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to make contemporary political points is, however, only one of several major flaws inherent within this book.

Cash's narrative contains a number of claims about Bright's importance that will startle historians of nineteenth-century Britain. The credibility of the study is weakened by assertions that Bright was the reason why the United Kingdom did not go to war with the United States during the latter's civil war (p. xxii); Bright was the reason why revolutionary socialism did not take hold in Britain (p. 118); and Bright was the driving force of the Reform Act of 1867 (p. 130). Leaving these questionable statements aside, the more immediate problem with the book is Cash's lack of imagination in framing Bright as a biographical subject. In following the traditional life pattern, Cash merely retraces the well-worn steps of previous biographers, without bringing any substantial revision or new insight to his subject. The book rarely travels outside of the cloisters of Westminster politics: there is no attempt to relate Bright's political thought to wider conceptions of Radicalism in Victorian Britain. The conservatism of the adopted approach is amplified by the reliance on not only the form of previous studies of Bright, but their substance: the footnotes brim with references to the biographies written by G. M. Trevelyan, R. Barry O'Brien, Keith Robbins *et al*. Bright's published diaries and speeches are the only sources used to reconstruct his political world, and are exploited to exhaustion. It is a challenge to find two consecutive pages without large indented quotes from these sources, most of which go without critical commentary. The narrative never descends from high politics, thus denying readers a rounded character study: there is no engagement with Bright's inner world, little on the impact of his Quaker background and religiosity on his political and social worldview, nothing on how personal relations moulded the man, bar his well-known friendship with Richard Cobden. Not one solitary reference to unpublished Bright correspondence (of which there is much, mostly housed in London) appears in the book. Nor have any newspapers, Radical or otherwise, been consulted to recapture the Victorian zeitgeist. Cash is also oblivious to historical scholarship published in the past twenty years: Eugenio Biagini, Colin Matthew and Miles Taylor, for example, are three prominent historians of nineteenth-century British liberalism that Cash has overlooked, but there are dozens more. The lack of scholarly research, combined with the unimaginative framework, renders this profile of Bright as stale and antiqued as the Victorian biographies that Woolf rebelled against many years ago.

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The Liberal Unionist Party: a history. By Ian Cawood. Pp x, 362. London: I. B. Tauris. 2012. £59.50.

That someone should 'do' the Liberal Unionists has been a refrain among historians of late-Victorian British politics since Colin Matthew's pioneering dissertation on the Liberal Imperialists appeared in 1973. Ian Cawood has now done the Unionists to death and most facts that anyone will ever want to know about them will be found somewhere in his comprehensive study. It has taken him many years. Was it worth it?

At one level the story seems simple. Those Liberal M.P.s who could not swallow Gladstone's extraordinary lurch in the direction of Home Rule in 1885–6 eventually withdrew their support from Gladstone's party and government and formed their own group under the leadership of Lord Hartington and Joseph Chamberlain. They proclaimed their continuing credentials – Whig in the one case, radical Liberal in the other – and hoped to make their way as a third force, independent of both the Gladstonians and Lord Salisbury's Tory party. But by 1895 the exigencies of the party struggle had led them into unhappy coalition with the Conservative government and had led Chamberlain into a far happier mood as Colonial Secretary and Salisbury's special friend. When Chamberlain (in

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many ways the anti-hero of this book) became himself extraordinary in proclaiming a programme of economic protection and imperial preference in 1903, the Liberal Unionists became yet more unhappy at the betrayal of free trade as a Liberal mantra. Though they retained a putative independence until 1912, they had become largely irrelevant to serious politics before Chamberlain succumbed to his stroke in 1906.

But no, says Dr Cawood: the story is not simple at all. Two intersecting lines of force carry his argument forward. First, the Liberal Unionists were Liberals first and Unionists by compulsion. They were not fudgers and they did not gravitate to the middle of the road: they saw themselves, and expected to be treated as, convinced Liberals who had a conscientious difficulty over a decision that conflicted with what their party had been elected to do. There was nothing inevitable, second and consequently, about a drift of Liberal Unionists towards the Conservative party and many reasons to think it implausible. With the support of *The Times* and luminous intellectuals from Albert Venn Dicey to Henry Sidgwick who deemed their cause just, they had every reason to anticipate their role as a new voice.

So why did it all go wrong? Cawood points towards human agency and, since he seems rather angry about the treatment of the Unionists, externally by the Conservative party managers with their 'malicious influence' (p. 92) and 'mischief' (p. 94), and internally by leaders who did not understand the feeling of the constituencies in which Cawood has a particular interest, not to say obsession, which betrays a 1980s methodological heritage. He does acknowledge a structural problem: that the Unionists shared their former friends' hostility to 'organisation' and therefore organised badly. But really it is Chamberlain who deserves a cuff round the ear. He did not concern himself with what he called 'the Dodos' in rural constituencies (p. 70); his thinking shared the discourse of the Westminster village; he behaved opportunistically when his supporters were dripping with outraged principle and clamouring for help in fighting the enemy.

The argument is well-developed though it irritates through laboured admiration of other historians, not all of whom are admirable. Where it surprises is only in Cawood's surprise that things turned out as they did. Anyone who knew Chamberlain and his allies could hardly have been astonished when he recast himself in order to prosecute his own dreams of leadership. From that point of view, the drift towards coalition of what was increasingly a minor faction looks all too likely.

Disappointments inevitably remain. The chapter on ideology leaves one thinking that much more could be said about the relationship between Unionism and late-Victorian political thought and that Cawood may not have the approach to give it voice. Readers of this journal may likewise regret the scarcity of Ireland in these pages – curious when one thinks about the origins of Liberal Unionism – though since the author thinks that Lecky was a 'Catholic intellectual'(p. 44) that may be just as well. Quite *why* Ulster was excluded from Unionist language for so long, despite Churchill's pleas, does not emerge fully here and would certainly reward a second visit. That this study sometimes falls short should not stand in the way of commendation, all the same. Cawood has written a good book that excavates much local detail previously buried. More important, he has darkened our lightness in ways that may invite others to pick up a lamp.

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THE CHURCHILLS IN IRELAND: CONNECTIONS AND CONTROVERSIES. Edited by Robert McNamara. Dublin: Irish Academic Press. 2012. £45.

Several generations of the Churchill family played a conspicuous part in Irish history, and two of Ireland's sons had a noteworthy influence on Winston Churchill. This is the

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