

reader discovers the true persona of the surprisingly human and fragile Lloyd George, a wholly enigmatic figure who so often sailed very close to the wind both professionally and personally, 'to be a surprisingly vulnerable man constantly in need of reassurance [which both Dame Margaret and Frances Stevenson, in their different, mutually complimentary ways, provided for him] who struggled to reconcile the competing demands of ambition and family' (publisher's press release). Travis Crosby's explanations for his subject's attitudes and actions are carefully thought out, and wholly reasonable and acceptable. Although there is little here that is wholly new to the Lloyd George specialist, the overall survey is always perceptively sharp, lucid and illuminating.

On the whole the author has succeeded in mastering well those Welsh aspects which are so crucial to Lloyd George's early life. He understands the central importance of disestablishing and disendowing the church in late-nineteenth-century Wales and the centrality of issues like the Llanfrothen legal case which gave an enormous fillip to Lloyd George's early career. He gives full attention to prominent Welsh individuals like Thomas Edward Ellis and Thomas Gee who are significant in an understanding of the young Lloyd George. Exceptionally gripping is the account of the courtship between Lloyd George and Maggie Owen and his fraught relationship with his parents-in-law Richard and Mary Owen, Mynydd Ednyfed Fawr, Criccieth. One possible weakness is that he does not, it would appear, fully appreciate the importance of denominationalism within the politics of north Wales. But, in sharp contrast to some historians, Travis Crosby pays attention to the Welsh aspects of Lloyd George's life even after the sudden collapse of the Cymru Fydd movement in 1896 and into the twentieth century.

A number of gripping, significant photographs, carefully selected by the author, are included in the volume and add much to the interest. I. B. Tauris has produced a very attractive volume which reflects great credit on its printers. It is a real pleasure to handle it. Before long the same press

will publish an authoritative new biography of Aneurin Bevan by Nicklaus Thomas-Symonds, a high-quality, balanced study which is sorely needed for this other elusive Welsh politician. And in the autumn yet another volume on David Lloyd George is anticipated from I. B. Tauris, namely *Lloyd*

George: a Life in Politics by Richard Wilkinson. These new studies will be eagerly anticipated by a large number of appreciative readers.

Dr J. Graham Jones was formerly Senior Archivist and Head of the Welsh Political Archive at the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth.

Home rule and the Liberals

Pauric Travers and Donal McCartney (eds.), *Parnell Reconsidered* (University College Dublin Press, 2013)

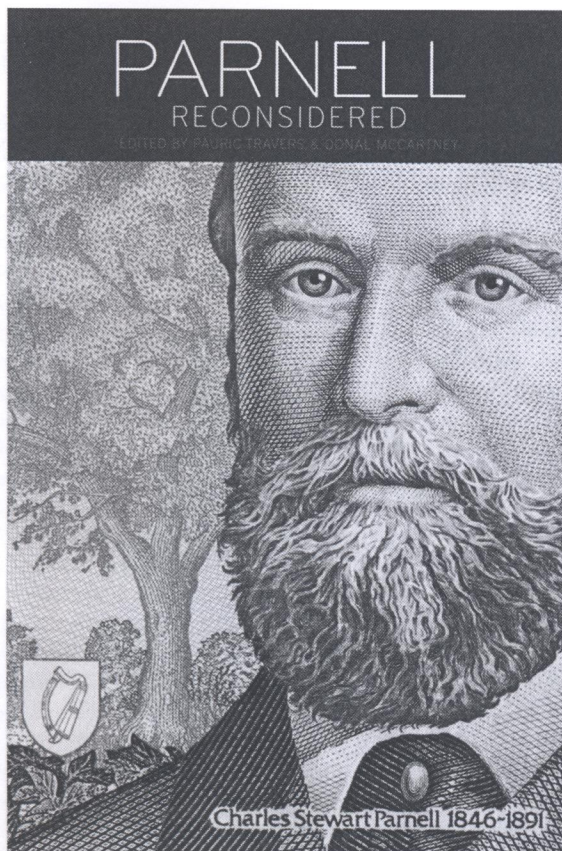
Reviewed by **Eugenio F. Biagini**

THIS IS A major reassessment of one of the most influential leaders in the making of modern British and Irish politics, and particularly of the Liberal Party, which underwent one of its deepest and most dramatic transformations in response to the 1886 Irish home rule crisis. Charles S. Parnell received considerable historical attention in the run up to the first centenary of his death (1991), and since then he has been revisited by Paul Bew and Patrick Maume in 2011, but on balance remains – as his most recent biographers put it in their title – an *Enigma*. The editors and contributors to *Parnell Reconsidered* have done an excellent job in addressing some of the unresolved questions. These include the 'Meaning of Home Rule' (McCartney, chapter 1), his relationship with Gladstone (D. G. Boyce, chapter 2), Anna Parnell as a feminist (Margaret Ward, chapter 3), Charles S. Parnell's attitudes to religion (Travers, chapter 4), to the newspaper press (Felix Larkin and Myles Dungan, respectively chapters 5 and 6), and his attitude to the drink interest (Fionnuala Waldron, chapter 7). Chapters 8 and 9 are devoted to more personal dimensions (with Pat Power writing about the Parnells' Paris link and McCartney writing about sexual scandals). Finally, in chapter 10 Travers explores the 'ne plus ultra' speech (in which Parnell declared that no one could impose limits to 'the march of a nation') and his final manifesto of 29 November 1890.

Taken together, these essays represent an important contribution

to the field, and are particularly welcome to scholars interested in Liberalism – whether of the British or the Irish variety. In the nineteenth century such a political creed was usually associated with demands for parliamentary reform and national self-determination, which the British Liberals had previously supported when demanded by patriotic movements in Greece, Italy and elsewhere. Would they not accept Ireland's plea for devolution? And, once a majority supported Gladstone in his attempt to 'pacify Ireland' through home rule, how solid were the bases of cooperation between the two parties, apart from the sentimental and emotional factors associated with the 'Union of Hearts'? In legislative terms, McCartney shows that there was a stable agreement on which Liberals and Nationalists could cooperate. In particular, although Parnell was disappointed by the 1886 bill because it did not offer sufficient autonomy to Dublin, he soon became a strong advocate of the retention of Irish MPs at Westminster. In other words, though the Irish leader had declared that 'no man [had] a right to fix the boundary of the march of a nation', McCartney concludes that, in practice, for Parnell 'that march ... could go into several different directions', including a more flexible Union, 'depending on unfolding circumstances' (p. 21). Boyce strengthens this point, showing how Parnell echoed Gladstone in identifying the Canadian confederation and Austro-Hungarian dual monarchy as examples of a stable

In legislative terms, McCartney shows that there was a stable agreement on which Liberals and Nationalists could cooperate.



relationship between self-governing units within the same sovereign state (p. 35).

Given the importance of Christianity for Victorian liberalism, the chapter on religion is also very relevant to the interests of the present journal. From Travers' account three conclusions emerge. One is the strength of Parnell's Protestantism, which for him was a source of identity and cultural attitudes and mattered more than many historians had previously assumed. The second was his refusal of sectarianism and willingness to accede to Roman Catholic demands in the field of education (the 1906 Liberal government was to follow his example when they granted a charter to the Catholic University of Dublin in 1908). And, finally, his commitment to personal liberty, exemplified by his decision to support Charles Bradlaugh, the atheist MP who refused to swear by the Bible and demanded to be allowed to take a secular oath in order to be admitted to the House of Commons. By the same token, in the last five years of his life, Parnell championed the religious freedom of the Protestant minority in a future home rule Ireland. His responsiveness to their concerns reflected also

Parnell's realisation that Ulster was going to be the Achilles' heel of the Nationalist movement. Hence the importance of assuaging and managing public opinion through the press. This dimension to his politics is examined by Felix Larkin in an excellent chapter on the *Freeman's Journal* and Myles Dungan's work on *United Ireland*, which shed new light on areas which deserve further analysis. By contrast, the last two chapters – on the 'March of the nation' speech and the 1890 manifesto – do not add much to what we knew already, perhaps because the documents under discussion do not allow for any new in-depth analysis, but also because McCartney yields to the temptation of a rather sentimental conclusion about what the loss of Parnell meant to Ireland and how his 'sacrifice' was to no avail in terms of securing home rule. However, surely the failure of the 1893 Home Rule Bill was caused primarily by deeper and more complex

factors, such as the democratic deficit afflicting the UK at the time (the House of Lords' veto powers), and secondarily by the opposition of the Ulster Unionist minority, which neither Gladstone nor Parnell did enough to appease.

On balance this book helps to establish the case for a deep and multi-layered affinity between Liberalism and Irish Nationalism, though with all the differences which derived from each operating in a different country with a distinctive cultural make-up and economic and social priorities. That, despite the affinities and the moderation of the proposals under discussion, the two parties failed to secure home rule remains one of the greatest political tragedies in the modern history of these isles.

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First biography of William George

Peter Rowland, *Lloyd George's Tada – the one father he never knew!* (PublishNation, 2014)

Review by Dr J. Graham Jones

THE AUTHOR, A former civil servant now retired, is best known to *Journal* readers as the distinguished author of a massive single-volume biography of Lloyd George (Barrie and Jenkins, 1975), a tome whose sheer size tested the skill of the bookbinder to its limits, but which has generally stood the test of time as an authoritative, detailed study. He is also the author of two comprehensive volumes on the Liberal governments of 1905–14 and a host of other works, fiction and non-fiction alike.

Recently Peter Rowland has applied his investigative skills to perusing and recreating the life and career of William George (d. 1864), Lloyd George's father, who died prematurely while his children were still infants and his wife Betsy was pregnant for the fourth time, and hitherto rather a shadowy, elusive figure in the Lloyd George chronicles. The study has been published to mark the 150th

anniversary of his death in June 1864. Previously the only authors to devote any attention to him were Herbert du Parc in the first volume of his multi-volume biography of Lloyd George published in 1912, and, much more recently, Dr W. R. P. George in his pioneering study *The Making of Lloyd George* (Faber, 1976).

Peter Rowland has certainly left no stone unturned in tracing the history of his hero, and has made widespread use of the William George (Solicitor) Papers purchased by the National Library of Wales in 1989 and the papers of Dr W. R. P. George donated there by his family after his death in 2006. A cause of some puzzlement, and indeed great concern, is that some of the valuable source materials used by Dr George in his researches in the 1970s seem to 'have apparently disappeared' (p. xiii). One hopes that they may some day reappear. The story