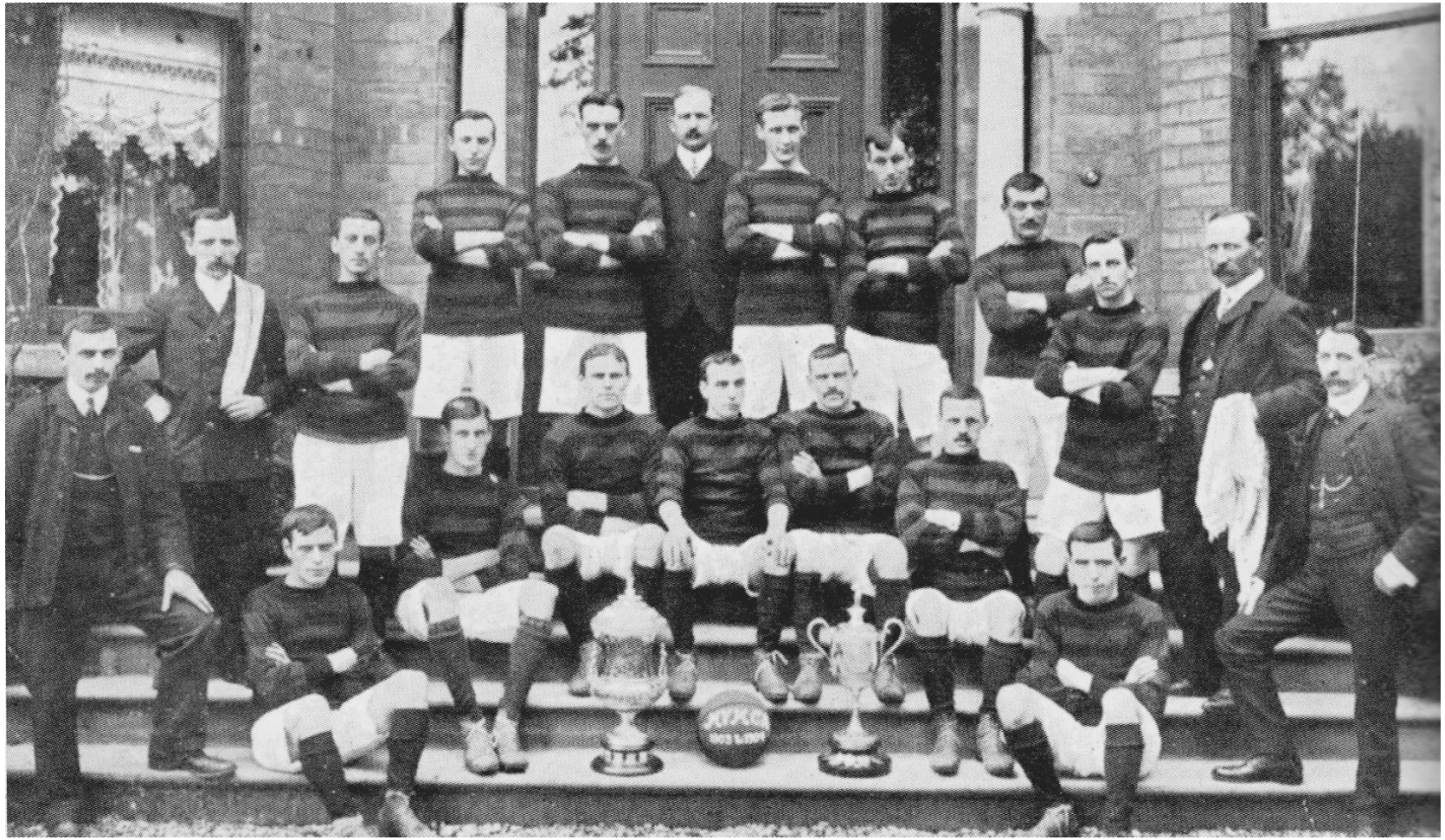
YMCA – Albertbridge Rd

- Built in about 1900.
- Rooms for men to stay in on apprenticeships.
- Facilities for reading, refreshment and education.
- In 1997, YMCA moved to new building in Lagan Valley Meadows, S. Belfast.





Mountpottinger YMCA football team, 1904-5



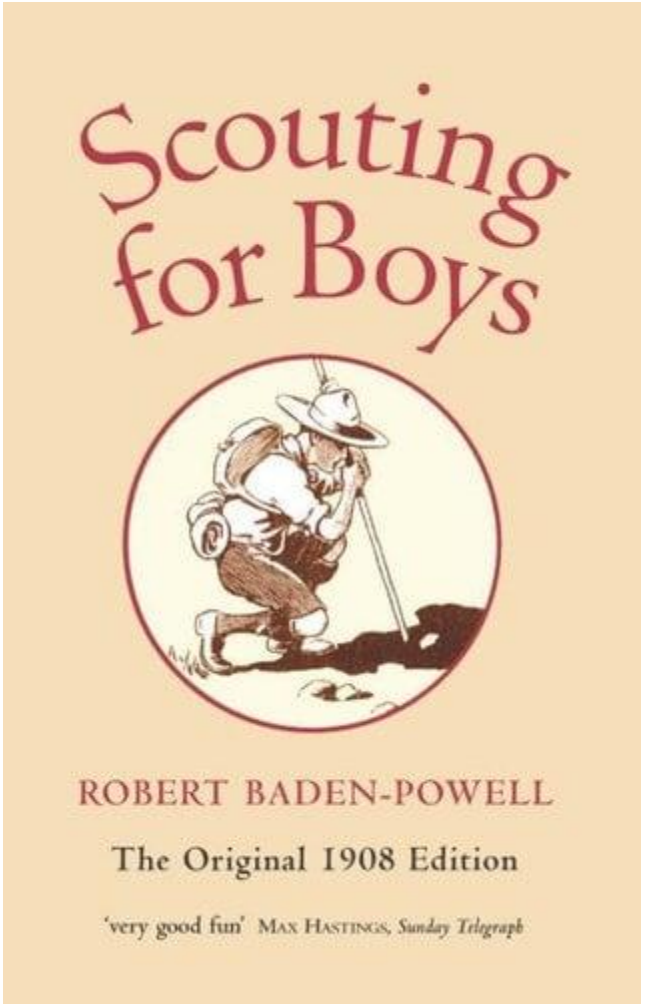
Why did the youth attend?

- Facilities of churches; sports halls, grounds, equipment
- Peer pressure; it was fun!
- Parental pressure; their doing constructive work
- It was something to do; no playgrounds, few parks; better than playin gon the streets

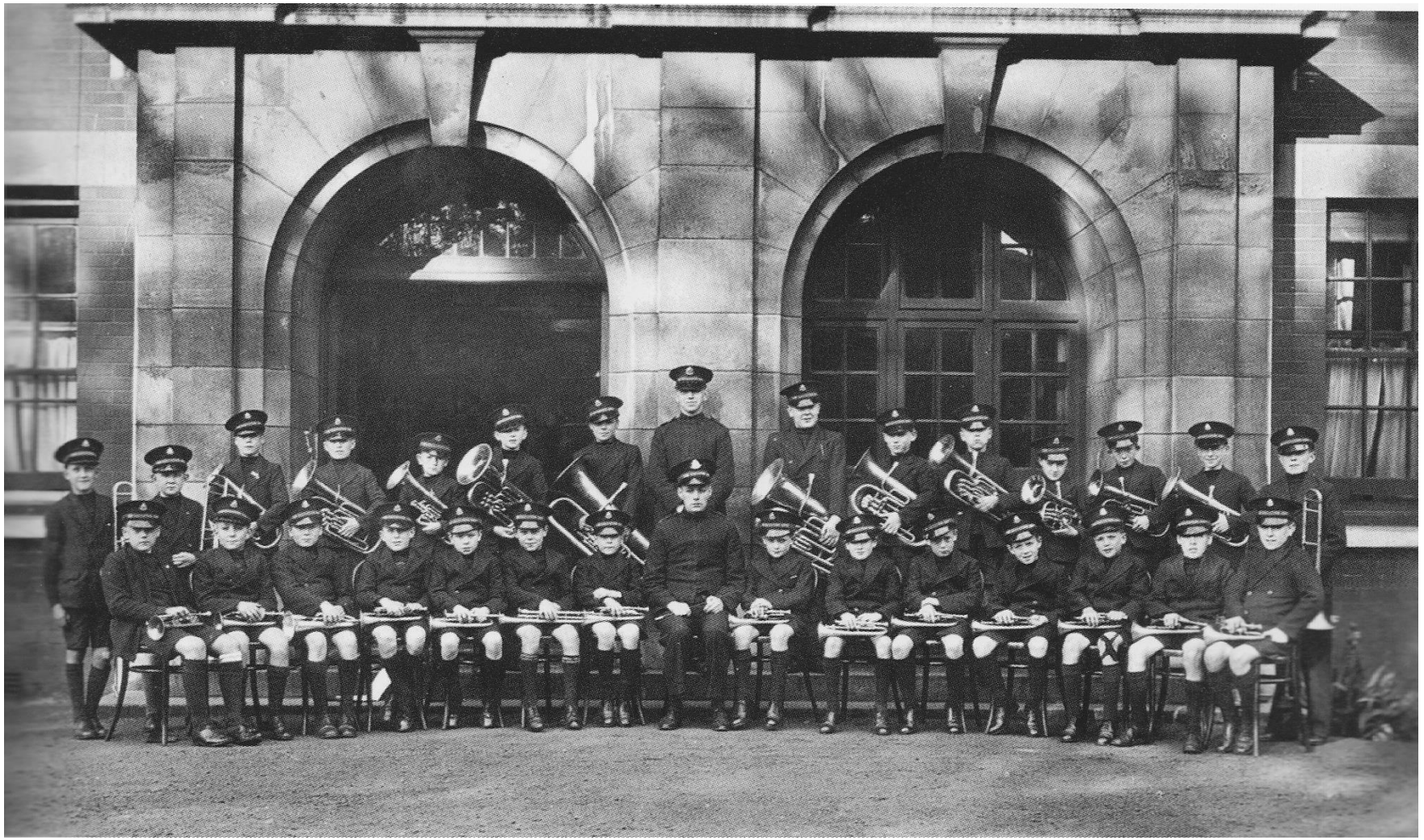


Impact in the rise of youth groups

- Reduction in youth gangs and crime – gave children something to do, under the supervision of moral (supposedly) adults.
- Helping with the creation of childhood?
- Giving them a social space to be children?



Community hub

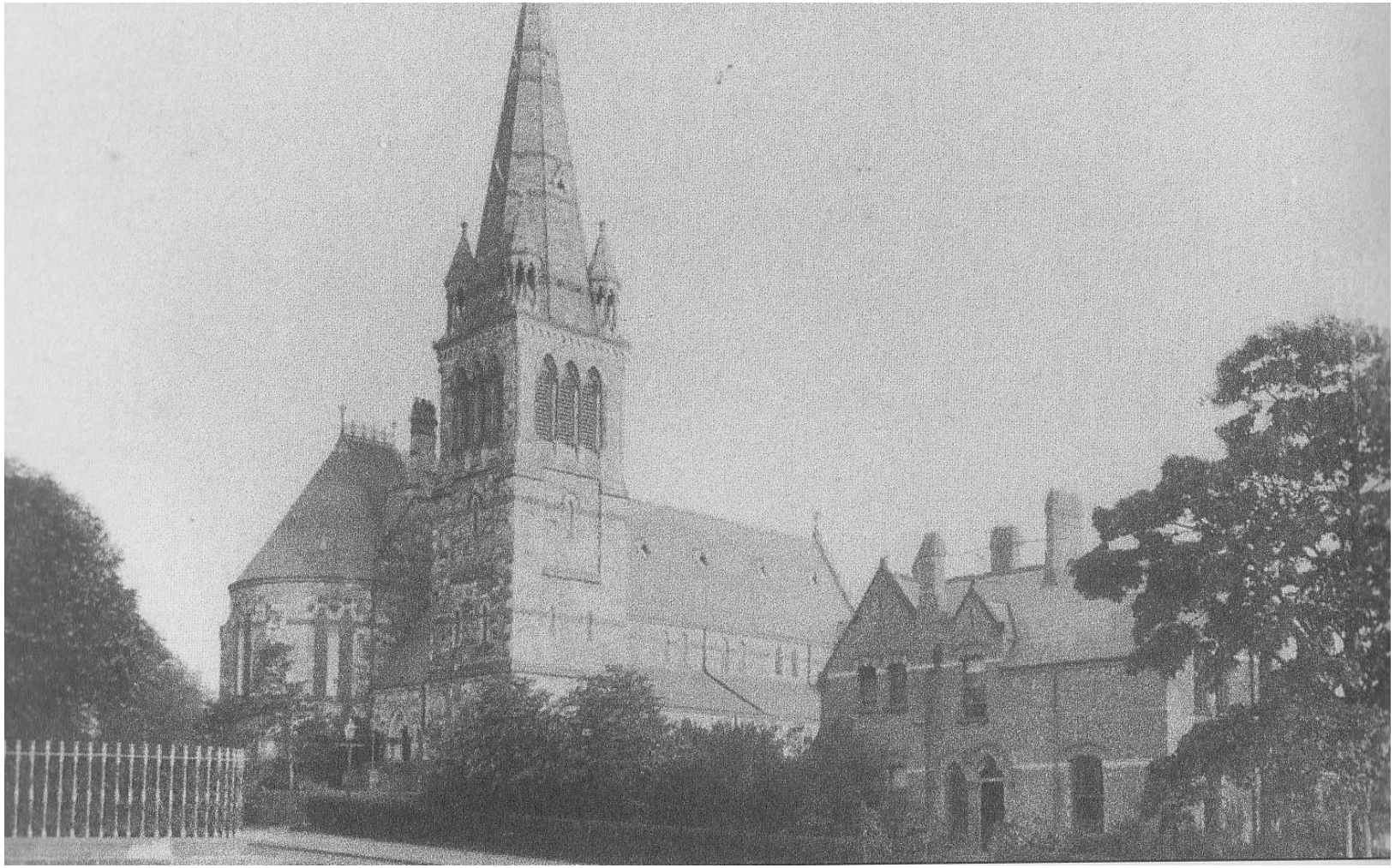


Montpottinger Young Person's Band, Ballymacarett, 1912

Members of St Thomas' Church Choir, 1911



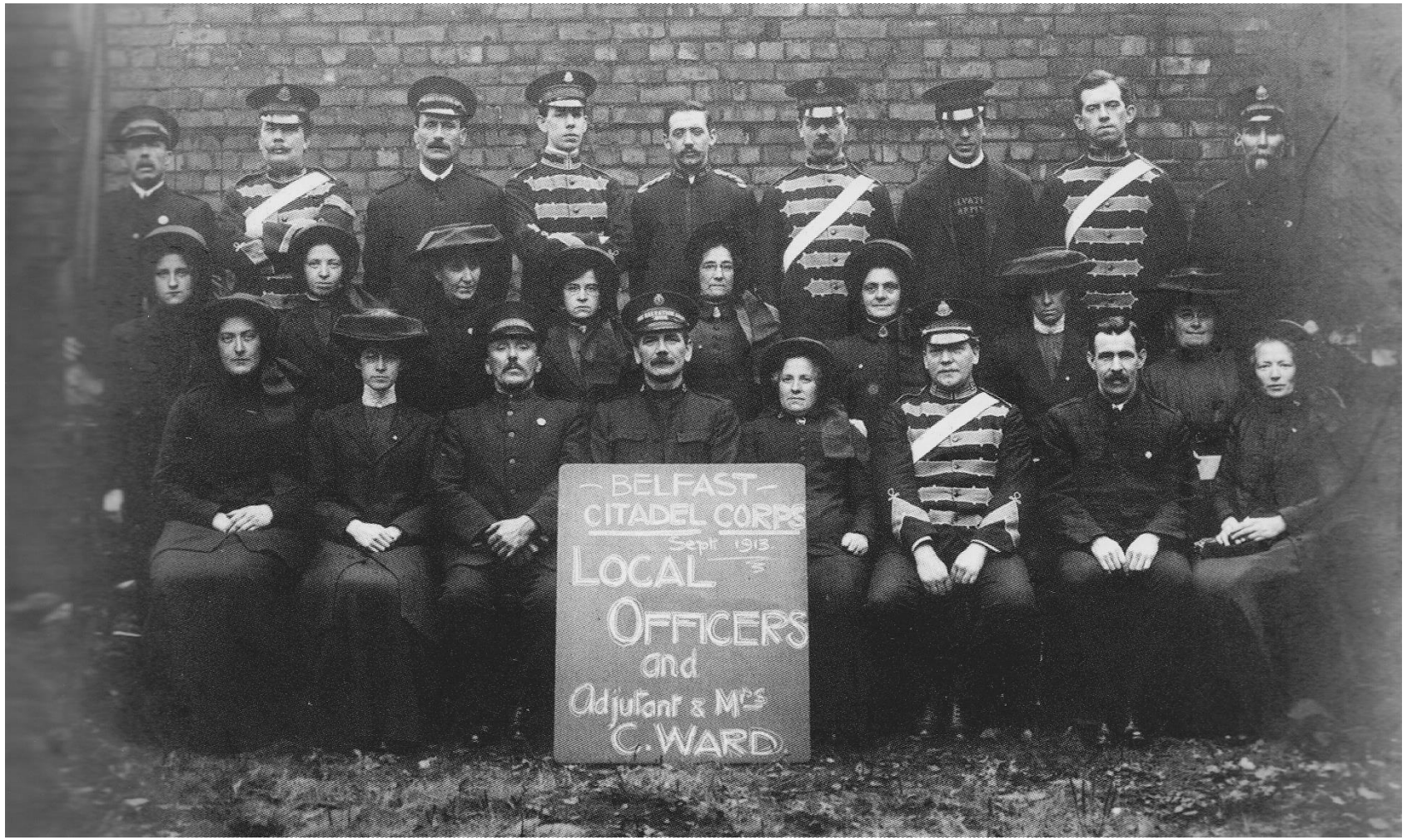
St Thomas' Church, Lisburn Road



Members of the Mariners’ Church choir, 1910



A form of employment - Salvation Army Belfast Citadel Corps



Meeting spaces for local groups and activism

April 1848: The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals annual meeting was held in Fisherwick Place congregational school room. Among the issues discussed were the problems of cockfighting among the respectable sphere of society

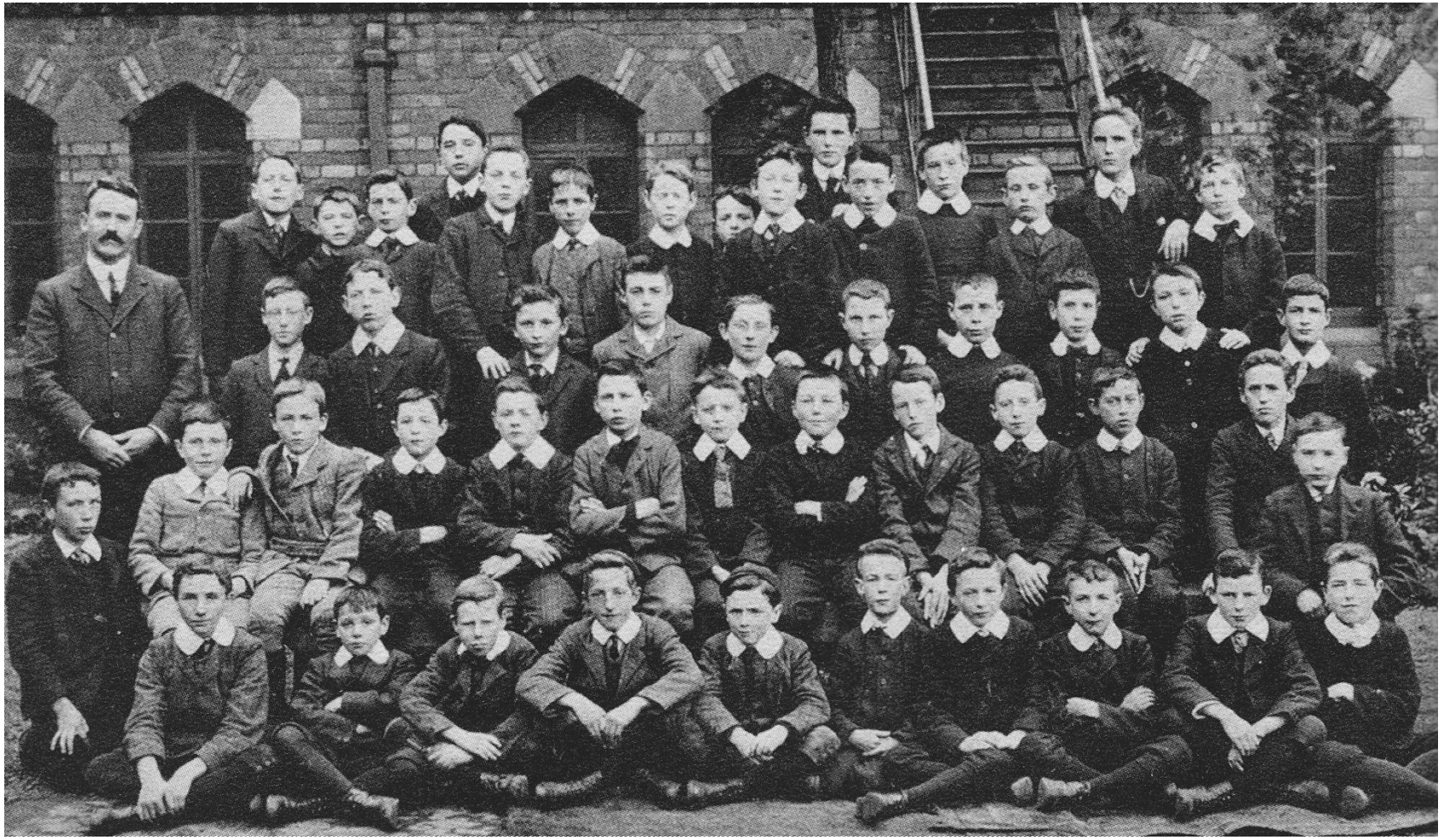


Sunday schools



Group of children from St Elisabeth Church of Ireland Church, Sunday school outing.

Running schools



Marriage



Marriage of Thomas Andrews, Harland and Wollf

Marriage and the church

- All weddings were conducted in context of church, either Protestant or Catholic.
- Until Catholic Emancipation in 1829, in theory the only valid marriages were those carried out by the state church, the Church of Ireland.
- In practice this was widely ignored. For many years before then, Catholic priests had been recording marriages.
- Government (civil) registration of marriages in Ireland began in 1845 for non-Catholics and 1864 for Catholics.



Age of marriage

- 1800, the average age of first marriage was 28 years old for men and 26 years old for women.
- During the 19th century, the average age fell but not lower than 22.
- Patterns varied depending on social and economic class, of course, with working-class women tending to marry slightly older than their aristocratic or middle class counterparts.
- Today (2021):
  - Ireland: average age of Irish women is 34.4 and 36.4 for men.
  - In Northern Ireland it is slightly younger, at 33.4 and 35.4 respectively.



Mixed marriages

1858, Vatican decreed that mixed marriages could not take place in a Catholic church.

Ne Temere (not casually) decree of 19 April 1908.

The result of this legislation was that both partners:

(a) promised to bring up all the children as Roman Catholic,

(b) the Catholic partner worked to convert the other, and

(c) the marriage could not take place in Church and there would be no ceremony, only the exchange of vows.



Agnes and Alexander McCann

- Married in Antrim Presbyterian Church in May 1908.
- Moved to Belfast, Agnes worshipped at Townsend Street Presbyterian Church.
- By 1910, they had two children, Joseph and Mary.
- Alexander was informed by a parish priest that he was ‘living in sin’ and must marry in front of a priest.
- Agnes considered that they were properly married already and would not agree to this.
- In October 1910, Alexander and the two children disappeared and moved to the USA; Agnes never saw her children again.



Reaction

- This was the first major outing of Ne Temere in Ulster
- Major public protest meetings in Belfast, Edinburgh, Glasgow, London, Dublin and Australia, Canada and New Zealand.
- Prior to 1910 the Presbyterian General Assembly had 30% of its members in favour of Home Rule, after the McCann case just 4%.



Unionist and Protestant reaction

- In 1916, the Grand Master of the Order, Colonel Wallace, declared that “the decree is final proof that Home Rule is Rome Rule.”
- The Orange Order decreed that a member entering a mixed marriage must leave the Order if any of the children are brought up as Roman Catholics (despite the claim that the Order stands for religious and civil liberty).
- The future Church of Ireland Archbishop of Dublin and Armagh John Gregg was then Dean in Cork. He said:

  “The Protestant is to surrender every right of conscience that he possesses, except that he is graciously allowed to remain a Protestant himself, though he must submit to reasonable efforts to make a Romanist of him.”



No D.I.V.O.R.C.E.

•Before 1857 in Britain, the only way of obtaining a full divorce which allowed re-marriage was by a Private Act of Parliament.

•Between 1700 and 1857 there were 314 such Acts, most of them initiated by husbands.

•Matrimonial Causes Act 1857 allowed divorce on grounds of adultery, although wives could now allege cruelty and desertion in Great Britain but not Ireland.



Slow to change

- In 1885, Lady Louise Westropp was the first Irishwoman to obtain an Irish divorce via the court of chancery (i.e. Parliament).

- No general right of divorce in Ireland until 1938 in Northern Ireland and 1995 in Republic of Ireland



Why no divorce?

- Irish and British political leaders against it: Daniel O'Connell, William Gladstone, John Redmond, Edward Carson against divorce.
- Charles Parnell and his relationship with Katharine O'Shea, which led to that sensational divorce, deplored first by Michael Davitt, then by the Methodist Evangelicals and subsequently by the Catholic Church.
- All this scuppered any consideration of divorce reform in later 19th century.
- Popular values across sectarian divide probably supported this position throughout the century.



Death



Religion and church linked to death

- The dead had to be buried in official city cemeteries.
- Mourning dictated by religious and social convention and etiquette.
- Death and burial also market by social convention popularised by the death in 1861, the death of Queen Victoria's beloved husband Prince Albert stunned the world.
- For the rest of her reign, until 1901, England and many other places adopted unusual death and funerary practices, all of which were influenced by Victoria's very public mourning of the late Prince Albert.



Friar’s Bush cemetery

- Dates from medieval times.
- Oldest headstone in the cemetery was erected to the memory of Thomas Gibson who died in 1717.
- During the 1800s, the cemetery was repeatedly raided by body-snatchers,
- Many buried are victims of the Cholera epidemic of the 1830s and the Great Irish famine of the 1840s.
- The graveyard is the resting place of the famed baker and philanthropist Bernard (Barney) Hughes who died in 1878.



Clifton Street Graveyard

- Clifton Street Graveyard, established in 1797, is managed by the Belfast Charitable Society and is now recognized as a historical site.
- Despite the construction of a protective wall, the cemetery failed to prevent bodysnatching, leading to relatives guarding new graves and the use of iron cages (coffin guards).
- The society eventually employed watchmen to protect the cemetery from bodysnatchers.
- The cemetery features a "poor grave" section for those who couldn't afford burials, and it contains an unmarked mass grave for victims of the 1832 cholera epidemic. Additionally, due to high demand, a second area known as the "lower ground" was opened for burials, with all plots sold by 1854.



Milltown Cemetery

- Opened in 1869 to serve Belfast's expanding Catholic population
- Approximately 200,000 individuals interred in Milltown Cemetery



City Cemetery

Belfast City Cemetery, established in 1869, served as a significant burial ground during a period of rapid growth in Belfast, accommodating diverse denominations.

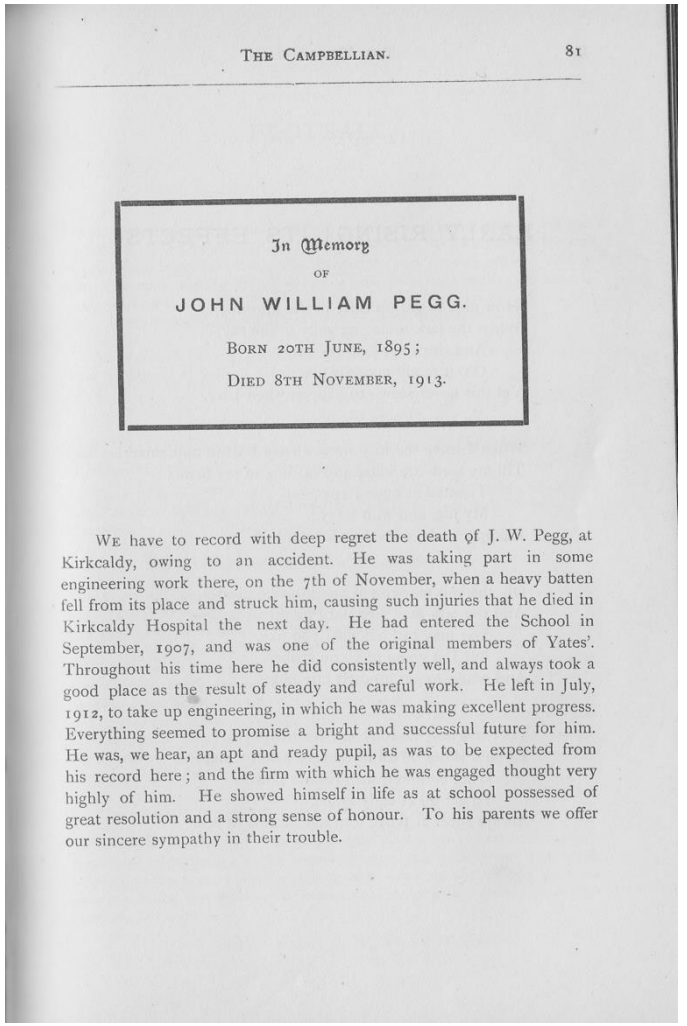
First physical separation barrier built separating Catholic and Protestant plots.

In 1874, an area within the cemetery was designated for Belfast's Jewish residents, featuring a memorial to Daniel Joseph Jaffe, father of former Lord Mayor Otto Jaffe.



Social conventions

- Covered mirrors and stopped clocks, when a family member died, the survivors stopped all of the clocks in the house at the death hour.
- Mourning cloths, death jewellery and black crepe
- Funerary Dolls. Grave dolls were a popular way for parents and siblings to remember a lost child. If the family could afford it, a life-sized wax effigy of the child was made and dressed in the deceased's clothing, and then displayed at the funeral.



THE CAMPBELLIAN. 81

In Memory
OF
JOHN WILLIAM PEGG.
BORN 20TH JUNE, 1895;
DIED 8TH NOVEMBER, 1913.

WE have to record with deep regret the death of J. W. Pegg, at Kirkcaldy, owing to an accident. He was taking part in some engineering work there, on the 7th of November, when a heavy batten fell from its place and struck him, causing such injuries that he died in Kirkcaldy Hospital the next day. He had entered the School in September, 1907, and was one of the original members of Yates'. Throughout his time here he did consistently well, and always took a good place as the result of steady and careful work. He left in July, 1912, to take up engineering, in which he was making excellent progress. Everything seemed to promise a bright and successful future for him. He was, we hear, an apt and ready pupil, as was to be expected from his record here; and the firm with which he was engaged thought very highly of him. He showed himself in life as at school possessed of great resolution and a strong sense of honour. To his parents we offer our sincere sympathy in their trouble.

Notice in Campbellian Vol.3, No.4, December 1913.

Mourning

- Strict mourning etiquette governed the behaviour and attire of mourners during the Victorian era.

  - Mourning periods varied in length, and wearing black clothing, especially for women, was expected.

  - The depth of mourning attire gradually lightened as the mourning period progressed.



Elaborate Funerals

- Victorian funerals were marked by elaborate and ritualistic ceremonies.

  - Elaborate processions featured a hearse, mourners, and carriages, with the number of carriages symbolising the social status of the deceased.

  - The practice of "lying in state" allowed friends and family to view the deceased and participate in a final farewell.



Complex Symbolism

Various symbols and motifs were associated with Victorian funerals, including black crepe, wreaths, and weeping willows.

Coffins were ornate and chosen to reflect the social standing of the deceased, serving as symbols of status.

Hymns, dirges, and mournful music played a significant role in setting the mood for Victorian funerals, symbolising the solemnity of the occasion.



Many could not afford to mark the dead





Memorials to those with no grave marker in Clifton Road Cemetery and Milltown Cemetery.

Covered and uncovered urn

- The urn was actually used in ancient classical burial grounds as a storage vessel for ashes and bones after cremation. In the Victorian era the urn became a symbol for death and sadness.
- Some are carved with drapery which represented veil between life and death. This reflects death customs.
- Victorians would drape items in the house when a person died. This could include the clock (which was also stopped), the mirrors and even the door knobs.



Obelisk

- Egyptian symbol of eternal life
- Originally the obelisk is an ancient Egyptian symbol found at the entrances to temples.
- It represented the sun god Ra
- Cleopatra’s needle is was erected in 1878 after it was gifted to the government by the ruler of Egypt.

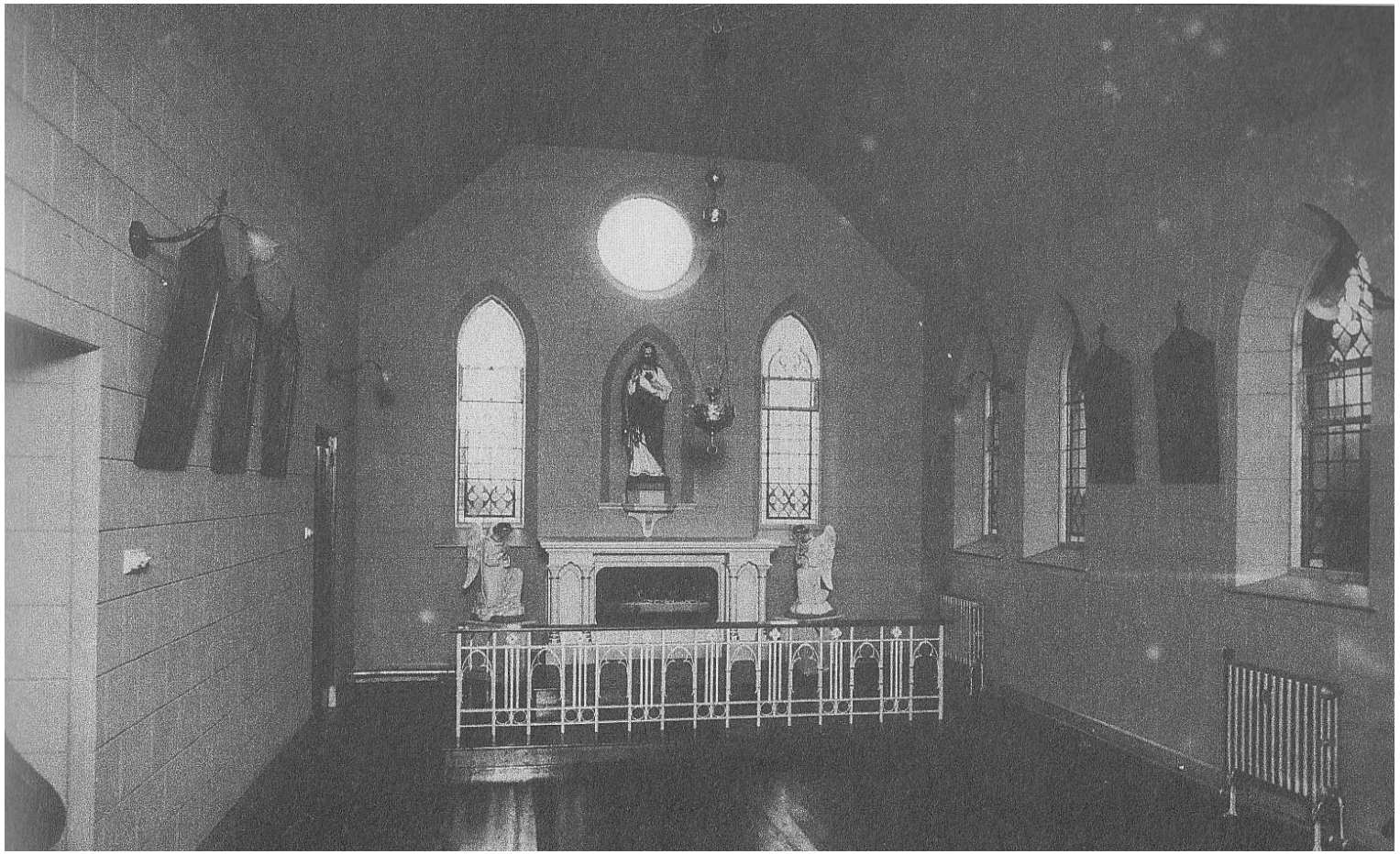


Floriography

- Flowers in the Victorian period had great meaning and this language was called Floriography.
- A rose was and still is a symbol of love. On a grave, an open rose usually represented a married woman, but a closed rose bud represented a child or unmarried women.
- Lilies are also strongly associated with both death and cemeteries.



Belief, conversion and church attendance



Church at the convent of the Good Shepherd, Ardmore Ave.

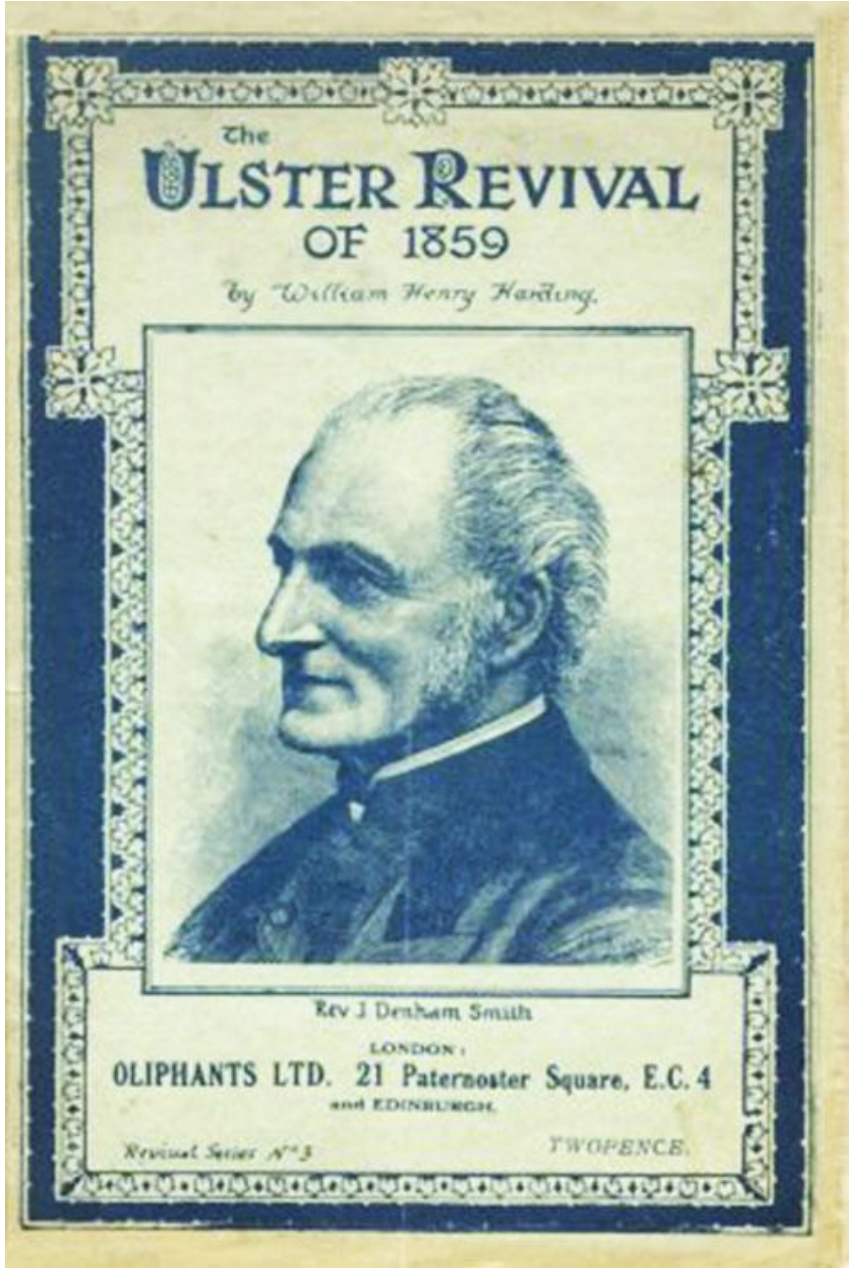
Where people Christians?

- Probably the vast majority of the population would identify as Christian.
- Only small Jewish community may not.
- No statistics collected on religion and identity.
- Today: Northern Ireland has more Christians in its population (93%) than Wales (57.6%), Scotland (53.8%), and England (59.4%).
- About 8% of the population is not religious compared to 31.9% in England, 43.7 % in Scotland, and 39.7% in Wales.
- In the 2016 RoI census, 78.3% (3.5 million) of the population identified as Catholic. The next largest group after Catholic was "no religion" at 10%.



Great Ulster Revival, 1859

- The revival began in Kells and Connor in County Antrim.
- In late 1857, through the encouragement of the minister of Connor Presbyterian Church, John Hamilton Moore, four recent converts began meeting in the Kells National Schoolhouse for prayer and Bible study.
- 1 January 1858 saw the first person converted as a direct result of the prayer meeting, and by the end of 1858 the attendance was around fifty.



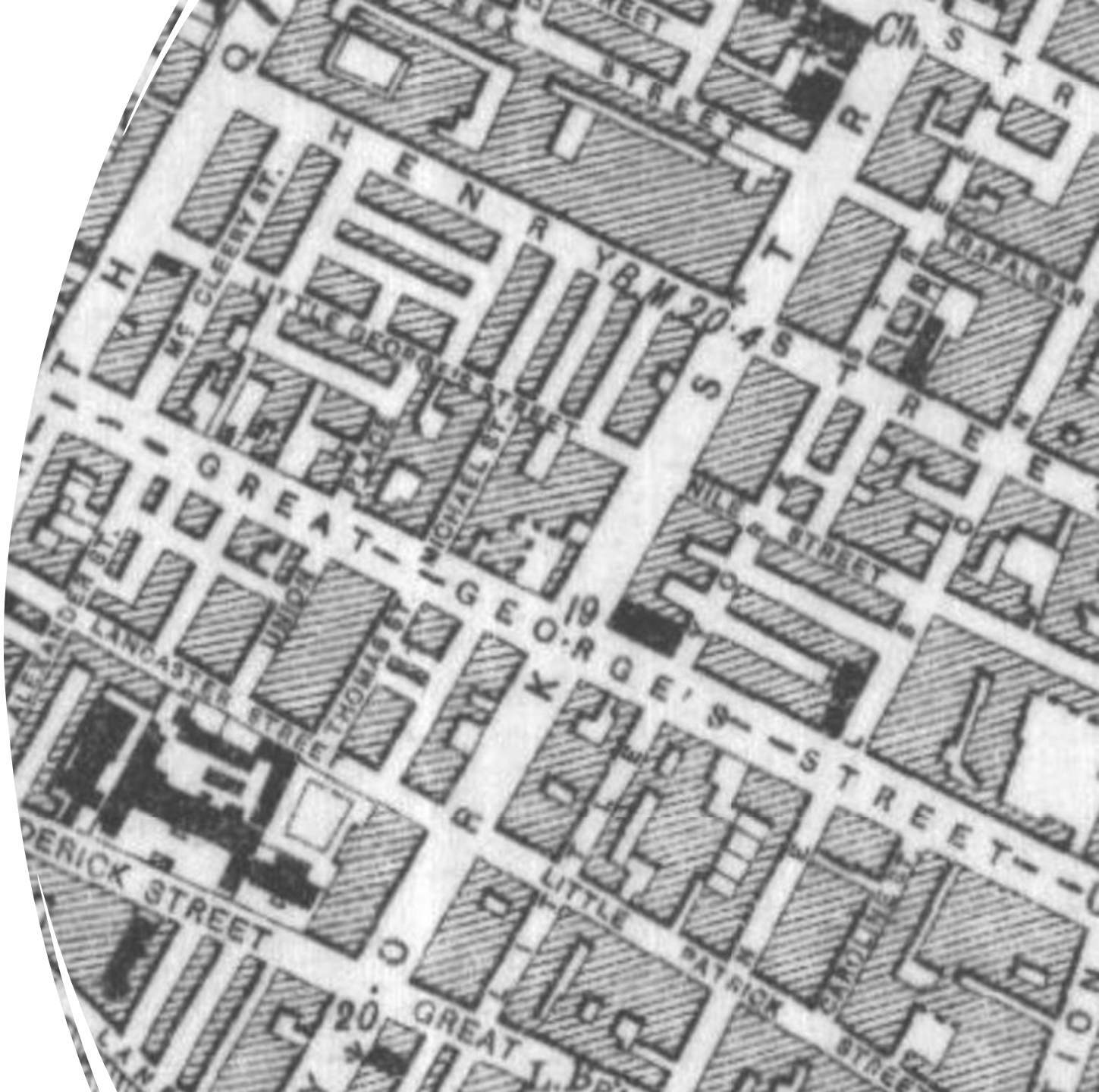
Great Revival in Belfast

1858, Daily Express wrote that the **Rev Henry Grattan Guinness** (right) ‘preached yesterday in York Street Chapel. The attendance was greater than on any former occasion. In the evening it amounted to 1600, and if there were a place large enough, five times the number would have been present, to hear this highly gifted preacher.’



July 1862

A ‘great open-air revival meeting’ was held in Great George’s Street, opposite the Rev. Mr. Toye’s church, by several ministers and laymen. Addresses of a very spirited nature were delivered to a crowd of about 600 or 700 men and women.



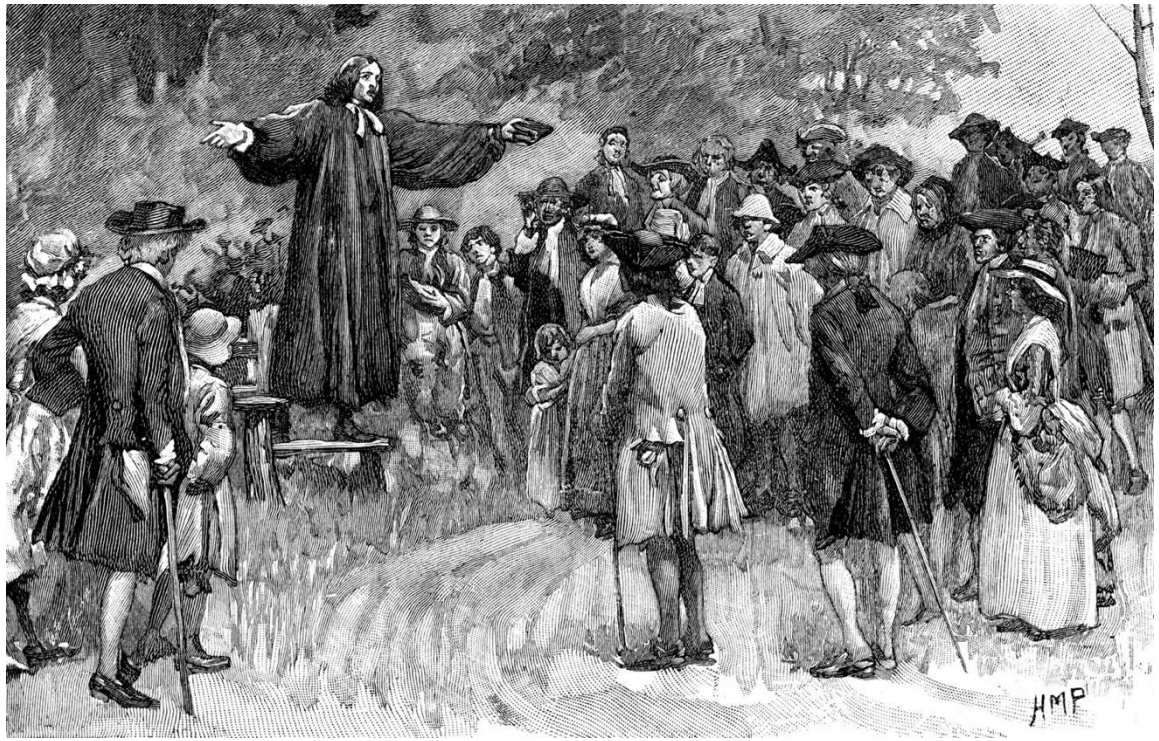
Impact?

- Mass conversions: The revival reportedly led to tens of thousands of conversions across Ulster.
- In some areas, churches saw their congregations swell significantly due to revivalist preaching.
- Claimed that 100,000 in Ulster were converted.



Expansion of smaller denominations

- Between 1861 and 1911, the number of Methodists in Ulster grew from 32,030 (1.7% of the population) to 48,816 (3.1%).
- The category (smaller evangelical denominations saw an increase from 20,443 (1.1%) in 1861 to 53,881 (3.4%) in 1911—a growth of over 163%.



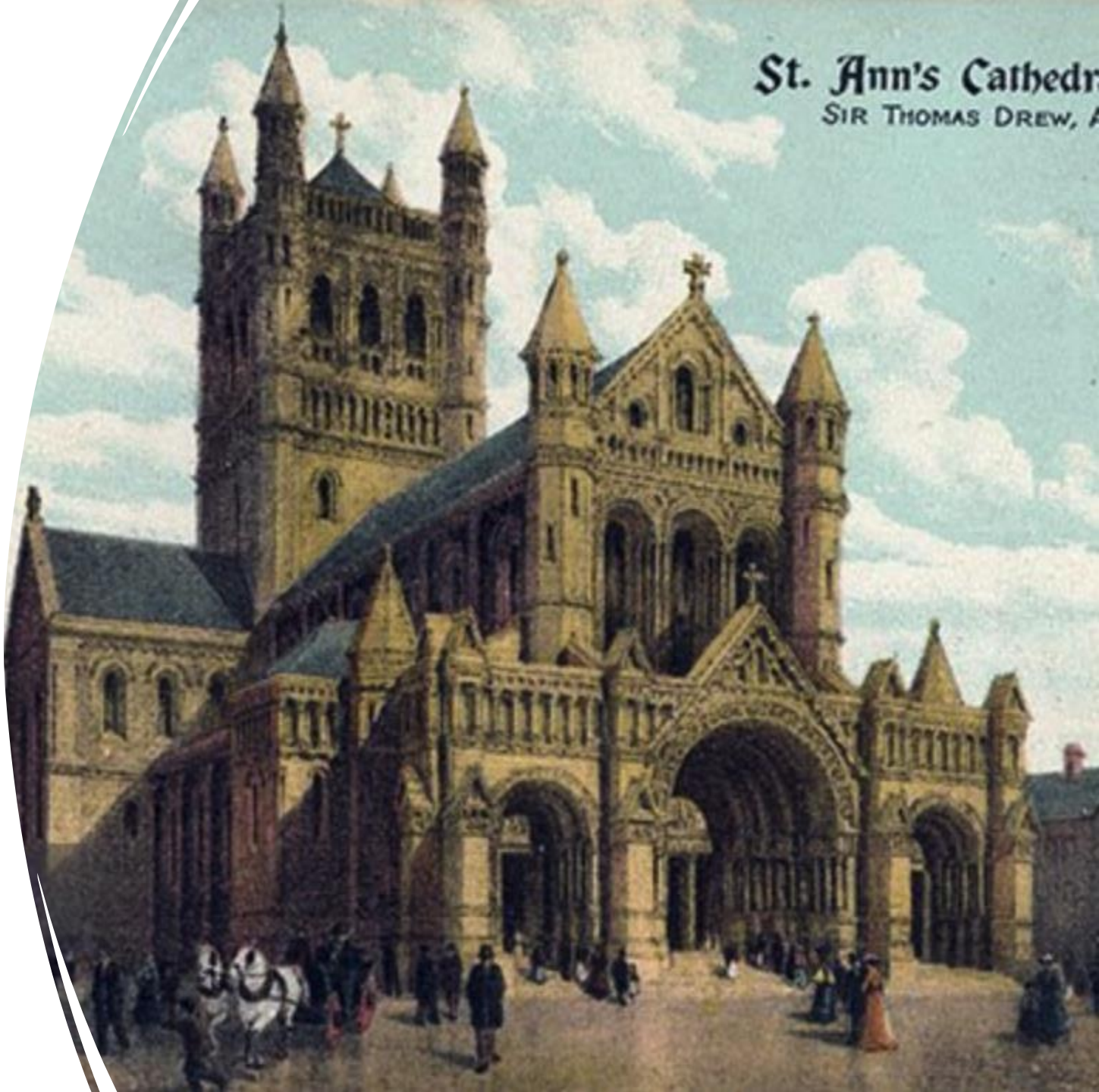
Increase in specific denominations:

- Congregationalists increased from 2,749 in 1861 to 8,578 in 1911.
- Baptists grew from 3,438 in 1861 to 6,669 in 1911.
- Plymouth Brethren grew rapidly from only 170 members in 1861 to 8,306 by 1911.



Impact on main Protestant traditions

- The Presbyterian population remained relatively stable, but its share of Ulster's population declined slightly from 503,835 (26.3%) in 1861 to 421,410 (26.6%) in 1911, partly due to growth in other evangelical groups.
- Similarly, the Church of Ireland saw a decline in its relative proportion, from 391,315 (20.4%) in 1861 to 366,773 (23.2%) in 1911.



Overall evangelical growth

By 1911, evangelical groups outside of the main churches (Presbyterian, Church of Ireland, and Methodist) made up a growing share of the Protestant population, reflecting the revival's lasting impact.



Impact on the Catholic church

- The Catholic Church did not experience an internal revival comparable to the 1859 Protestant Revival. Instead, it focused on maintaining its traditional doctrines and reinforcing devotional practices.
- Movements like the Marian devotions (devotion to the Virgin Mary) and the establishment of new religious orders (e.g., the Christian Brothers and Sisters of Mercy) played a role in strengthening Catholic religious life.



Rising congregations: Mountpottinger Presbyterian Church, Castlereagh Street

- 1867-1884, Rev David Hunter, 1st Minister
- 1885-1897, Rev W J McCaughan, 2nd Minister.
- In 1885 when he was installed there were 268 families, 139 communicant, 256 freewill offering contributors, 2 Sabbath schools, 550 scholars and Sabbath collections amounting to £102.
- 1897, these figures had risen to 700 families, 472 communicants, 630 freewill offering contributors, 7 Sabbath schools, 1,597 scholars and Sabbath collections of £479.
- 1897-1928, Rev Robert Duff, 3rd minister
- Source: https://www.mpcbelfast.org.uk/









Popular support – death of Friar Christopher, Holy Cross, Ardoyne, 1871

At his funeral at Holy Cross, it was reported in the Northern Star that:

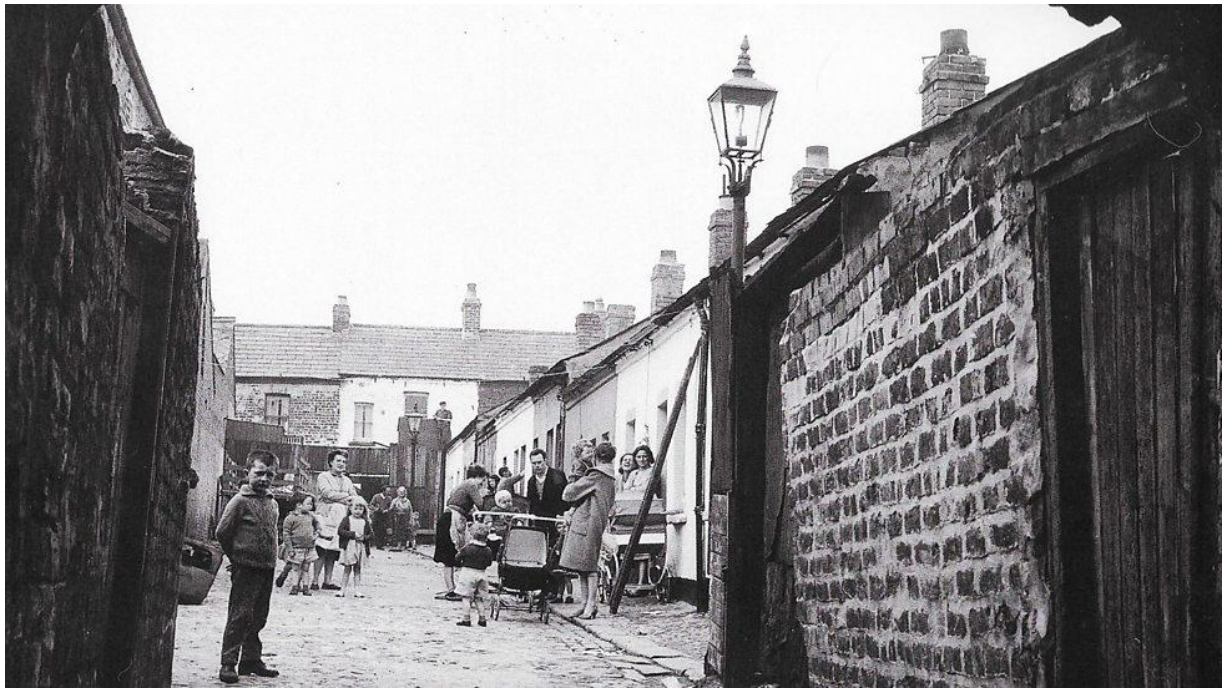
"…twenty thousand people gathered round the church…and yielded to loud wailing when they beheld borne along, the coffin that contained all that remained of their departed priest…the funeral procession was over a mile in length…on arriving at the cemetery the coffin was slowly borne on the shoulders of six priests to the grave."



Population of Belfast was 174k and Catholic population about around 50k.

Church attendance, Edwardian era

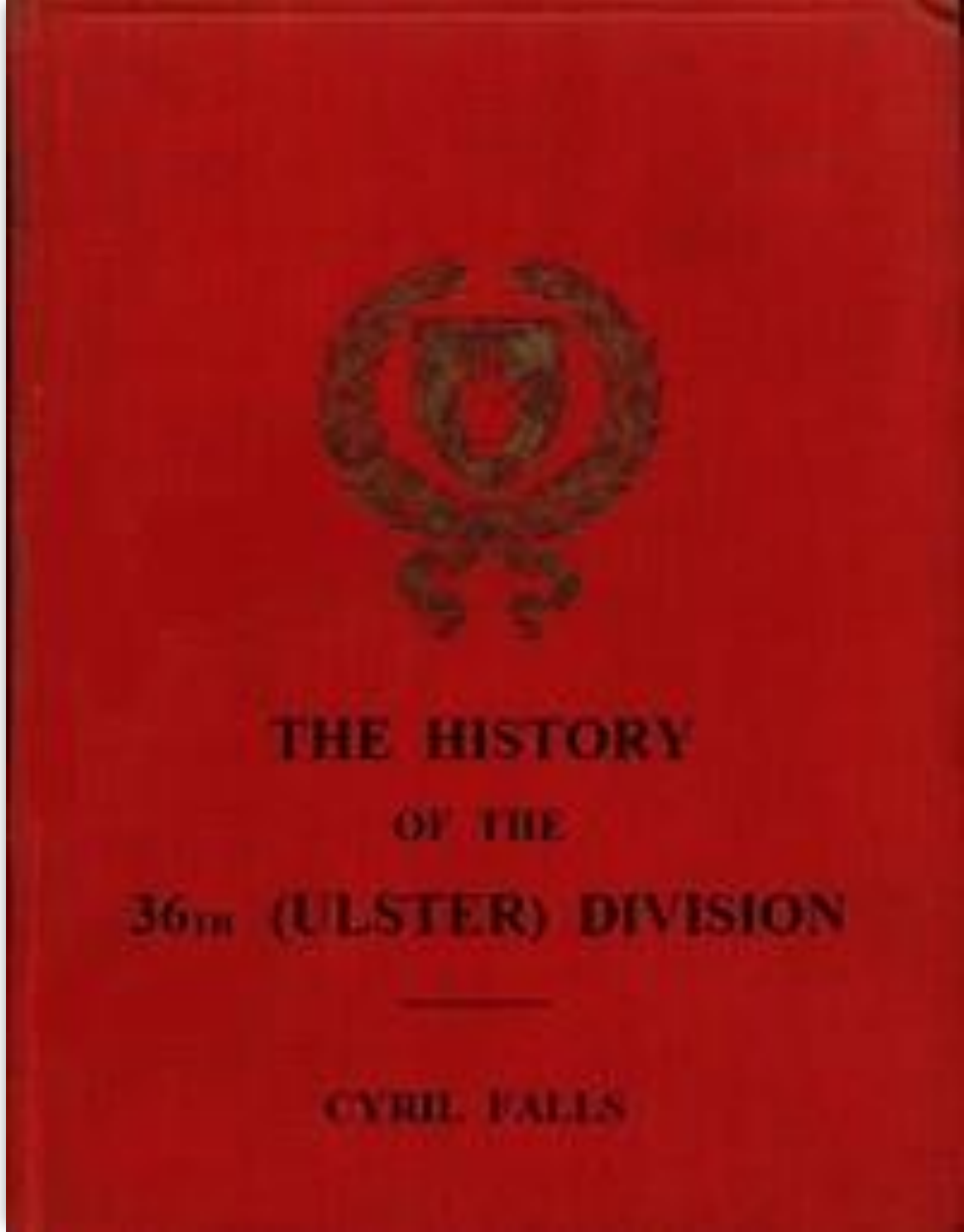
- 1908, one in 15 (6%) people in Ballymacarett attended church.
- Compared to:
  - 20% in Camberwell, London in 1902-03.
  - 23% in Middlesbrough, North Yorkshire in 1906.



Religious fervor in the trenches?

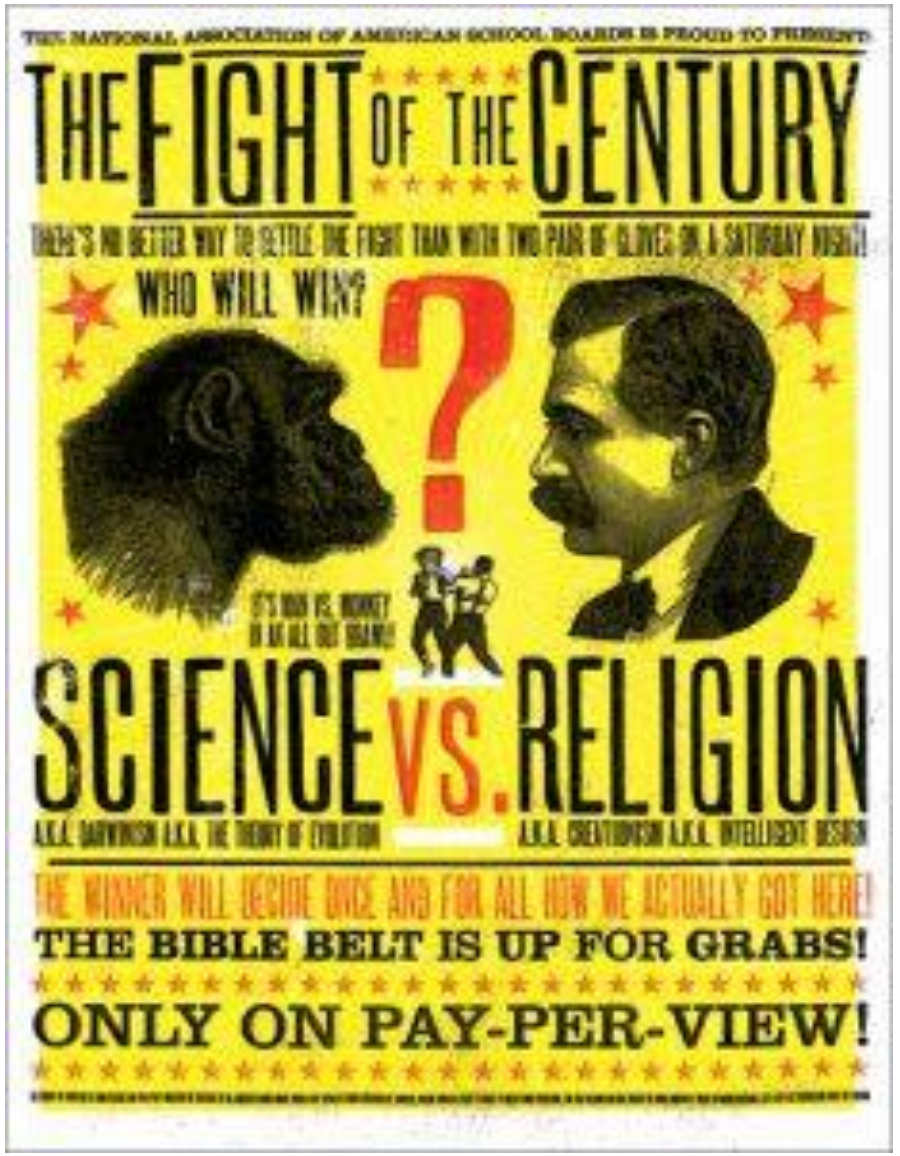
”One factor…which could not be omitted from the record [of the division] was the element of religion…Undoubtedly something of the old covenanting spirit, the old sense of the alliance of ‘Bible and Sword’, the reborn in these men. It was the easier recreated because of the strength of religious feeling which had existed in times of peace in Protestant Ulster…’

Cyril Falls, The History of the 36th (Ulster) Division Belfast: McCow, Stevenson & Orr, 1922), p.16.



Challenges to the dominance of religion during the 19th century

- Scientific thought: Charles Darwin, Origin of the Species helped question religious belief
- Marxism and 'scientific socialism': 'religion is the opium of the masses'.
- Mass education, literacy and communication gave people ability to 'think' for themselves.
- Breakdown in deference in some parts of society



Miracles?

- July 1911: There were interesting scenes in the Falls Road area when it was said that in one of the houses hung a painting of the Virgin Mary whom persons examining it noticed what they believed to be a lifelike moving of the eyes and the hand.
- October 1913: It was reported locally that a young boy, the son of James Barnes from the Oldpark area, was miraculously cured after his mother applied holy water from the shrine at Lourdes and days later the boy discarded his crutches. People form the district confirmed that until a few days previously the boy had relied totally on his crutches and that a miracle had indeed occurred.



Questions?