**Chapter Three**

**Peace, Protestantism, and the Unity of Ireland: the career of Bolton C. Waller**

***Conor Morrissey***

Writing in 1963, Walter Starkie, Trinity College Dublin professor and travel-writer, recalled one of the outstanding personalities of his undergraduate days:

I remember one very constant devotee of Thomas Davis—Bolton Waller, who used to gather us in his rooms late at night and cook for us a frugal meal of sausages and bacon on his Primus stove. Then as he filled for each guest from a big brown teapot . . . he spoke like one inspired of ‘a nation once again’ . . . a nation in which all Irishmen no matter to what religion and class they belonged would collaborate together in making a nation that would be rooted in the affections of Ireland’s people, not in any exclusive principle of blood or creed or culture. . . . Many of us placed great hopes in Bolton Waller in later days, after the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921, when men of his calibre and tolerant humanism were desperately needed . . . but alas, he died after a short illness.[[1]](#endnote-1)

For the southern Protestant minority, the Great War, the Easter Rising, partition, and the turmoil that followed, proved traumatic. Broadly speaking, the Protestant response to finding themselves part of the Irish Free State, with its strongly Catholic ethos, was, in Terence Brown’s words, ‘a sense of isolation and political impotence’.[[2]](#endnote-2) One figure who reacted differently to this trauma was Bolton Waller. Bolton Charles Waller (1890-1936) was a journalist, soldier, public servant, pamphleteer, ecumenist, anti-sectarian campaigner, peace activist, and latterly, Church of Ireland clergyman. Unlike many of his co-religionists, he did not retreat into convivial social networks post-independence, but rather embarked on an extraordinary career that had three main objectives: first, the peaceful unification of Ireland and the reconciliation of Irish factions; secondly, the revival of Protestant influence in public affairs; and thirdly, the promotion of a progressive internationalism, largely by means of international arbitration, protection of small states, and the League of Nations.

The Waller family was of English descent, settling in Ireland in the 1630s, becoming prominent landowners in County Limerick, with a seat at Castletown Manor, near Pallaskenry.[[3]](#endnote-3) The family was notable for producing clergymen: Bolton was the fourth of his line to attend Trinity College and enter the Church. His father, also Bolton, served as rector of St Munchin, Limerick.[[4]](#endnote-4) Born in County Wicklow, Bolton Charles Waller was educated at Aravon School, Bray, before entering Trinity in 1908 with the intention of taking holy orders. Waller enjoyed a stellar college career, being elected a scholar in 1911, taking the Brooke Prize in classics in 1912, and the Carson Biblical Prize in 1915, before graduating B.A.[[5]](#endnote-5) He was a popular figure, and a distinguished debater, being elected president of the Philosophical Society in 1914. In 1915 (presumably just before he enlisted in the army) Waller made his first contribution towards ecumenism and anti-sectarianism, when he founded the Irish Christian Fellowship. The Fellowship was ‘A comradeship of Irish men and women who desire, as followers of Christ, to understand and express His spirit in relation to the whole of life’.[[6]](#endnote-6)

Waller’s political views first became evident during the student protest against the Campbell Amendment. In October 1912, the board of Trinity College voted a resolution exempting the college from the jurisdiction of the proposed Home Rule parliament. James Henry Campbell, a unionist member for Dublin University, moved the amendment in the Commons, which had the reluctant consent of the Irish Parliamentary Party.[[7]](#endnote-7) However, a group of students and staff, of differing political persuasions, understood that the amendment would have a disastrous impact on the standing of the college in Ireland.[[8]](#endnote-8) Waller was instrumental in organising student resistance to the measure: in late-October a protest against exclusion signed by 184 students appeared in the press.[[9]](#endnote-9) However, the Campbell Amendment foundered, not on student opposition, but on a revolt by staff. On 11 November 1912, a meeting of fellows and professors voted by 24 to 13 against the amendment, killing the measure.[[10]](#endnote-10)

In November 1914, Waller gave the inaugural address as president of the University Philosophical Society. He argued that Home Rule was inevitable, at least in the south, and warned against any attempts to coerce Ulster. He urged Protestants to play a full role in the coming dispensation:

If Protestants stood apart from the operations of Home Rule, and took no interest in local or national politics, Ireland would be deprived of the services of some of her ablest men, she would have to carry a dead weight of permanent opposition, and would be thrown more and more into the hands of extremists. It was sheer foolishness to wait and grumble till they were bayoneted in the ‘last ditch’ when it was to their own interest and to that of the enemy that they should become friends.

Finally, in warmly received comments, he stated that Ulster, having gained the respect of nationalist Ireland by the strength of her determination, should now negotiate entry into a united Ireland.[[11]](#endnote-11) Themes that would recur throughout Waller’s career are evident in this address: the need to treat Ulster honourably, the importance of Protestant influence in Irish affairs, and, above all, a concern to unite the country.

Waller’s perspective was not as eccentric as it might seem. The Home Rule crisis saw the emergence of several members of the Church of Ireland to challenge Carsonism, argue against partition, and work for conciliation. Prominent ‘conciliators’ included Rosamond Stephen (1868-1951), whose Guild of Witness organisation sought to promote unity among Christian denominations.[[12]](#endnote-12) The leading figure was Sir Horace Plunkett (1854-1932), the cooperative pioneer, whose 1914 pamphlet *A better way* proposed implementing Home Rule for the whole island, but allowing Ulster the right to secede after a stated period.[[13]](#endnote-13) Waller, Stephen, and Plunkett point to the existence of a strand within Irish Anglicanism that avoided explicit endorsement of the Home Rule bill in 1912, but which became reconciled to self-government in the years that followed, as a means of preserving the unity of the nation, the people, and the church.

Waller’s prediction that Home Rule would be introduced was not borne out. With the entry of Britain into the European war in August 1914, the Government of Ireland Act was suspended for the duration of the conflict: events over the next four years would ensure it would never be implemented. Waller was among the approximately 206,000 Irishmen who volunteered to fight in the war.[[14]](#endnote-14) He abandoned his divinity studies, obtained a commission in the Royal Army Service Corps, and served in Mesopotamia for four years. There, he achieved the rank of captain (temporary) and was mentioned in dispatches. Waller’s wartime experience marked him for life. He later recalled that he regarded his service as ‘a duty, though a detestable duty’.[[15]](#endnote-15) His obituarist would note that ‘His war experiences influenced his mind to such an extent that on his return to Ireland he determined to devote his time to the cause of peace’.[[16]](#endnote-16)

The 1916 Easter Rising represented an enormous setback for those who sought a constitutional settlement to the Irish crisis. In the aftermath of the rebellion, a group of southern Irish Protestants and well-to-do Catholics, fearful of partition and separation from the empire, came together and sought to promote a peaceful all-Ireland settlement. This group, which initially called itself the Irish Constitutional Association, was soon renamed the Irish Conference Committee. Members included the artist Dermod O’Brien, Lord Monteagle, Joseph Johnston, James Creed Meredith, James Douglas, Diarmid Coffey, Walter MacMorrough Kavanagh, and Wilbraham Fitzjohn Trench. They sought to bypass the Irish Parliamentary Party and reach out to southern unionists in the hope of building a broad pro-self-government coalition. In a letter to the secretary of the Irish Conference Committee, Waller lamented his inability to take part in the group’s activities, although he promised to lend moral support.[[17]](#endnote-17) Such support was apparent in Waller’s pseudonymous pamphlet, *Ireland’s opportunity: a plea for settlement by conference*, which appeared shortly after the Rising. This argued for a representative conference to be convened in Dublin that would draw up a constitution for a self-governing Ireland.[[18]](#endnote-18) The Irish Conference Committee, believing that such a proposal would avert partition, and save the cause of constitutional politics in Ireland, went on to make representations to the British government in favour of a delegate conference.[[19]](#endnote-19) This, alongside pressure from other quarters, led to the summoning of the Irish Convention of 1917-18, chaired by Horace Plunkett. Although the Convention saw a degree of rapprochement between southern unionist representatives and the Irish Party, it broke up without securing the wide consensus needed to allow the government to legislate for Home Rule, and thus save constitutional nationalism.[[20]](#endnote-20)

Following his demobilisation in 1919, Waller moved to London, where he became involved in two closely-connected initiatives. In June 1919 Plunkett founded the Irish Dominion League (IDL), which agitated in favour of awarding an all-Ireland parliament a degree of independence similar to that of Canada or Australia. The party, which was mostly comprised of former supporters of the Irish Parliamentary Party, as well as Protestant Home Rulers, made limited impact, being squeezed between Sinn Féin, which refused to countenance anything short of an all-Ireland republic, and the Ulster unionists, who had settled on partition. Significantly, southern Irish Protestants, who might have been expected to form the IDL support base, largely scorned the movement: the emotional connection to the union remained too strong. Much of the League’s publicity work was carried out by its London branch, of which Waller was an active member. More high profile was Waller’s work with the Peace with Ireland Council. The Council, which was largely comprised of writers, churchmen, and politicians, sought to rouse British public opinion against the war in Ireland. As secretary of the Council, Waller was involved in publicising the ill-treatment of republican prisoners and internees during the war.[[21]](#endnote-21)

The IDL was outraged by the 1920 Government of Ireland Act, which created the self-governing state of Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom. Partition, and its threat to southern Protestants, was at the core of their objections: it meant the ‘casting off by the Ulster Protestants of their co-religionists in the south and west’.[[22]](#endnote-22) However, to Bolton Waller’s horror, IDL unanimity was undermined when Stephen Gwynn, an independent-minded former Irish Party member, declared in favour of the measure, and chaired the Government of Ireland Bill Amendment Group, which sought to promote amendments to make it more acceptable to southern Irish opinion.[[23]](#endnote-23)

This crisis in moderate nationalism prompted an emotional appeal from Waller. In a letter to the press he outlined five distinct groups which desired an all-Ireland peaceful settlement, which, he said, should cohere under one agreed leader. These were: the remnants of the Irish Party; the unionist Anti-Partition League; moderate elements in the Irish Labour party; the IDL; and the Government of Ireland Bill Amendment Group. ‘Past controversies and minor disagreements’, he said, were keeping them apart. Only by uniting together could the unity of the country be preserved. He addressed his own people directly:

Especially to the South of Ireland Protestants would I appeal. We have been too late again and again. This is perhaps our last chance. Are not we ready to sink a great deal for the sake of Ireland?[[24]](#endnote-24)

This appeal itself came too late. No union between the moderate groups was brought about. In November 1921, after several months of inactivity, the IDL, whose efforts to preserve constitutional politics in Ireland had failed, was dissolved.[[25]](#endnote-25) Partition, and the collapse of the small moderate movement might have proved dispiriting to Waller. However, he turned away from possible careers in London and Geneva, and returned to Ireland. Here, he would devote the remainder of his life to working towards conciliation and the union of Ireland.

One figure to whom Waller reached out was John Frederick MacNeice (1866-1942), the rector of Carrickfergus, County Antrim, and later the bishop of Down, Connor and Dromore. In ways MacNeice resembled Waller and other southern Protestant conciliators, modified for Ulster conditions. As David Fitzpatrick has shown, MacNeice was an all-Ireland rather than an Ulster unionist, who opposed Carson and the Covenant, detested partition, and joined the Orange Order in the hope of acting as a restraining force on the rank and file. MacNeice’s address to Orangemen in July 1922, written in the midst of sectarian murder in Ulster, and at the outbreak of civil war in the south, was a plea for reconciliation between factions, in which he suggested that the country could eventually be reunited.[[26]](#endnote-26) This address prompted a response from Waller, who suggested they collaborate on ‘some sort of unofficial body working for conciliation’.[[27]](#endnote-27) Although such a movement did not transpire, MacNeice and Waller would each engage in a similar pursuit of intercommunal peace in succeeding years.

From 1922 Waller sought to promote a more concrete form of unity. In that year the provisional government of the Irish Free State appointed him researcher at the North Eastern Boundary Bureau, a position he would hold until 1926.[[28]](#endnote-28) The Boundary Bureau was set up to liaise with Ulster nationalists, monitor the Northern Irish government, produce propaganda, and prepare data in anticipation of the Boundary Commission, which was expected to draw the border between the Free State and Northern Ireland.[[29]](#endnote-29) Waller’s appointment, which was made at the request of Kevin O’Shiel (1891-1970), a Tyrone-born barrister and assistant legal advisor to the provisional government, was testament to his growing reputation as an expert on minority rights and the settlement of boundary disputes. Eda Sagarra has criticized Waller’s initial memorandum to the Boundary Commission.[[30]](#endnote-30)This argued against the use of plebiscites, on the basis that the ‘wishes of the inhabitants are already well known by the results of the elections and other indications, and where unnecessary the expense and possible danger of a plebiscite are best avoided’.[[31]](#endnote-31) Plebiscites along the border region, reminiscent of those held in Upper Silesia and Schleswig after the war, may have led to the award of substantial Catholic-majority districts to the Free State. However, it is possible that Waller was working with a different intention in mind. Rather than seeking to draw an ethno-religiously-clean border, with few Catholics on the northern side and few Protestants on the southern, Waller sought to produce a settlement that would allow Ireland the chance to eventually reunite. The creation of a homogeneous Protestant state in Northern Ireland would preclude this.[[32]](#endnote-32) Certainly, in 1924, Waller was among the authors of a report that recommended to the government that it should aim for the creation of an all-Ireland assembly, while allowing the Northern Ireland parliament to remain *in situ*.[[33]](#endnote-33)

The story of the wrecking of the Boundary Commission—and with it the hopes of northern nationalists—is well known. On 7 November 1925 the London *Morning Post* leaked the contents of the Commission’s report, which recommended only small transfers to the Free State, and, to the horror of nationalist opinion, sought transfers of some southern territory to Northern Ireland.[[34]](#endnote-34) Amid the furore, the British and Irish governments agreed to suppress the Commission’s report, and an agreement was reached by which the Free State recognized Northern Ireland’s boundaries in return for a financial settlement. This agreement, although seen by some as copper-fastening partition, did not deter Waller, who continued to apply his mind to peacefully reuniting Ireland.

With the Boundary Bureau wound up, Waller developed his parallel career in journalism. Between 1924 and 1930 he contributed at least ninety-nine articles and reviews to Plunkett and George Russell’s liberal and pluralistic *Irish Statesman* journal. Equally productive was his work for the *Church of Ireland Gazette*, on whose editorial staff he served for four years. The task closest to his heart, however, was his editorship of *Concord*, the journal of the League of Nations Society of Ireland. By the mid-1920s, Waller was acknowledged as the county’s leading expert on, and proponent for, the League of Nations.

In March 1923 Waller produced a memorandum for the cabinet on the question of Irish Free State membership of the League of Nations. He argued in favour of joining, stating that the chief advantages of membership included gaining recognition of the country’s independent status, providing a means of publicity and protest against aggression by another state, and allowing for an opportunity to influence world affairs and work towards world peace.[[35]](#endnote-35) In 1927 he became secretary of the League of Nations Society of Ireland, holding the post for three years. The Society aimed to educate public opinion and gain support for the League by means of lectures, public events, and publications. Waller proved active in this regard, and by the late 1920s he was among the country’s best-known commentators on international affairs. He also began to build a reputation outside Ireland: in 1924 he won the £1,000 Filene Prize for the best proposal for the restoration of peace in Europe, and in 1927 he won the Bok Prize for the best essay on the solution to world peace.[[36]](#endnote-36)

It is unsurprising that the attainment of peace and security proved so important to him. Waller’s war experience had been transformative, and the cessation of hostilities did not fulfill his hopes: ‘The Peace Settlement proved a staggering disappointment’. The creation of the League was the sole glimmer of promise; he would state that its ‘establishment was the greatest advance ever made out of international anarchy and towards international order’.[[37]](#endnote-37) Waller was not a pacifist, however, and in common with many Christians of his generation he believed that the use of force, during, for example, the Great War, was justified in certain cases.[[38]](#endnote-38) His aim, rather, was for the League to develop into a potent world arbitrator, which would eventually render violence obsolete in pursuit of political aims. Waller saw that a small country such as Ireland, with its history of conquest by a larger neighbour, could be a force for good in the League.

We have talked much of our own right to freedom; now that we have gained it, we will stultify ourselves if we do not use that position to help to establish freedom elsewhere. To some of its supporters, especially in the larger countries, the League seems to stand almost solely for the preservation of peace. But the maintenance of peace is not by itself good enough. We can remind them that a peace which permits oppression or merely perpetuates injustice is no real peace and does not deserve to be lasting.[[39]](#endnote-39)

Waller’s background was key to his thinking. The southern Protestant population in the twenty-six county area had fallen from about 10% in 1911 to about 7% in 1926.[[40]](#endnote-40) This small, scattered community, which was largely now without political influence, had reason to fear the repercussions of border tensions between Northern Ireland and the Free State. North-south conflict would leave southern Protestants and northern Catholics vulnerable.[[41]](#endnote-41) Among southern Protestants, Waller was far from alone in admiring the pacific and internationalist perspective of the League. Of the thirty members of the Council and Committee of the Irish League of Nations Society in 1923, a total of sixteen were Protestant, among them the earl of Wicklow (a southern unionist senator), Sir William de Courcy Wheeler (a distinguished surgeon), and Charles E. Jacob, (a prominent businessmen and leading figure in the Society of Friends).[[42]](#endnote-42) Protestants with a Home Rule pedigree were especially strongly represented: six individuals had advocated self-government for Ireland within the empire during the period before 1920.[[43]](#endnote-43) For these individuals, the precepts of the League seemed to offer the best protection for endangered minorities, those who found themselves on the wrong side of a newly-drawn border. Membership of the League of Nations Society may have offered southern Protestants, starved suddenly of the opportunity to contribute to public affairs, a suitable forum in which to do so.

As a well-known figure, whose views commanded some attention, Waller was tempted by public office. In 1927 he announced his candidacy for the Dublin University (Trinity College) Dáil constituency, in the June election. Waller was a well-known alumnus, and was frequently invited to take the chair in debates and other college events. The three sitting TDs, William Thrift, Ernest Alton, and Sir James Craig, were generally seen as providing quiet, yet effective representation in parliament—Waller argued that they, and other southern Protestant representatives, should play a more assertive role. However, Waller found that his work with the North Eastern Boundary Bureau was a hindrance to a public career. The Trinity electorate, which comprised scholars and graduates of the college, included a substantial Ulster unionist or Ulster unionist-sympathising segment. These took a dim view of the Boundary Bureau’s attempts to undermine the integrity of the northern state. In late May 1927 a meeting in the Examination Hall in support of Waller’s candidacy erupted in chaos. A gleeful *Belfast News-Letter* recorded events under the heading ‘Uproar at Trinity College: Egg-throwing in excelsis’:

The Examination Hall was crowded with elderly graduates and students. It was evident that many of the latter had little sympathy with Mr Waller, and that they were prepared to make their disapproval of his candidature manifest. Mr E.J. Gwynn, FTCD, who presided, had uttered only a few sentences when a rotten egg, thrown from the back of the hall, fell in his lap. . . . The egg-throwers were cheered to the echo, and for a few minutes pandemonium prevailed. Appeals for order were met by egg-throwing and laughter, and the atmosphere at the platform became most unpleasant . . . Mr Waller was received with applause mingled with catcalls. A slight man, he stood well forward on the platform, and showed remarkable ability in dodging the eggs that were thrown at him. He could not, however, escape them all. Once he put up his hand and caught an egg, which . . . broke and ran down his sleeve. . . . Mr Waller was warming to his subject when there was an enormous noise outside. The doors were thrown open, and a band of students, carrying Professor [William] Thrift, whom they had ‘kidnapped’ marched in. They placed the professor on the platform and cheered him.[[44]](#endnote-44)

Thrift, who presumably had been ‘captured’ while strolling through Front Square, was visibly unimpressed at events; he mounted a chair and insisted that Waller should be allowed to speak.[[45]](#endnote-45) Waller received a total of 332 first preferences, placing him in line for the third seat. However, when Thrift’s surplus was distributed, Alton overtook him by just eight votes.[[46]](#endnote-46) A friend later suggested that the failure to take a seat was ‘one of the greatest disappointments of his life’.[[47]](#endnote-47)

Waller’s interest in public affairs remained undimmed. In 1928 he took part in a Church of Ireland delegation to the minister for justice, James FitzGerald-Kenney, to seek amendments to the Censorship of Publications Bill. Peter Martin, in his study of censorship in Ireland, discusses a letter by Waller in which he described the interview:

Waller . . . reported that FitzGerald-Kenney was ‘polite and patient but extremely obdurate’. The Minister was ‘unyielding’ over . . . the use of the term ‘public morality’ in the bill. He explained that he wanted to ban anything ‘attacking the institution of marriage’. . . . On the question of contraception ‘the minister was still more stiff’ and opposed anything which ‘even incidentally advocated it’. When asked if this included the works of George Bernard Shaw or Dean Inge he replied that ‘he was not afraid of big names . . . if they were as I alleged they would have to go’. Waller [stated] that ‘a large number of Protestants do, absolutely genuinely and sincerely regard this as an intolerant and unfair bill’ . . . ‘I want to avoid sectarian controversy of the old type but this bill makes it very difficult’.[[48]](#endnote-48)

During this period Waller, alongside Yeats and Russell, became that rarest of figures: an advocate for a more assertive Protestant political voice in the Free State. He argued that the older generation of Protestants, having relied ‘on supports which proved untrustworthy’, i.e. Ulster unionists and the British government, had damaged themselves beyond repair. He looked to the younger generation to regain Protestant self-confidence, and play a forceful role in society:

What too many Irish Protestants suffer from at present is timidity, combined with superciliousness. Having been so long denounced as a tyrannical ‘Ascendancy’ they seem now—to avoid odium—to have gone to the opposite extreme . . . In both the Senate and the Dáil Protestants are numerous, but, with a few exceptions, they are content to display a vague amiability rather than to make any definite contribution. Such timidity is bad both for themselves and for Ireland. Outspokenness is needed, combined with a readiness to join energetically in any effort for the benefit of Ireland.[[49]](#endnote-49)

The unity of Ireland, which, peacefully effected, would allow for an enhanced Protestant voice in national affairs, remained his principal objective. Waller’s pamphlet, *Hibernia, or the future of Ireland*, published in 1928, gives insight into his thinking during this period. This work, although striking an optimistic tone about the future of the country, argued against viewing members of different religions as being ethnically dissimilar. He also argued against attempts to impose a Gaelicising policy, such as by means of compulsory Irish, which he believed would further alienate Protestants. Northern Ireland, he stated, could be tempted into a united Ireland, but only on the basis of continued membership of the Commonwealth: ‘the choice before us is transparently plain. Do we want complete independence for three-quarters of Ireland, or Freedom, with Unity, for the whole?’[[50]](#endnote-50) Unity, he argued, could only be brought about by degrees, and with consent. He remained as convinced of the potential of settlement by conference in 1928 as he had been in 1916: he looked forward to the day when ‘Representatives of North and South will . . . meet in Conference to consider the general question of the future government of the country’.[[51]](#endnote-51)

Waller’s inclusive vision of Irish nationalism was evident two years later, in his Trinity Monday memorial discourse on Thomas Davis. This was the first time one of Trinity’s nationalist alumni was the subject of such a lecture.[[52]](#endnote-52) Waller urged Trinity College to take pride in its nationalist alumni, and highlighted how Davis, a Protestant, had sought to forge a conception of Irish nationalism which would incorporate all classes and creeds.[[53]](#endnote-53) This appeal for the creation of a unifying, non-sectarian form of nationalism was not welcomed by the Catholic press, who denounced Waller’s speech, and made the dubious claim that Davis, were he alive in 1930, would have sought a Catholic Ireland.[[54]](#endnote-54)

In that year, at the comparatively advanced age of forty, Waller renewed his divinity studies in Trinity. There is a sense, throughout the 1920s, of an ambitious, talented figure, applying himself to many things, but never quite finding his calling. The Church, his first love, would provide focus in the last six years of his life. Waller was ordained deacon in 1931, and a priest the following year. He initially took a curacy in Rathmines, where he proved a parishioners’ favourite, before being moved to the incumbency in Clondalkin in February 1936.[[55]](#endnote-55) He quickly became one of the best-known Anglican clergymen in the country.

If Irish unity was his principal objective throughout the 1920s, unity of the churches became his great cause as a clergyman. Waller was the chairman and moving spirit behind the Irish branch of the ‘Friends of Reunion’ movement, which sought to unite all Protestant denominations into a single church.[[56]](#endnote-56) He lost none of his appetite for public debate. The founding of the Irish Hospitals’ Sweepstake in 1930 had seen several Protestant (although few Catholic) clergymen denounce the measure.[[57]](#endnote-57) Waller was among the most prominent critics of the Irish Sweep, publishing a pamphlet which highlighted the infinitesimally small chances of winning a prize, and casting doubt on the benefit of actually doing so.[[58]](#endnote-58) He also showed there were strict limits to his ecumenism during this period. Claiming that Catholics were making systematic efforts to convert Irish Protestants, his pamphlet *The Pope’s claims and why we reject them* offered an assertive refutation of the doctrines of papal supremacy and infallibility.[[59]](#endnote-59) All this time Waller maintained a parallel career as an indefatigable proponent of the ideals of peace and of the League of Nations, through print, public addresses, and on the airwaves.

The durability of these ideals would be challenged in the mid-1930s. In October 1935 Mussolini launched his invasion of Abyssinia. Waller, unsurprisingly, was outraged. In fact, addressing the League of Nations a month before, Éamon de Valera, the President of the Executive Council of the Free State, had delivered the sort of defence of smaller powers that Waller had always argued could be undertaken by Irish representatives.[[60]](#endnote-60) Waller threw himself into anti-Italian agitation, addressing several meetings and writing numerous letters and articles, and demanding that a stronger line should be taken by the international community to prevent the aggression.[[61]](#endnote-61) Walter Starkie, whose recollections of Waller opens this chapter, adopted an entirely different approach. Starkie came from a ‘Castle Catholic’ background, and his family were loyal to the crown. For Starkie, his outsider status led him towards open support for fascism. He accepted Italian hospitality and ventured to Abyssinia, from where he dispatched propaganda that praised ‘the great colonising work that Italy is doing in this far-off land’, at a time when Mussolini was using mustard gas against civilians.[[62]](#endnote-62) There could be no greater contrast with his old college friend.

The death of the rector of Clondalkin in the Adelaide Hospital on 28 July 1936, following a brief illness, came as a great shock to his friends, colleagues, and parishioners. The press, which provided extensive coverage, was united in viewing him as among the most gifted figures of his generation. For the *Church of Ireland Gazette,* he was ‘A man of very wide sympathies, allied to the gift of single-mindedness; it was generally thought that he would be numbered not many years hence among the Bishops of the Church of Ireland’.[[63]](#endnote-63) The *Irish Times* wrote:

To know him was to love him, for he had just those qualities that will always attract. A genuine humility, a sincerity of purpose, a strong sense of duty—these made Bolton Waller the man he was. And with them was combined a warmth of heart which won for him the love he deserved.[[64]](#endnote-64)

His friends rushed to memorialize. Members of the Irish Christian Fellowship, which he had founded over twenty years before, produced a festschrift.[[65]](#endnote-65) Subscribers from Ireland, Britain, France, Switzerland, and the United States raised over £500 towards creating the Bolton Waller Memorial Trust, which between 1938 and 1950 held seven lectures in his honour.[[66]](#endnote-66) The topic of these lectures, fittingly, was peace and international affairs.

When making sense of Waller’s career it is tempting to consider him primarily as a peacemaker, one of a number of Protestant clergymen such as Robin Eames, John Morrow, and Joseph Parker who contributed, in various ways, towards reconciliation in Ireland. However, we should give equal weight to his strenuous efforts to revive Protestant political influence in the Free State, at a time when his community was content to lay low and pray for good treatment. Southern Protestants, declining in numbers and labouring under a sense of dispossession, were probably never going to reorganize and assert themselves politically; this makes Waller’s stand all the more impressive: during the 1920s and 1930s, his was a lonely voice indeed.

**ENDNOTES**

1. Walter Starkie, *Scholars and Gypsies: an Autobiography* (London: John Murray, 1963), pp. 109-110. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Terence Brown, *Ireland: a Social and Cultural History, 1922-1985* (London: Fontana, 1985), p. 109. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Sir Bernard Burke, *A Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Landed Gentry of Ireland* (revised by A.C. Fox-Davies) (London: Harrison & sons, 1912), pp. 734-735; Edward MacLysaght, *The Surnames of Ireland* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1980), pp. 295-296**.**  [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Canon J.B. Leslie, *Clergy of Limerick, Clergy of Ardfert and Aghadoe: Biographical Succession Lists*

   (revised by Canon D.W.T. Crooks) (Belfast: Ulster Historical Foundation, 2015), pp. 512-515. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. *A Catalogue of Graduates of the University of Dublin,* IV(Dublin: Longmans, Green, 1917), p. 103; *The Dublin University Calendar, being a Special Supplemental Volume for the Year 1912-1913* (Dublin: Longmans, Green, 1913), pp. 75, 260; *The Dublin University Calendar for the Year 1915-1916* (Dublin: Longmans, Green, 1916), p. 56. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Margaret Cunningham (ed.), *Looking at Ireland* (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1937), p. 10. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. *IT*, 28 October 1912. See also Dermot Meleady, *John Redmond: the National Leader* (Sallins, Co. Kildare: Merrion, 2013), p. 223. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. See Tomás Irish, *Trinity in War and Revolution, 1912-1923* (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2015), p. 56. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. *Freeman’s Journal,* 28 October 1912. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Undated clipping from unknown newspaper [November 1912], NLI, Redmond Papers, MS 15,254. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. *IT,* 6 November 1914. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. See Oonagh Walsh (ed.), *An Englishwoman in Belfast: Rosamond Stephen's Record of the Great War* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2000),esp. introduction, pp. 1-15. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Horace Plunkett, *A Better way: an Appeal to Ulster not to Desert Ireland* (Dublin: Hodges, Figgis, and London: Simpkin, Marshall, 1914), pp. 23-24. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. For figures, see David Fitzpatrick, ‘The Logic of Collective Sacrifice: Ireland and the British Army, 1914-1918’, *The Historical Journal,* vol. 38, no. 4, December 1995, pp. 1017-1030, at 1017-1018. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. Bolton C. Waller, *Paths to World-peace* (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1926), p. 7. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. *IT,* 29 July 1936. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. Waller to H.O. White, 19 September 1916, Dermod O’Brien papers, TCDDM, MS 4294/142-187.  [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. ‘Unificus’ [Bolton Waller], *Ireland’s Opportunity: a Plea for Settlement by Conference* (London: King, 1916).For Waller’s authorship of this pamphlet, see Wilbraham Fitzjohn Trench, *The Way to Fellowship in Irish Life* (London: Student Christian Fellowship, 1919),p. 24. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. *IT,* 13 April 1917; *The Times* 13 April 1917. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. See R.B. McDowell, *The Irish Convention, 1917-18* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, and Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), p. 181. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
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22. *Irish Statesman,* 13 March 1920. See also Henry Harrison, *The Irish Case Considered: a Remonstrance Addressed to the British Public* (London: Irish Dominion League, 1920). [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. For this group, see Colin Reid, *The Lost Ireland of Stephen Gwynn: Irish Constitutional Nationalism and Cultural Politics, 1864-1950* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), pp. 183-184. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
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25. *IT,* 4 November 1921. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
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27. Waller to MacNeice, 22 August 1922, in Fitzpatrick, ‘*Solitary and Wild’,* p. 168. [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. Ronan Fanning, Michael Kennedy, Dermot Keogh, and Eunan O’Halpin (eds), *Documents on Irish Foreign Policy,* II, *1923-1926* (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2000), p. xxv. [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. K.J. Rankin, ‘The Provenance and Dissolution of the Irish Boundary Commission’, *Working Papers in British-Irish Studies,* no. 79, 2006, p. 12. [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
30. Eda Sagarra, *Kevin O’Shiel: Tyrone Nationalist and Irish State-builder* (Sallins: Irish Academic Press, 2013), p. 204. [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
31. ‘Memorandum on European precedents for the North Eastern Boundary Bureau’, by B.C. Waller, NAI NEBB 1/3/3, p. 4.  [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
32. Paul Murray, *The Irish Boundary Commission and its Origins, 1886-1925* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2011), p. 252. [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
33. Proposed settlement with Northern Ireland: report of the Cabinet committee, appointed 1 October 1924, NAI, Department of the Taoiseach, S4084. [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
34. Jonathan Bardon, *A History of Ulster* (Belfast: The Blackstaff Press, 2001), p. 508. [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
35. Extract from a memorandum by Bolton Waller on admission to the League of Nations, 24 March 1923, in Fanning, Kennedy, Keogh, and O’Halpin (eds), *Documents on Irish Foreign Policy,* II*,* pp. 74-77. [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
36. *CoIG,* 7 May 1926; *IT,* 22 January 1927. [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
37. Waller, *Paths to World-peace,* pp. 8, 9. [↑](#endnote-ref-37)
38. *CoIG,* 7 May 1926. [↑](#endnote-ref-38)
39. Bolton C. Waller, *Ireland and the League of Nations* (Dublin: Talbot Press, 1925), p. 73. [↑](#endnote-ref-39)
40. Saorstát Éireann, *Census of Population, 1926, Religions and Birthplaces* (Dublin: Stationery Office, 1929)*,* vol. 3, p. l. [↑](#endnote-ref-40)
41. For references to the League’s work on peaceful arbitration and minority rights, see *Concord,* September 1927, January, February 1928, January, April 1929. [↑](#endnote-ref-41)
42. Nominal data derived from *Irish League of Nations Society,* leaflet no. 6, 7 December 1923. [↑](#endnote-ref-42)
43. Bryan Cooper; Senator James G. Douglas; Stephen Gwynn; Sir John Lumsden; George Russell (Æ); Bolton C. Waller. [↑](#endnote-ref-43)
44. *Belfast News-Letter,* 1 June 1927. [↑](#endnote-ref-44)
45. *IT,* 1 June 1927. [↑](#endnote-ref-45)
46. Final tally: William Thrift, 614; Sir James Craig, 415; Ernest Alton, 400; and Bolton C. Waller, 393. [↑](#endnote-ref-46)
47. *IT,* 3 August 1936. [↑](#endnote-ref-47)
48. Peter Martin, *Censorship in the Two Irelands: 1922-39* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2006), p. 82. Waller’s correspondent was Michael Tierney. [↑](#endnote-ref-48)
49. Bolton C. Waller, *Hibernia, or the Future of Ireland* (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trubner, and New York: Dutton, 1928), p. 68. See, similarly, enthusiastically-received comments to the Church of Ireland Young Men’s Christian Association, in Dawson Street, Dublin—*IT,* 17 October 1929. [↑](#endnote-ref-49)
50. Waller, *Hibernia,* p. 82. [↑](#endnote-ref-50)
51. Waller, *Hibernia,* p. 92. [↑](#endnote-ref-51)
52. Irish, *Trinity in War and Revolution,* p. 255. [↑](#endnote-ref-52)
53. Bolton C. Waller, *Thomas Davis (1814-1845): a Commemorative Address, Delivered in the Chapel of Trinity College, Dublin, on Trinity Monday, 1930* (Dublin: Printed at the Dublin University press by Ponsonby and Gibbs, 1930), pp. 7, 12. [↑](#endnote-ref-53)
54. *The Standard,* q. in *Kerry Champion,* 28 June 1930. [↑](#endnote-ref-54)
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57. Marie Coleman, *The Irish Sweep: a History of the Irish Hospitals’ Sweepstake 1930-87* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2009), p. 14. [↑](#endnote-ref-57)
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60. See Martha Kavanagh, ‘The Irish Free State and Collective Security, 1930-6’, *Irish Studies in International Affairs,* vol. 15, 2004, pp. 103-122, esp. 115-117. [↑](#endnote-ref-60)
61. See, for example, *IT,* 19 September 1935, 24, 27 April, 4 May 1936. [↑](#endnote-ref-61)
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63. *CoIG,* 31 July 1936. [↑](#endnote-ref-63)
64. *IT,* 29 July 1936. [↑](#endnote-ref-64)
65. Cunningham (ed.), *Looking at Ireland.*  [↑](#endnote-ref-65)
66. Papers relating to the Bolton Waller Memorial Trust, NAI, M3578. [↑](#endnote-ref-66)