

# On a mission TO EXPOSE Jehovah group's DEEPEST SECRETS

Facing the threat of eternal damnation and hellfire as well as lawsuits, two ordinary men took up a crusade to expose the innermost workings of this powerful organisation, writes **Barry J Whyte**

## THE INTERROGATION

In September 2001, Jason Wynne found himself sitting in an uncomfortable chair in the library of his local Kingdom Hall, staring into the faces of four serious and sombre men: the elders of his congregation.

Together they formed a judicial committee, and they were there that night to interrogate Wynne because he had committed one of the most serious sins a Jehovah's Witness could commit: an act of fornication.

According to Wynne they peppered him with questions designed to determine just how seriously he had sinned.

"What led up to the event?"

"What did you do?"

"Where were your hands?"

"Where were hers?"

"What was she doing?"

"How far did you put your penis in?"

"Was there foreplay?"

"Was there anal sex?"

The Jehovah's Witnesses religion demands chastity, purity and innocence until its members are ready to get married. Anything else can lead to expulsion from the religion, a process known as disfellowshipping.

Wynne had been expelled before, briefly and temporarily, and he had found it almost unbearably difficult. Unlike most religions, expulsion requires you to be shunned by your family and friends. Because Witnesses tend not to associate with non-Witnesses, it can leave the victim isolated.

Moreover, Witnesses believe fervently that the end of the world is coming and that on the day of Armageddon, all apostates will be consumed by God's rage and obliterated. Throughout his first expulsion, Wynne had been plagued by fear that the end of the world would arrive and, being outside the flock, he would join the damned.

More than just four men in uncomfortable chairs, Wynne believed he was facing the threat of eternal damnation and hellfire if he answered the questions incorrectly, or showed insufficient repentance.

Somehow, through all of that interrogation, he noticed the notebooks. Why, he wondered, did they need them? What were they for? Who were they for? Where would the notes be stored? And why would the notes of a small disciplinary matter in a small parish in a small country be recorded at all?

*'Wynne believed he was facing the threat of eternal damnation and hellfire if he answered the questions incorrectly'*

The thought never left him. And even after they came to their determination and called him back in to deliver the news that would change the course of his life, the memory of those notebooks would stay with him. How many other investigations were recorded in this way? Where were they stored? And what else did they record?

Finding the answer to that question would take him on a 20-year journey which would see him lose his family and his faith, but find a crusade to expose the secrets of his religion. It would also put him on a collision course with the Watch Tower, the Jehovah's Witnesses' equivalent of the Vatican, over its handling of child sexual abuse.

## A TROVE OF DOCUMENTS

In March of this year, I visited Wynne's home in Galway where he lives with his wife Marlen and his children.

Wynne, a mild-mannered, self-effacing, bespectacled father of two, works in new product development for a medical device multinational. Like many middle-aged professionals, he has set up a home office in a shed at the bottom of his garden.

Inside that shed, at the end of a winding flagstone path, is a hodgepodge of the accoutrements of work and family life – a guitar and a keyboard on opposite sides of the shed, shelves groaning with books, and elaborate Lego sets he builds with his children.

Look closer, however, and there's evidence of his unusual hobby. On one side of the room there are several computer stacks, all connected, whirring away quietly in the background, while the

bookshelves, at a second glance, are stuffed with books about religion, theology and apostasy.

It is from this unassuming headquarters that Wynne helps to lead a group of fellow apostates – people who were expelled from the Jehovah's Witnesses – in a campaign to reveal the organisation's deepest secrets.

It is not too far to suggest that Wynne and his fellow apostates, in particular an American man called Mark O'Donnell, are the source of a large proportion of what we know about the Jehovah's Witnesses – and in particular, how they handle allegations of child sex abuse.

Wynne's hard drives, he told me, contain five terabytes of data, a volume of material so large it can be hard to quantify.

"One terabyte is about a thousand movies. But we're talking about documents, so it's about a hundred thousand documents. File sizes are all

Jehovah's Witnesses believe fervently that the end of the world is coming

BARRY CRONIN





variable, but it averages out at about a hundred thousand files per terabyte,” he tells *Business Post Magazine*. “I would say I have about a million files.”

From that database Wynne has distributed to lawyers and prosecutors some key documents related to shocking abuses within the religion. In Ireland, for example, he has helped to identify the case of one man – whom we cannot name for legal reasons – who a number of years ago admitted abusing a family member.

As previously reported, those documents show that instead of reporting that case to the police, local elders instead reprimanded the Witnesses who did report it. They were deleted – in the religion’s own terminology – for “lacking soundness of mind” and “being disloyal”.

Wynne’s reach is not limited to Ireland. Over the last seven years, Wynne and O’Donnell have dealt with lawyers and prosecutors in the UK, Spain, the Netherlands, Germany, Japan and Spain. It’s been a long personal journey to get to this point, however, and for many years after he was finally disfellowshipped he remained a staunch defender of the faith.

## WAKING UP

Wynne was terrified of Armageddon arriving while he was still disfellowshipped. “I was full sure I was going to die,” he says.

“I kept telling myself, ‘God knows my heart and he’ll know that I apologized and I confessed and I knew it was wrong. So he’ll know my heart,’ when the final fire and fury of the end of the world arrived.

By this time he had met his wife, Marlen. Early in their relationship he brought her to a meeting. Marlen was unsettled by what she saw. Having grown up in East Germany before the fall of the Berlin Wall, she knew a system of authoritarian control when she saw one.

“I grew up in a communist state, so when I walked into one of those meetings to me it was very clear it was already a dogmatic, very closed scenario, without even understanding what they were talking about,” she says.

Even so, it took Jason a while to come to his final awakening. The moment he credits came in June 2014 when his brother, Keif, invited him for a drink in a bar called Whiskey Joe’s in Loughrea.

Keif had been raised as a Witness but had lost faith in his teenage years and he enjoyed a good deal more clarity in his thinking. He suggested that Wynne go to his computer and Google the term “Beth Sarim”.

Wynne found that Beth Sarim is the name of a ten-bedroom mansion in San Diego, which was built by Joseph Rutherford, the second president of the Watch Tower, as home for the resurrected biblical prophets like Abraham and Moses after Armageddon. When the end of the world didn’t arrive, Rutherford chose to live there in some luxury as each subsequent

prophesied date for the end of the world passed by.

That in turn led Wynne to a book called *Crisis of Conscience*, an exposé written by a former member of the Jehovah’s Witnesses governing body called Raymond Franz. The book revealed some of the secret internal workings of the church, particularly how they investigated and rooted out apostates and unbelievers, and how they recorded their investigations.

That’s when he remembered the notebooks. Ten years after he ➤

Jason Wynne:  
campaign to  
reveal secrets  
of Jehovah  
Witness group  
ANDREW  
DOWNES







There's been much criticism of the Jehovah's Witnesses leadership when it comes to how it handles allegations of child sexual abuse within the group

had been expelled, he realised that the notes his elders had taken at his disfellowshipping were not aide-memoires but legal documents compiled on behalf of the lawyers in the church's headquarters. This wasn't just "rogue elders making bad decisions", as he had previously thought. "The elders were following a book of instructions – and following it to the letter. And the letter tells them that I had to be disfellowshipped."

He may have been disfellowshipped, but he was not alone.

## MARKO'DONNELL

Five thousand miles away in Baltimore, Maryland, Mark O'Donnell was going through his own journey of drifting away from the faith. O'Donnell had been born into a Jehovah's Witness family and had been a steadfast believer as a child.

His drift from the faith was incremental, with nagging doubts slowly growing like cracks in the foundation of a house. Over time he began to question, tentatively, such core beliefs as the religion's ban on blood transfusions, which began to look cruel and wanton to him.

"And by the way, Armageddon never happened. It was supposed to happen in 1975 when I was, like, eight years old," he says, referring to a major doctrine of the faith: the church's many predictions of the end of the world.

He had more serious concerns, too. A conscientious young man, he had once warned his local elders about a man he suspected of behaving inappropriately around young girls. Instead of being commended for speaking up, he was chastised. This may have been an early warning of how the religion handled accusations of child abuse, even if O'Donnell was too young to recognise it as such. Many years later, the man he had complained about was sued by several women from the congregation, and he would settle the case out of court.

It all combined to convince O'Donnell that the Jehovah's Witnesses were not the possessors of 'The Truth'. They did not have a patent on morality: there were plenty of sinners in the church, many of whom were protected; and there were plenty of good and decent people outside of the Jehovah's Witnesses.

He was PIMO, in Jehovah's Witnesses terminology: physically in, but mentally out. It's a state that can take a severe emotional toll, forcing a Witness to stay inside the religion and police themselves for any sign they might betray their doubts and be expelled from their church, their families and their communities.

That tension bubbled away inside O'Donnell for years, until eventually he just blurted it out to his wife, Kimmy, saying, "I just can't do this anymore."

Such a revelation would ordinarily tear a Jehovah's Witness couple apart. But Kimmy had been abused as a child and was perhaps more open to what Mark was saying than others. After many miles of walking and talking over several months, they hashed out their fears and concerns and secrets. They were on their way to becoming ex-Jehovah's Witnesses.

## SEARCHING FOR ANSWERS

In order to help him to process his confused roil of anger, and the new information about the global corporate structure of the Watch Tower, Wynne set up a blog in 2014.

Called AvoidJW.org, it started out in rather unstructured fashion, from prosaic posts that reflected his growing knowledge of the history of the religion to entries such as '12 Ways To Avoid JW's', which reflected his undigested anger at the way he was being treated.

In Baltimore, O'Donnell had set up his own website and was searching for his own answers on the various message boards populated by Witnesses, some of whom had been expelled and some who were PIMO.

Through those message boards, like-minded individuals shared experiences and, crucially, documents. At least initially, those documents seemed relatively innocuous, such as copies of out-of-print issues of *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines – two of the critical vehicles through which the Jehovah's Witnesses organisation conveys its teachings to the flock.

O'Donnell and Wynne, publishing under pseudonyms, fell into a regular correspondence, comparing notes and trading material. They realised that the magazines occasionally contained references to what elders

and ordinary Witnesses should do in the event that they came across instances of child abuse. Not only did the magazines show the rules, but they showed the evolution of the rules.

The two men realised that the out-of-circulation versions of those magazines had value to non-Jehovah's Witnesses. In 2015, for example, Wynne received an email from the UK Charities Commission, which at the time was investigating child protection issues within a number of religious organisations.

The commission had come across his website and wanted to know if he had a particular issue of a magazine that contained an article that dealt with child sexual abuse.

The commission would go on to conclude, aided in part by Wynne's supply of the magazines, that one particular congregation in Manchester had not adequately dealt with allegations of child abuse – allegations that had subsequently led to an elder being convicted of two counts of indecent assault.

The database of documents came in just as useful to the Australian Royal Commission in 2015, which was looking at child sex abuse within religious organisations, including the Jehovah's Witnesses. The hearings were streamed live and Witnesses and apostates worldwide watched them obsessively.

A member of the Watch Tower governing body, Geoffrey Jackson, happened to be in Australia at the time, but the Watch Tower had been resisting having him give testimony because it said he had no role in decision-making or policymaking.

This was simply not true and O'Donnell knew it. More importantly, he could prove it by reference to the religion's own branch organisation manual and several other key documents.

O'Donnell sent a digital copy of the documents to the Charities Commission, which knocked down any obstacle to Jackson giving his testimony. In his testimony he gave an insight into how the Watch Tower governing body made its decisions, and separately admitted that child abuse was "something we've had to deal with" and that its policies had had to be changed in the past because they "weren't perfect". It was the first – and certainly the most high profile – recorded admission by a governing body member.

Later that year, Wynne and O'Donnell would meet in Galway for the first time. They had dinner, toured the countryside, and discussed their respective stories. When they parted, Wynne gave O'Donnell a small USB stick. It had a capacity of 128 gigabytes and contained all their files and documents collected to date.

That was about to grow substantially.

## ATLANTIS AND JUDAS

In 2016, they were sent a document called 'The Megafile'. It was a gigantic PDF containing hundreds of letters and documents from the early 1900s to the modern day.

It had been compiled by one elderly apostate who, in the style of many within the religion, goes only by the name of Atlantis. Atlantis's twin brother had died in 1979, and had asked him to make one promise: to expose the religion's sins.

From his position as an assistant to a circuit overseer – a kind of bishop of the Jehovah's Witnesses – he had access to a swathe of documents that showed the internal workings of the church's leadership.

Through the 1970s and 1980s he would grab what documents he could, stuff them inside his shirt, and race to the public library to copy them. There were letters showing all kinds of wrongdoing, including extensive evidence of child molestation.

Wynne spent months pulling the file apart, extracting confidential documents and posting them to his blog.

These were precisely the kind of documents that the Watch Tower did not want to make public. Indeed, in one lawsuit in the US around that time, the Watch Tower paid a \$4,000-a-day fine in defiance of a court order to hand over documents in a sexual abuse case. The total value of the fines rose to \$2 million before, in February 2018, the church finally settled the case out of court.

What the Watch Tower didn't know was that during the summer of 2017, a young Jehovah's Witness in Massachusetts – who, like Atlantis, goes by an assumed name: Judas – was in the midst of a kind of crime spree with his girlfriend, who goes by the name Jezebel.

They were clambering into Kingdom Halls all around the north-east of the US with a specific goal in mind. It wasn't to get money or to vandalise the place, but to acquire evidence.

Judas and Jezebel had obtained a small lock-picking kit and used it to unlock filing cabinets in the hall, where they found the documents they needed – the ones that showed serious instances of child sexual abuse and the Jehovah's Witnesses' failure to properly act upon them. Having glued the files sealed again, they slipped out unnoticed.

Those documents, along with those



Jehovah Witnesses gather for a convention: in 2018, it was revealed that the church had a €33bn share portfolio  
GETTY

Some Jehovah Witnesses have had a crisis of faith about some of the church's teachings







from Atlantis's Megafire, soon found their way on to AvoidJW. The website, which had once had a few hundred hits a day, suddenly surged to thousands. That's when the Watch Tower began to fight back.

## FAITHLEAKS

In 2018, the Watch Tower's legal department took their first shot at Wynne: a demand to take down his website because of alleged copyright violations. The letter threatened him with "monetary damages and compensation to the fullest extent of the law" through a New York court.

The demand did not, perhaps surprisingly, relate to secret internal documents, but to magazines and videos he had published online.

The legal threat caught Wynne offguard. "I went in to a lawyer in town and showed him the letter," which was signed by the general counsel of the Watch Tower, Philip Brumley. "I remember him saying, 'They're really trying to scare you with this one, aren't they?'"

In order to satisfy the demand, Wynne shut down two of the websites he controlled – but it was clear that he and his fellow apostates needed help. That help came in the form of two former Mormons, Ryan McKnight and Ethan Dodge.

McKnight and Dodge ran a website called *Mormon Leaks*, which they had set up to force the Mormon church to be more transparent in its finances, its corporate policies, and its handling of sexual abuse allegations.

By the time they met Wynne and O'Donnell, they had published some significant stories.

In 2018, for example, they revealed that the church had a nearly \$33 billion share portfolio, split between 13 different corporate vehicles, that had never before been disclosed. That revelation would lead to a fine by the Securities and Exchange Commission, the US stock market regulator for having "obscured the church's portfolio".

Together, they decided to create a new entity, *FaithLeaks*, built around a non-profit newsroom that would investigate and interrogate such leaked documents from a variety of churches. McKnight and Dodge would run the operation and Wynne would sit on the advisory board.

Their first story was based on a trove of documents taken from a Kingdom Hall by Judas and Jezebel.

The story revealed that an elder in one American congregation had been accused of abusing his daughters.

In 1999, the documents – which this publication has seen – showed that his fellow elders had interrogated the man and found that his daughters' claims had been credible, and how the Watch Tower had failed to report it.

The documents were published by *FaithLeaks* and stories were published by bigger publications like *Gizmodo*, a technology and science website, and organisations like the US-based Centre for Investigative Journalism.

The Watch Tower responded promptly. In May 2020, it filed suit against *FaithLeaks*. It was, again, a copyright claim, related to *FaithLeaks'* publication of a number of videos the Watch Tower had made.

For McKnight and Dodge, the intention was clear. They declared that the effort to "effectively censor this content is clear cut" and was an "abusive assault" on the First Amendment right to report matters of public interest under the guise of a copyright claim.

But they struggled to raise the funds, and by July 2020 they had to give in. In a post on their website, they wrote, "It is with great difficulty that we announce that our fundraising efforts have come up short and we were forced to settle the suit."

They were forced to remove the Watch Tower's videos from their site, give an undertaking to never again publish such material, and pay a total

of \$15,000 in damages.

They described the result as "absolutely agonising", adding that the journey had been "been emotionally, mentally, and physically taxing on us, as it goes against our core values".

They insisted that they still believed they had not violated the copyright – claiming a fair-use defence – but, having failed to raise the legal fees, they had "no choice but to settle".

For Wynne, it was another frustrating setback. "The collapse of *FaithLeaks* was unnecessary. I firmly believe that if they had the economic support of ex-JWs, they could have gone to court and won," he says.

For O'Donnell – who had never fully supported the publishing of the videos – the case was a reminder of the legal power of the Watch Tower.

"We are always in fear of the Jehovah's Witnesses organisation coming after us."

*Business Post Magazine* contacted the Watch Tower a number of times over to the last two weeks for a response to the allegations laid out in this story. No reply was forthcoming prior to publication. However, the church previously told this publication that "all allegations of abuse are thoroughly investigated" and that "any suggestion that Jehovah's Witnesses cover up child abuse is absolutely false".

## THE FIGHT CONTINUES

For Marlen Wynne, the last few years have been difficult: not just Jason's awakening from the religion, but the time he's spent working on the website – and, of course, the legal threats.

"It's gotten better lately. In the first few years it was a lot more intense, and I think we did have arguments," she says.

"We were at points where... 'are you ever going to leave behind fully?' For his own health and well-being and mental health, would there ever be a point where he says, 'Okay, that's it?'"

The legal threats were "only slightly worrying", and she saw them more as the Watch Tower showing its strength. If anything it reinforced in her mind the importance of the work that he was doing.

It seems unlikely that the fight will be over anytime soon. Sitting out in their back garden is a vast archive of documents, of which only the surface has been truly scratched.

Next month, O'Donnell will attend the trial of a man whose crimes first saw light under Judas's torch. He's also following very closely a Pennsylvania investigation into nine men accused of child sexual abuse, which has been described as one of the most comprehensive yet in the US.

The two men continue to gather and disseminate the documents they can find. Even so, it's clear that the job can be overwhelming. It's simply not possible for any one human to have looked through all those files, Wynne says, so he has to prioritise.

Is it likely that his archive contains material that could yet prove hugely important to victims, investigators or prosecutors somewhere in the world? Wynne pauses.

He is not given to overstatement, and this is simply an unquantifiable question. "Possibly," he answers, slowly.

I rephrase the question: The possibility of enormous amounts of heretofore untapped information is huge, is it not?

"Yeah," he says, sighing slightly, as if I'd reminded him of the size of the mountain he has yet to climb. ■



Mark O'Donnell: uneasy about the ban on blood transfusions

Old HQ of the group's controlling body in New York: Watchtower is to the Jehovah's Witnesses as the Vatican is to Catholics





Last weekend, Jordan Peterson performed to a sell-out audience at Dublin's 3Arena, warning of how the supposed dangers of wokeness and liberalism risk capsizing modern society entirely. But does his messianic message risk shepherding his followers down the road towards the far-right?



# Philosopher or pretender?

By Barry J Whyte

**A** Jordan Peterson lecture feels at times like you've been running through a library, ripping pages at random from books to read a paragraph or two, before running to the next aisle to rip another page and read more. Information rushes past you with no particular structure or order, no overarching context, and with nuggets that sometimes mean something, and nuggets that sometimes don't.

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Approximately 9,000 people turned up to hear Jordan Peterson talk at the 3Arena in Dublin last week

“ One of the reasons I think we’ve had an explosion of unhappiness and mental illness, particularly among women, over the last 30 years is because we’ve inadvertently interfered with children’s ability to play ”

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It’s a heady experience at times, given Peterson’s singularly impressive oratorical style, allied to his slightly anglophone Canadian speaking voice, his tweedy dress sense, and his choice of vocabulary, which can often linger on the slightly obscure words, adding to his professorial air.

Peterson has spent the last few years speaking expansively on such a wide range of topics – far wider than you’d expect from a professor of clinical psychology – that it can often be difficult to pin him down to a particular position.

That’s not to say that he doesn’t have a unifying theme in his speeches and writings, and this was on display last Sunday in Dublin’s 3Arena in front of 13,000 fans. By the time the theme emerged explicitly, he had finished a nearly 90-minute, virtually extempore lecture, with only an occasional glance at his notes for guidance, churning up new topics and talking points like worms in freshly turned soil.

The 60-year-old was sitting in a pair of leather armchairs beside his wife Tammy, who serves as a kind of compere on his global tour, introducing him to the audience in glowing terms, and then fielding questions during the questions and answers session at the end.

One of the questions was: “There seems to be a growing population of people sick of the woke left, but who are instead becoming radicalised in the other direction. What would you say to them?”

It’s the question that goes to the heart of the Jordan Peterson narrative, whether he knows it or not: how does he continue to rant and rave about the Marxist leftists and their pernicious effect on society – painting it, as he does, as a kind of existential cultural crisis of the Marxists’ creation – without inspiring people to push further and further rightwards?

His answer was several minutes long, and described his view of the flashpoints between conservatives and liberals over tradition versus reform, and the dry tinder that would likely ignite what he views as the inevitable culture war. “People come along and say: ‘Well, that’s a stupid tradition; justify it’ and if you’re a conservative you think: ‘I don’t know how to justify it, we’ve done this for like 50,000 years, I thought we were sort of beyond the justification,’” he said, to general murmurs of approval.

Then, adopting the tone of a hectoring liberal, he said: “Do you know what a woman is?”

“I thought I did,” he responded to himself, taking the place of a bemused conservative, to which the audience gave knowing chuckles. “I thought we settled that when sex emerged on the biological front two billion years ago, but apparently not.”

There was a large eruption of applause and whistles, one of the largest of the night, reflecting the crowd’s general belief in a binary concept of gender.

Peterson then warned the audience of the danger of such a cultural moment as this. “So the conservatives get gnawed at by the radicals and

then they get irritated and that’s a very bad idea – to irritate conservatives – because they’re slow to wake up, and slow to respond, but once they wake up, you better look the hell out,” he said.

This current moment of “You slap me and I slap you, then you punch me and I punch you”, of tit-for-tat provocation, had the risk of escalating and getting out of hand, he said.

“We’re really on the brink of that moment. And it’s a positive feedback loop that can tilt us towards a very serious end.”

What’s the alternative, he asked rhetorically? Leadership, he answered. A very specific kind of leadership – his own.

“What do you want in a leader in a time of trouble, and in a time of increasing polarisation? It can be, and I’m not saying I’m innocent of this, it can be someone who slaps back,” he said: someone who can put up a barrier and protect the faithful; someone who can withstand the blows during such a time of polarisation.

“But, more importantly perhaps, it’s someone who can tell a better story,” he said. “If you can tell the right story, then people will be inspired by that.”

It was as neat an encapsulation of the Peterson approach as one can hope for: to tell a better story; to comfort conservatives who he believes are under attack by the West; and to stand as a barrier between them and the Marxists in the tit-for-tat culture war. And, as his audience in the 3Arena last Sunday know only too well, if necessary to slap back.

Colourful liberal-bashing

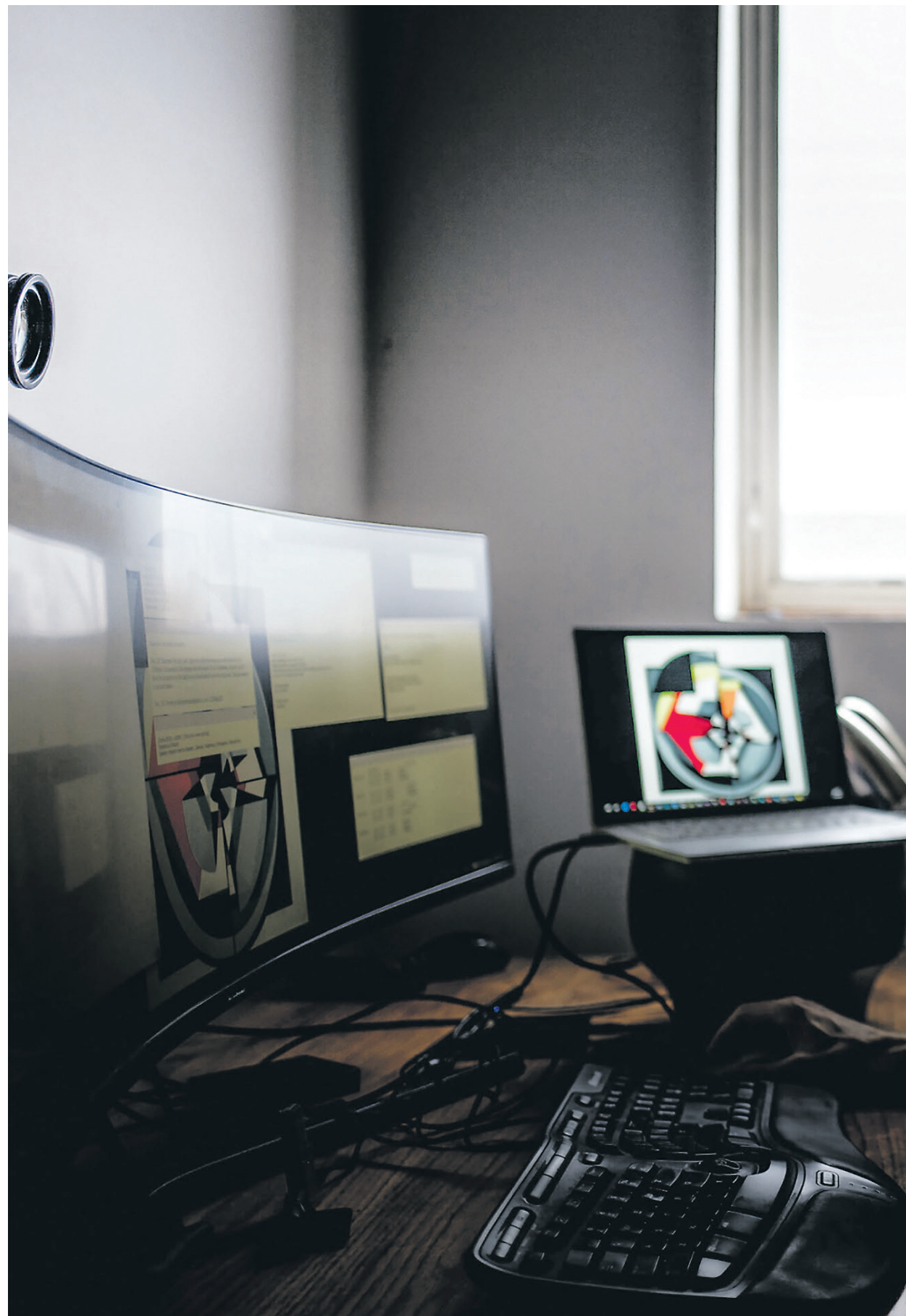
If you have never heard of Jordan Peterson before, here’s a brief synopsis of his swift and recent rise.

He was a college professor in Canada who rose to something like fame when he opposed the introduction of a constitutional amendment that he said amounted to the introduction of legally mandated speech, threatening criminal sanctions against people who didn’t use certain personal pronouns. His opponents argued that it did no such thing, that it never mentioned pronouns, but merely extended hate speech protections to transgender people.

Nonetheless, it made him a celebrity, and the subsequent years have only amplified that. As well as being a clinical psychologist by training, he has dabbled in Biblical studies, set up his own university, and railed against political correctness and what he regards as the woke Marxist assault on western ideals. He has become a kind of advocate for young men adrift in what he derided as an increasingly feminised world; he became a multimillion-selling author; and he was described by the New York Times as “the most influential public intellectual in the western world” while the Guardian referred to him as “Weapon X” in the culture wars.

He has the capacity to rile up his base, not least demonstrated in his response to Olivia Wilde, the film director, who said one character in her recent film *Don’t Worry Darling* was based on Peterson, who she described as “this pseudo-intellectual hero to the incel [involuntary celibate] community”.

His response was lengthy and vitriolic, describing Wilde’s comments as “the latest bit of propaganda disseminated by the woke, self-righteous bores and bullies who now dominate Hollywood”, before adding – and take a deep breath before reading this – that “many of the young men whom the progressive and cancel-culture-facilitating mad woke mob (which contains no shortage of bitter, self-righteous, victimhood-brandishing, virtue-sig-



Below: Olivia Wilde (far right) at a photocall for her new film *Don’t Worry Darling*, which also stars (from left) Harry Styles, Gemma Chan and Chris Pine. Pine’s character is broadly based on Jordan Peterson, something which has provoked a vitriolic response from Peterson himself Getty



nalling, accusatory and even outright demented mean-girl feminists) have shamed and tortured into cowering for ever daring to manifest a single masculine attribute have turned to my work and found some solace therein”.

It was that kind of colourful liberal-bashing that drew the audience to the 3Arena last Sunday, and the most immediately noticeable thing was the composition of the crowd.

Peterson was last in Ireland in 2018 for two events. One was a joint lecture with Sam Harris in the 3Arena, which wasn’t full by the looks of photos from the time, and was overwhelmingly male. The other was later that year in the Olympia, which has a capacity of just under 1,300.

Last Sunday, the 3Arena was packed, and substantially more than a third of the audience was made up of women. There was a liberal sprinkling of couples, apparently on dates, many texting babysitters and taking selfies, as if on a long-needed night out. There was also a noticeable number of families with young children in attendance, and while the audience was overwhelmingly white, it was not 100 per cent so.

Most of the audience had almost certainly read some of his books, but it’s a safe assumption that the vast majority knew Peterson best from his YouTube and social media outpourings.

Those videos, clipped for ease of online sharing, tend to be short and pithy, and full of examples of Peterson’s erudition and eloquence – not to mention his ability in an argument to make his opponent look wrong or foolish. The most devastating example of this is his 2018 interview with Cathy Newman on Channel 4, during which she was temporarily struck dumb, the video of which has racked up millions of views on YouTube.

But a two-hour audience with Peterson is very different to a two-minute clip, and the unventilated, un-airconditioned theatre soon became stiflingly hot as he embarked on his lecture.

If nothing else, it served as a decent example of the Peterson method, for want of a better word. The first half-hour or more was filled with Oprah Winfrey-style exhortations to regard yourself as having value; about the importance of play to children; and hollow epigrams about the optimum outlook on life, such as “cynicism might be preferable to naivety, but it doesn’t hold a candle to wisdom”.

That’s merely the surface-level stuff, though. The real message being pushed by Peterson, the one that has made him an internet sensation, is his unwavering line on the “proper” roles of men and women, and the importance of those proper roles to the stability of western society. On Sunday night, his lecture was filled with plenty of examples of his particular brand of biological essentialism.

Early on in his speech, he argued: “One of the reasons I think that we’ve had somewhat of an explosion of unhappiness and mental illness, particularly among women by the way, over the last 30 years is because a lot of what we’ve done inadvertently has interfered with children’s ability to play.”

It’s very hard, he said, “for boys to play in school because almost everything they’re required to do is antithetical to the rough and tumble ethos of masculine play”.

As for girls, he said, referencing Jonathan Haidt, an American social psychologist: “Girls have almost stopped doing pat-a-cake and skipping, and these are deeply embodied forms of play that might be something like the female equivalent of rough-and-tumble play among males.”

Why is play so important? To explain that, he cited the example of a child of three playing with a truck.

“That’s a very abstract thing to do, because a little toy truck is not a truck. It’s a representation of a truck,” he said. “They’re formulating a very complex representation of the world and acting out a potential role – it’s very sophisticated. When a girl plays with a doll, too, she’s not playing with a baby, she’s practising doing that.”

He elaborated that he meant the girls were “practising taking their optimum place in the social order”.

Then, without any particular preamble, Peterson seemed to be talking about trans issues, raising his voice and barking at the crowd that “this idea that identity is something you define subjectively, and then can impose on other people, that’s what two-year-olds think”.

“And now we’re making that law,” he said, without referencing which law, before adding: “That’s not very wise.”

“The other way you can tell that’s two-year-old behaviour is that if I don’t accept the identity

“ One of the reasons you should become as a little child is so you can see miracles when they unfold in front of you instead of being blinded by your own defensive cynicism ”





Jordan Peterson is greeted by a member of the audience after a debate at the University of Toronto. Getty

you're imposing on me subjectively, you'll have a tantrum," he said. "I knew you were two and now you just proved it." The crowd clapped and cheered enthusiastically.

### Psychic shock

A few years back, before he became famous, Peterson told one of his colleagues that he wanted to buy a church. Renovating old church buildings and turning them into new homes was popular in Toronto at the time, but that's not what Peterson wanted. He wanted an actual church from which he could deliver sermons every Sunday.

It was an odd desire, and his colleague, Bernard Schiff, a former professor of psychology in the University of Toronto, was a little thrown by the admission, which he detailed in 2018 in a very long article about Peterson in the Toronto Star newspaper.

At the heart of that piece was Schiff's dismay about the road that his former friend – he had advocated for Peterson in college and helped accommodate the entire Peterson family when they were renovating their own home – had gone down.

It may or may not be relevant that Schiff has a trans daughter, or that he is a former publisher of the Walrus, a magazine that would later stingingly criticise Peterson for his false claim to be a member of an indigenous Canadian tribe.

What is relevant is that Schiff regarded Peterson as a friend, and admired his "agile and creative mind", his power as an orator, and his intelligence, passion, thoughtfulness and kindness, all of which he said he struggled to recognise in the public version of Peterson that was beginning to develop.

That public Peterson was more like Billy Graham, the American evangelical pastor, Schiff wrote. Peterson had become more of a preacher than a teacher.

Some of that religious inflection was on display vividly in his speech last Sunday, from his oratorical style – consciously or unconsciously, and not always successfully – borrowed from the centuries-old mannerisms of American evangelical preachers, to the subject matter, which frequently dipped into a deep well of biblical references.

Peterson speaks often of the existence of good and evil. Not simply of good acts and evil acts, but of good and evil as material forces in the world. Last Sunday, he repeated his chiding of anyone who disagrees with him as being hopelessly naïve, and even vulnerable to deep psychic shock when they inevitably encounter the irredeemable evil of which he warned.

On its face, it seems odd for a clinical psychologist, but could perhaps be written off as a rhetorical flourish, were it not for Peterson repeatedly returning to the subject in a variety of different ways.

In fact, every few minutes he seemed to invoke some kind of religious – and that is to say, Christian – image. He spoke variously of people as "the embodiment of serpentine sins and errors", or about the risk of letting "nihilistic, demonic voices steal your *joie de vivre*", and more than once framed mental health and self-improvement in the context of heaven and hell and purgatory, adding at one point: "There are things that are much worse than death, that's for sure." Cue great applause.

He occasionally quoted scripture, mentioning the gospel statement "Knock and the door will open, ask and you shall receive", and commend-

ing the audience to consider how they ought to incorporate it into the way they think.

Later, he referenced the gospels again, and the warning that "unless you become as little children, you'll never enter the kingdom of heaven". This was important, he argued, because "one of the reasons you should become as a little child is so you can see miracles when they unfold in front of you instead of being blinded by your own defensive cynicism".

On another occasion, he described his vision of heaven as "a place where people were eternally playing", and it was clear yet again that he meant this not as a simple rhetorical flourish, but as his literal description of his vision of heaven.

Peterson's fundamental belief in the roles of men and women was also framed through the Bible. At one point he referenced a discussion he had with Ben Shapiro, a conservative thinker and writer who has forged a career out of making contentious remarks about race, culture and sexuality. Shapiro had introduced him to the

**Jordan Peterson: in the past he has expressed the desire to buy a church in which to deliver weekly sermons**

Jonathan Castellino

## A self-styled prophet in his own words



**On one of his rules for life**  
"Pet a cat when you encounter one on the street."

**On witches**  
"They do exist. They just don't exist the way you think they exist. They certainly exist. You may say, well, dragons don't exist. It's, like, yes they do – the category predator and the category dragon are the same category. It absolutely exists. It's a superordinate category. It exists absolutely more than anything else. In fact, it really exists. What exists is not obvious. You say, 'Well, there's no such thing as witches.' Yeah, I know what you mean, but that isn't what you think when you go see a movie about them. You can't help but fall into these categories. There's no escape from them."

**On male supremacy**  
"The people who hold that our culture is an oppressive patriarchy, they don't want to admit that the current hierarchy might be predicated on competence."

**On "crazy women" and violence**

"[Physical violence] is forbidden in discourse with women. And so I don't think men can control crazy women... for example, there's a woman in Toronto who's been organising this movement, let's say, against me and some other people, who are going to do a free speech event. She managed to organise quite effectively and she's quite offensive, you might say. She com-

pared us to the Nazis, for example, publicly, using the swastika, which wasn't something I was all that fond of. But I'm defenceless against that kind of female insanity because the techniques that I would use against a man who was employing those tactics are forbidden to me."

**On the value of bullies according to the gospel of 'The Simpsons'**

"Without Nelson, King of the Bullies, the school would soon be overrun by resentful, touchy Milhouses, narcissistic, intellectual Martin Princes, soft, chocolate gorging German children, and infantile Ralph Wiggums. Muntz is a corrective, a tough, self-sufficient kid who uses his own capacity for contempt to decide what line of immature and pathetic behaviour simply cannot be crossed... Abandoned by his worthless father, neglected, thankfully, by his thoughtless slut of a mother, Nelson does pretty well, everything considered."

**On free speech**

"We have this notion – developed not least in your great country – that people have an intrinsic worth, that we're sovereign citizens, that we're all possessed of a voice that redeems the state; that's why we have an inalienable right to free speech, let's say; because we're a necessary corrective to the blindness and archaic nature of the state; we're the living eyes of the dead king."

description of Eve in the King James version of the Bible as Adam's "helpe-meet", to the general bewilderment of many in the audience.

"It's an archaic word," he reassured them. "You don't call your wife your helpe-meet, generally, or you're going to get a slap, probably, if you do. The Biblical language means something like beneficial adversary; and it's very nice, because a beneficial adversary would be someone you're pushing against and who's pushing against you exactly the right amount." He didn't dwell on other interpretations that simply describe the term as meaning "helper".

Even in discussing his primary area of academic research, the tendency towards alcoholism, he managed to infuse a kind of religious angle.

"Religious transformation cures alcoholism, that's known among people who are purely atheistic researchers. No one knows quite how to account for that, but it's an interesting thing to know," he said.

The combined effect of the repeated emphasis on traditional gender roles, and the regular reference to the bible and its meaning, serves to underline Schiff's observation in 2018 that underpinning all of Peterson's public persona is a desire not merely to be a public intellectual, but to be a kind of evangelist – or the West, men, free speech, traditional gender roles, and so many other things.

But in that article in 2018, Schiff boiled it down: Peterson, he wrote, was "not a free speech warrior, [but] a social order warrior".

times in the past few months. I cannot see a future. Do you have any advice? Thank you for everything". Another asked: "My friend's baby passed away after just a few weeks. They are really struggling. How can I help them find some hope for the future?" Yet another asked for advice on how to "help an introverted alcoholic father who's been drinking for over 20 years (and lives 2 kilometres away)".

There were a dozen or so questions about a cashless society, including the 3Arena being card-only, and whether this was leading us towards an Orwellian surveillance state.

But perhaps the commonest questions were about the culture wars, the woke agenda and the impending collapse of modern society.

In that vein, a great many of the questions were invitations for him to speak again about Enoch Burke, who has been in prison since September 5 for breaching a court injunction to stay away from the school at which he teaches, which Burke claims stems from his refusal to use a child's preferred gender pronouns. (A judge last week said the school's decision to place him on administrative leave was not an attack on his religious beliefs.)

It hardly needs explaining why this would seem a rich subject for Peterson, and there were plenty of requests for him to discuss it.

That he didn't address any of them head-on hardly seemed to matter. His audience knows his views on such matters from his far more sulphurous media and social media appearances, and he had nodded and winked at the subject enough times, and got enough cheers, to send the audience home happy.

It was clear that what mattered to the audience wasn't the message but the medium: being in the presence of someone who can promise to tell a better story, and who will, if necessary, slap back. Someone who can by virtue of his persona give intellectual heft to their convictions; to defend the West against the much-feared claims of Marxists that all their institutions are racist; or that its male hierarchies are indefensible; or that capitalism has pushed the environment to the brink of collapse, and that only radical lifestyle change can save humanity.

The *Business Post* spoke to a group of attendees, all of whom gave different reasons for their enjoyment of the lecture.

José, who was standing with a group of friends after the gig, described it as "really insightful", and was impressed by Peterson's background in clinical psychology, his research, and his skill in communicating his ideas, as well as his vigorous advocacy of orthodox conservative positions like personal responsibility.

"All people have heard for all their lives is that all your issues are someone else's fault," José said. "It's society that brought you up in a certain way, it's your family, it's the culture you were brought up in, all of that is to blame."

A group of people from Wexford were rapturous about the show, though they had expected Peterson to delve more into the transgender issue, especially since he used social media to weigh in on Burke's jailing for contempt of court.

Two men outside, who would only identify themselves as Colm and Paul, also expressed a mild disappointment that he hadn't been more full-throated in his commentary on the so-called woke agenda, but were keen to express their admiration for his intellect and erudition.

Another man, who admitted to having one of his books but not having read it, said that Peterson "cuts to the chase of what everybody knows deep down, but it gets smothered in the group-think", particularly the misinformation that is disseminated by the mainstream media.

A man named Phil enjoyed Peterson's position as an alternative to what he regarded as the mainstream view. He described him as "a giant intellect, not easily dismissed" who "presents a countercultural view that can help to open up debate – and proper debate – about really tough issues".

Phil added that Peterson was "a welcome voice because I think in Ireland there's too much of one voice and he's articulating a different perspective" to the one presented by "the entire political and media world".

In short, a social order warrior who can, if necessary, slap back.



**You don't call your wife your helpe-meet, generally, or you're going to get a slap, probably, if you do. The Biblical language means something like beneficial adversary; and it's very nice**



Business Post

# Magazine

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**Shane Byrne**

'I was dropped because of my hair'

**Itchy feet**

This year's travel trends

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Speed dating for creative business owners

## Still under siege?

Many loyalists refuse to even discuss the possibility of a united Ireland, but there are signs of change among younger members of the community. Barry J Whyte reports







Thousands attended the annual Apprentice Boys Lundy Day parade in Derry last month. The event commemorates the 17th-century siege of the city. The parade ended with the burning of an effigy (pictured, right) of Lt Col Robert Lundy, known as Lundy the Traitor  
PACEMAKER



More than 26 bands took part in the Lundy Day parade, which commemorates the 'shutting of the gates' by apprentices who locked the city's gates against the approaching forces of the Catholic King James II  
PACEMAKER



# STILL UNDER SIEGE?



Lundy Day in Derry commemorates a historical event, but it also reflects the fact that many loyalists are still trying to close those gates and won't even contemplate a united Ireland – although there are signs of change among some younger members of the community, writes **Barry J Whyte**

**R**obert Lundy, stuffed with straw, his face geisha-white, his cheeks gaudily rouged, and his hair woolly, black and thick, hangs from his gantry on the corner of Bishop Street and Society Street, waiting.

On this frigid, lead-grey Saturday morning in December, he's waiting for the Apprentice Boys of Derry, who are on their way to burn him in effigy for his crime of nearly surrendering the city to the attacking Catholic forces in 1689.

That Lundy was not successful was, in loyalist lore, due only to the intervention of the stout Protestant defenders of the city, including those brave 13 apprentices who leapt to Derry's cause and shut the gates.

Lundy's name has in the ensuing three centuries become a by-word for treachery and betrayal, and his effigy bears two signs, one front, one back, reading: "Lundy the Traitor" and "The End of All Traitors".

The march, when it arrives, is everything you have come to expect. Drums pulsing, pipes piping, boots polished, and ceremonial swords shining. There's wee'uns throwing batons and turning cartwheels; men in bowler hats and white gloves; an array of sashes slung round shoulders. Flags troop by identifying the dozens of local Orange lodges and Apprentice Boys clubs, such as the Brownings, the Walkers, the Mitchelburnes and the No Surrenders.



The parade begins at the city's main train station, goes through the winding streets around Derry, and ends up at St Columb's Cathedral  
PACEMAKER

Bands wave banners, some of which identify the bearers as 'Sons of Kai', said to be a reference to an otherwise unnoteworthy 1960s Rangers player called Kai Johansen, but more likely an acronym for the term Kill All Irish.

You can hear the noise before you see them, reverberating across the river and off the walls of the houses and offices of Derry. At one stage a band thumps past so loudly that it sets off the alarm in a white Renault Kadjar parked on the street.

The route of the march takes the bands from the city's main train station, over Craigavon Bridge, and up the steep hills of Derry, through narrow, winding streets – especially those whose kerbstones are painted red, white and blue – to St Columb's Cathedral.

Just before they pass the cathedral they move through Derry's west bank, one of the last remaining bastions of loyalism in the increasingly





nationalist and Catholic city.

Two murals stand out, sitting side by side on the walls in front of a block of council flats. The first carries a quote that reads, “Between 1971 and 1991, the Protestant population of the cityside declined by 83.4 per cent as a result of Republican violence,” while the other proclaims, “Londonderry West Bank Loyalists; Still Under Siege; No Surrender.”

It’s a reminder that this parade doesn’t just commemorate a historic siege, but reflects a persistent siege mentality among a sizeable cohort of Northern Ireland’s Protestants and loyalists.

And for all the joy and celebrations among the Lundy Day marchers, the talk of Brexit, of Scottish independence and more significantly of Irish unity, means that mentality appears particularly raw lately.

**T**he idea of shutting the gates is a potent and powerful symbol in loyalist and unionist mythos: the idea that, surrounded by Catholics, nationalists and those disloyal to the crown, they can simply bunker down and rely on their own resourcefulness to resist.

It relies on a kind of group unity into which the Lundy Day parade is a particularly keen insight. In order to maintain that sense of cohesion, it is critical to root out and eliminate those who would traduce them to the invading, overwhelming forces.

It makes the job of convincing loyalists to talk openly about the idea of a united Ireland particularly difficult. Consider the response of one loyalist, delivered to the Business Post Magazine by email, through an intermediary, in response to an invitation for an interview: “The conversation on a potential ‘united Ireland’ is not happening within our community because the position is [that] it isn’t acceptable nor wanted in any form. We have no allegiance nor any cultural connection with the [Republic of Ireland]. We have seen how the Irish governments treated their minority community after the formation of their state to the present day. In reality the view from our community would be the unification of Ireland back in the Commonwealth and then in the future back under the crown and the British Parliament.”

It contains the predictable response that no united Ireland would be acceptable to loyalists, but also the perhaps surprising insight that this conversation is simply not happening at all.

The simple reason for that, according to Moore Holmes, a loyalist activist and an increasingly prominent critic of not just a united Ireland, but also the British government, is one of self interest. In short, why would loyalists even discuss a proposal that is anathema to their very identity?

“No unionist is going to lend a hand to political institutions in a united Ireland. You would get the same level of obstinacy that Sinn Féin deploys in Westminster,” he says.

“It’s not in the interest of loyalists like me to contribute to a discussion that effectively is designed to bring about my own demise. There’s no enthusiasm for unionists to help Sinn Féin, or anyone else, in painting what a united Ireland would look like, because frankly, for people like me and communities like mine, no one that bears the name loyalist would ever contemplate that – not even for a moment.”

Is loyalism irreconcilable with even a conversation about a united Ireland, I ask him.

“Engaging in a programme that is purpose-built to try and create the destruction of my country is not something I think that unionists should or would entertain,” he says. “People may look at it as the reunification of this island, or the creation of a new country, but I look at that as an attack on the country I love. It’s the height of folly for a unionist to help draw up the plans for their own demise.”

Holmes may be unusual among prominent loyalists for his willingness to discuss his community’s resistance to the idea, but his reason for doing so is clear: “I’ll talk to anyone about the lunacy of a united Ireland.”

But there are many who feel so deeply uncomfortable that they don’t even want to have a conversation, and many for whom such talk makes them anxious, triggering folk memories of being under siege and at risk of betrayal by some modern-day Lundy.

Consider the backlash that James Nesbitt, a Northern Irish actor from a Protestant background, received last October for speaking at a conference organised by the pro-unity group Ireland’s Future. There was a predictable Twitter outcry, branding him a Lundy. More chillingly, someone spray painted a message on a wall in Belfast reading, “No Pope in Our Town James Nesbitt”, alongside a target symbol.

Holmes insists that he’s among a small group of loyalists who are quite bullish about the future of Northern Ireland as a wholly British entity, but adds: “There are those within unionism that will be less ►►



confident; there are those that would be more insecure; there are those that may fall for the hoodwink, [about] the census results and the fact that Sinn Féin are the largest party in Northern Ireland and that they're growing in influence and political capital in the south."

He has a point. The last census showed that Northern Ireland's population had risen to 1.9 million, its highest ever. The proportion of Catholics is 45.1 per cent and Protestants 43.48 per cent, compared to 48.4 per cent Protestants and 45.1 per cent Catholics in 2011.

This was immediately seized upon as a seismic shift in Northern Ireland politics, which has long been presumed to rest on a simple demographic fact that Protestants are in the majority.

And while it's not quite as simple as that – the census shows that nearly 60 per cent of the population identifies as "British only", "Northern Irish only", or "British and Irish only", while only slightly more than 30 per cent identify as "Irish only" or "Irish and Northern Irish only" – the analysis was overwhelming in its conclusion: if Catholics are now the largest bloc, is a united Ireland now inevitable?

Holmes accepts that the tsunami of coverage focusing on the shift in the Catholic vs Protestant figures makes it easy to imagine that things may look "slightly ominous from a unionist perspective".

Is it enough to make loyalists feel like they're under siege? "Well, there's certainly an element of that mentality in loyalism, absolutely," Holmes says.

Many loyalists feel like they're under attack from the increasing talk of a united Ireland, which Holmes describes as "a defensive mentality" because unionists and loyalists are aware that Northern Ireland is a "shared place, [but] we recognise that there's a significant minority that supports the abolition" of the region as it exists now.

"We also have an increasingly interfering Irish government that wants to stick its nose in our business at every turn. And an untrustworthy British government across the water that has failed to represent unionists and to protect unionists' interests in this place," he says.

"There's a number of moving pieces that can create this sense of being under siege and heighten that desire to defend what you have, and sometimes that may manifest itself as seeing bogeymen where there are no bogeymen," he says. "It generates a community that feels more on edge, that feels more frustrated, more marginalised and more isolated."

Jamie Bryson, another high-profile loyalist activist, has repeated dark forebodings that talk of a united Ireland could trigger violence, while also framing post-Brexit political agreements such as the Northern Ireland protocol, the mechanism to avoid a hard border on the island, as the latest in a long line of betrayals. Bryson recently tweeted: "In many years from now, those who stood firm against the protocol will be remembered as those who closed the gates in this time of great peril. Those who showed weakness and wanted to compromise on the constitutional integrity of NI will be remembered like Lundy before them."

It raises an inevitable question that has flittered at the edge of this debate for as long as it's been held: would the mere discussion of a united Ireland be enough to move some loyalists to violence?

As many loyalist activists and spokespeople have done, Holmes addresses the question slightly obliquely. But his meaning is clear, especially less than a year, after the UVF drove a hoax car bomb to a building in Belfast where Simon Coveney, then the Minister for Foreign Affairs was giving a speech last March.

"Along with the economic difficulties, you would get political difficulties and then you would obviously get the inevitable social or societal difficulties that come along with that," he says. "Because, you know, we're still in a post-conflict society. It doesn't bear thinking about."

**T**he centre of the Lundy Day march – other than the effigy, of course – is a commemorative church service in St Columb's Cathedral. The sermon neatly highlights the undercurrent of unarticulated unease within the loyalist community about the rising talk of a united Ireland.

It's delivered by the Reverend David McBeth, who begins with a folksy tale about "two old boys" worrying about whether there will be Apprentice Boys marches in heaven. The first dies, and comes back to tell the second that there's good news and



Jamie Bryson, loyalist activist, at a rally against the Northern Ireland protocol in Newtownards in Belfast: 'The interfering Irish government wants to stick its nose in our business at every turn' **PACEMAKER**

Moore Holmes at the anti-protocol protest in East Belfast: 'No unionist is going to lend a hand to political institutions in a united Ireland' **PACEMAKER**



bad news. The good? That there are indeed marches in heaven. The bad? "You're marching tomorrow."

It gets appreciative chuckles, before he segues into a relatively lengthy history lecture on the valiant sacrifice of not just the brave 13, but all the Protestants of Derry – or, rather, Londonderry.

He paints a picture of a people who had retreated to Derry as their last redoubt, pursued by the "mighty Jacobite army" of James II, the deposed Catholic king of England.

James's intention, McBeth preaches, "was to take Ireland and use it as a stepping stone to take Scotland, and then upon taking Scotland it was to proceed south to retake his throne."

James was very well supported, he notes. "Having secured Dublin – and he was welcomed in Dublin with cheers and accolades; they thought he was brilliant – James decided to march against those Protestants from all over Ireland who were gathered here and sought refuge in Londonderry."

The Protestants of Derry were terrified, McBeth says. They feared for their lives and had no support from Lundy, who thought the city's position was hopeless and indefensible, "especially when news arrived that James himself would be in charge of the Jacobite army. Thankfully the people of Londonderry themselves are made of much stronger stuff," he says, to murmurs of approval.

The defenders raised the famous crimson flag, "a defiant symbol" of what he describes as "the spirit of Protestant resistance, the spirit of no surrender".

The gates had been shut by the brave Apprentice Boys, but the city was being strangled to death by surrounding Catholic forces who had erected a siege boom across the river Foyle.

Then comes Captain Michael Browning of the Mountjoy, McBeth says, warming to his theme, who "sensing the winds of history in his sails, at top speed rams the boom with full force", breaking the siege of Derry and relieving the residents after more than a hundred days of famine and pestilence.

Browning died in the breaking of the boom, sacrificing himself bodily to free the people of Derry, much as Jesus had given his life to save our souls, McBeth says.

With the two neatly merged in his faithful's minds, he asks: "Today as we remember the brave sacrifice of the men and women who sacrificed their lives in the siege of Londonderry, let us also remember the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross for you and me so our sins may be forgiven."

The symbolism was potent: the siege of Derry was a righteous, godly battle in which a Christlike sacrifice might be required. It cannot simply be remembered. It must be lived every day.

**I**t's worth noting that for all the perception of unionism as a single, monolithic bloc, shivering in fear behind a large granite NO, there is actually a greater range of thought than our caricatures of loyalism might let us imagine. Academics tend to speak of the PUL community (Protestant, unionist and loyalist), which hints at three distinct but overlapping layers of identity – religious, political and economic. These aren't easy to parse, but they are generally understood to be crucial pillars of understanding at least half of Northern Ireland's population.

According to Morgan Largey, a young loyalist who has earned a master's degree in conflict transformation and social justice at Queen's University, there is also a new



dimension: young versus old.

Many young unionists and loyalists, Largey says, don't necessarily share the traditional social, cultural or religious values that we might associate with, say, the evangelical loyalism of Ian Paisley and the DUP.

"I know that's quite an issue for myself and a lot of younger people who are unionists – our politicians don't represent our views, but we have no viable alternative. There is no socialist, left-leaning, equality-based unionist party, which disenfranchises quite a lot of young people that will otherwise vote for a unionist party," she says. "It is why a lot of young people tend to turn to the Alliance Party or the Green Party or People Before Profit."

Joel Keys is another prominent young loyalist whose views tend to veer away from the mainstream. He has gained some publicity in recent years for his articulate and informed commentary on television and in print.

Keys grew up in a Belfast housing estate called Taughmonagh, which he says "some websites would describe as a loyalist stronghold". While the estate has become more mixed in recent years, Keys's background is certainly strongly loyalist. His mother went to the same Free Presbyterian church as Ian Paisley senior in Ballymena, and was a DUP supporter all her life.

Keys says that plenty of people in his community are "still very much in the 'no, never' mode" – a reference to the infamous rhetorical stylings of Paisley senior. Based on his conversations, however, he's noticed a significant gap between the generations.

In his circle, he says, people weren't bothered by the Irish women's soccer team singing "Up the 'Ra", which became a brief but vigorous controversy last October.

Keys informally surveyed several young people at the time and says that "they did not give a shit – just didn't care – because we know that whenever we're in our circles, there would be songs that we would sing that would be offensive if they were recorded and shown to republicans."

He says that particularly among young people, both loyalist and republican, especially those who socialise in mixed company in college or in work, such banter can be ironic and bonding rather than divisive.

Of the Irish women's soccer team, he says: "It's not like they were sitting around and wondering, 'How will we piss off the Prods today?'"

Even allowing for their more moderate outlook, both Largey and Keys identify primarily as Northern Irish and British.

They have a strong attachment to the symbols and practices of loyalist culture: the marches, the bands, the history and the sense of community around them.

They share an opposition to the idea of a united Ireland, and what – as Largey puts it – "that might mean to me as a British person".

Largey got a particularly vivid reminder of that when she attended a My Chemical Romance concert in Dublin last year. During the show, the rock band's lead singer Gerard Way made a throwaway comment about Queen Elizabeth II.

"It was nothing political. It was more like, 'I wouldn't do this if the queen of England asked me to.' The crowd started to boo and chant 'F\*\*\* the queen.' And that left me quite uncomfortable – even as someone who's not necessarily hardline unionist or loyalist, the Queen and the symbolism of the Queen is something that's a large part of my community.

"It made me think: how can I subscribe to a united Ireland or a new Ireland when thousands of people are chanting negatively about something that's important to so many?"

For Keys, the sense he gets from conversations with his peers is less about symbols and more about the role of Sinn Féin.

"We still haven't had an acknowledgement of wrongdoing. That scares a lot of people," he says. "I know a guy who isn't too happy with some of the things I say, but I can talk to him and he can share his views with me.

"His brother was killed by the IRA [in a] completely unprovoked attack, he was just driving down the road and he was shot. His point is: how can I trust these people to protect my identity in a united Ireland when they can't even apologise and acknowledge that that was wrong?"

For both Largey and Keys, the Republic of Ireland is a distant and largely foreign place to them.

Largey, who describes herself as "more moderate than some", says that "in my opinion, the South feels alien. To me it feels the same as travelling to Spain in the sense that it's not a culture I feel connected to. It's something different from mine."

When I ask Keys for his impressions of the south, he says, "The first thing that jumps to my mind is the fact that they are neutral, and I'm not a big fan of that." He's familiar with the housing and health crises.

He knows about the Hutches and the Kinahans, especially because of their links to loyalist drug-dealing gangs.

Perhaps more surprisingly, he is also aware of Ireland's historical corruption and figures such as Pádraig Flynn, who was found by the Mahon Tribunal to have "wrongly and corruptly" sought donations to Fianna Fáil, and diverted donations to his own personal use.

What distinguishes them from, say, activists like Moore Holmes is that they can at least countenance a set of circumstances under which a united Ireland debate might take place – but even there, those circumstances are heavily hypothetical.

For Keys, it's possible to have the conversation. It's even possible to imagine a place for loyalists and unionists in a newly created all-island entity. "I mean, there's nationalists and Republicans that exist in Northern Ireland, within the United Kingdom, so I think it's



Dozens of local Orange lodges and Apprentice Boys clubs took part in the annual Lundy Day parade in Derry  
PACEMAKER

Joel Keys: a prominent young loyalist whose views tend to veer away from the mainstream  
PRESSEYE



definitely possible."

But the discussion has to start as a blank page. There can be no notion of a revanchist absorption of Northern Ireland's six counties by the Republic, and no presumptions that the new Ireland would automatically be in the European Union, for example. Any negotiation would have to throw everything on the table, however unexpected or uncomfortable that might be.

"Like, if a loyalist is going to engage in a discussion on a united Ireland, are they allowed to [put forward] the possibility that it'll be a united Ireland within the United Kingdom? It may be immediately shut down or immediately voted against, but can it be raised as a talking point? Can it be explored as an option? Or is it just assumed that that's not going to be the case?"

Such conditions and possible structures are being discussed in great detail in academic and legal circles, but this hasn't filtered down yet to voters – the place where such ideas will either live or die.

For Morgan Largey, the crux of the problem is the tension it would generate, especially in parallel with Brexit, the protocol and the increasing support for Scottish independence – all of which serve as existential shocks to loyalists and unionists in Northern Ireland.

"I think that the way British politics is going, it will only accelerate further. There'll be more and more talk, which will lead to more and more anger on the PUL side," she says, referring to the 2021 riots in Belfast and Carrickfergus.

"That anger and that animosity is still lingering in the background and I don't think it'll take much for that to pick up again."

After the service, the congregants filter out to meet the rest of the crowd, patiently waiting for the moment itself: the burning. The air is cold and sharp, with a light mist, and it reverberates with the sounds of drumming and lilting flutes. The streets fill gradually, the mass of bodies spreading from the footpath to the road, until the only visible space is within the barriers surrounding the effigy.

People line up for selfies in front of Lundy, chatting jovially, occasionally shouting a cheerful "Death to the traitors" to general laughter. There's cigarette smoke and clouds of flavoured vapes; tattoos and sashes; and the occasional bobble-head Union Jack hat emblazoned with the word "Ready". The bands continue to march around the streets, piping away merrily, though many of their members have broken off to have a drink and a smoke.

Eventually, as 4 o'clock approaches, someone steps inside the barrier with two small barrels of kerosene and douses Lundy's feet. Then he lights a rag on a stick and touches it to the bottom of the effigy as people cheer and drummers drum enthusiastically.

The barriers creak as people lean over them, phones in hand, videoing the moment.

The flames lick up Lundy's legs, igniting his frock coat which burns fast, like tissue paper, flying away in great gouts of flame, blowing out over the crowd, into women's hair and onto men's coats.

Eventually Lundy is engulfed and the crowd roars its approval. A girl standing by the railing, who can't be more than seven, screams and screams again: "I hate that guy!"

The heat from the fire is ferocious and as Lundy burns the straw falls to burn-plates below, exposing his chicken wire frame.

After about ten minutes or so, the extinguishers are deployed and the charred remnants of the effigy are doused. The bands give a final flourish, to the delight of the crowd, and it's all over until next year. And the year after. And the year after that. ■