

Subject : Junior Cycle History
Teacher : Niall Lenehan

LESSON 12

**Parliamentary tradition in Irish
Politics: Daniel O'Connell &
Charles Stewart Parnell**

Learning intentions

- Investigate the role and significance of Daniel O’Connell in the parliamentary tradition.
- Investigate the role and significance of Charles Stewart Parnell in the parliamentary tradition.

Learning Outcome 2.2:

Investigate the role and significance of two leaders involved in the parliamentary tradition in Irish politics

Key words – define these

Parliament

Catholic Emancipation

Charles Stewart Parnell

Parliamentary Tradition

Daniel O’Connell

Act of Union

Home Rule

What is the Parliamentary Tradition?

The parliamentary tradition involves achieving political change using **nonviolent methods**.

It involved:

- Peaceful, lawful methods
- Mass demonstrations
- Applying pressure on the British Government

Who was Daniel O’Connell?

- Daniel O’Connell (1775-1847) made a significant contribution to Ireland’s parliamentary tradition.
- He studied law and joined the United Irishmen.
- After the British brought in the Act of Union, O’Connell wanted to repeal it along with other anti-Catholic laws.
- He wanted to achieve his aims peacefully.
- Laws passed in parliamen



Daniel O’Connell

Daniel O'Connell and Non-violence

- O'Connell **opposed using violence** for political purposes.
- He believed in using parliament to bring about change in a peaceful way.
- O'Connell had travelled through France during the **French Revolution** – He said France was 'deluged (flooded) in blood; liberty (freedom) was sacrificed.
- He was also horrified by the violent events of the **1798 rebellion** – He said 'May every virtuous revolutionist remember the horrors of Wexford!'
- Both of these conflicts convinced him that **peace** was the best way of achieving political goals.

"The principle of my political life is, that all ameliorations and improvements in political institutions can be obtained by persevering in a perfectly peaceable and legal course, and cannot be obtained by forcible means, or if they could be got by forcible means, such means create more evils than they cure, and leave the country worse than they found it."



How did O'Connell achieve Catholic Emancipation?

- **Catholic Emancipation:** The freedom from discrimination and civil disabilities granted to the Roman Catholics of Britain and Ireland.
- The Penal laws banned Catholics from many liberties such as taking seats in Parliament.
- O'Connell wanted to change this.
- He founded the **Catholic Association** which led to fight for Catholic Emancipation.
- He organised a **Catholic Rent** (a penny a month) to finance the campaign.
- He held **peaceful meetings** to put pressure on the British government.
- Following his election in Clare (1828), he forced the government to pass the **Catholic Relief Act (1829)** – This allowed Catholics to take seats in parliament.
- He was nicknamed '**The Liberator**'

How did O’Connell contribute to the abolition of slavery?

- Daniel O’Connell was **an abolitionist** – This meant he wanted to abolish slavery.
- He helped to pass the **slavery abolition act of 1833** – This abolished slavery in the British empire.
- Former American slave, **Frederick Douglass** visited Ireland in 1845 – He viewed O’Connell as a hero.
- He said: *‘The fire of freedom was burning in his mighty heart.’*

The Repeal of the Act of Union

- After winning Catholic Emancipation, **O’Connell set his sights** on repealing the Act of Union.
- This would mean that a parliament would be established in Dublin.
- O’Connell set up the **Repeal Association in 1840** to campaign for the repeal of the Act of Union.
- Despite O’Connell’s efforts, **his campaign failed as the British** feared that giving repeal to Ireland would lead to the break-up of the rest of the United Kingdom.

The death of Daniel O’Connell

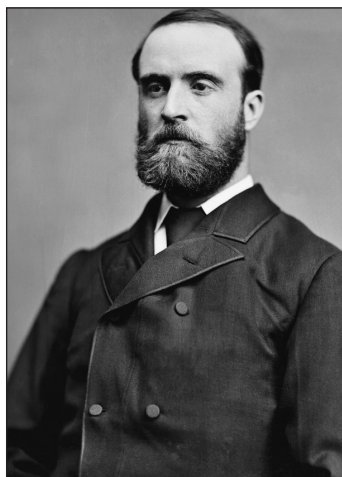
- Daniel O’Connell warned the British government about the devastation of the Great Famine in Ireland.
- In 1847, O’Connell died in Genoa in Italy. He was on the way to meet the Pope in Rome.

Recap exercise 12.2

- Q1.** What is meant by the ‘parliamentary tradition’ in Ireland?
- Q2.** Why did Daniel O’Connell dislike violence?
- Q3.** How did O’Connell achieve Catholic emancipation?
- Q4.** Why did Britain refuse the repeal the Act of Union?
- Q5.** How did O’Connell view slavery?

Charles Stewart Parnell

- Charles Stewart Parnell (1846–91) Irish politician, born in Avondale, Co Wicklow.
- He was the **most influential Irish politician** at the end of the 19th century.
- Parnell was elected as a Home Rule MP for Meath in 1875.
- The Home Rule movement was formed by **Isaac Butt** in 1870.
- They wanted a **parliament in Dublin** – Similar to what O’Connell 30 years before.



Charles Stewart Parnell

- He came to prominence in the House of Commons when he claimed that no murder had been committed by the **Manchester Martyrs**.
- This brought Parnell to the attention of the **IRB** (Irish Republican Brotherhood) or **Fenians**.
- Parnell supported the policy of **parliamentary obstruction** – This was when Irish MP's would make long speeches to disrupt business in parliament until they dealt with Irish matters.
- This strengthened Parnell's links with the IRB – They ensured Parnell was elected President of the **Home Rule Confederation of Great Britain**.

The New Departure

- American IRB leader, **John Devoy** proposed the idea of a '**new departure**' in politics.
- This meant that the Fenians should work with Parnell and other MPs to promote self – government for Ireland and land reform.
- The New Departure brought the physical force tradition and parliamentary tradition together.

Parnell and The Land War

- Parnell soon became involved in the land campaign which was known as the Land War.
- Due to economic hardship in the 1870's, conditions worsened for tenants and evictions increased.
- **The Land League** was formed with Parnell as the president.
- The Land League aimed for **fairer rents** and in the long term, peasant or farmer **ownership of their farms**.

Parnell and the Kilmainham Treaty

- Following Isaac Butts death in 1879, Parnell became the leader of the **Home Rule Party**.

The Kilmainham Treaty (1881)

- Following agrarian outrages (rural crimes) between landlords and tenants, the Land League demanded that the **British PM Gladstone** bring in reforms.
- This was done through **the Land Act (fair rents)**.
- Parnell and other leaders tested the Act in courts – Parnell was interned (imprisoned) as a result – This increased agitation in the countryside.
- Gladstone released Parnell as a result – Parnell then agreed to the **Kilmainham Treaty (1882)**. This meant that Gladstone would improve the Land Act IF Parnell stopped the violence.

The Home Rule Bill

- Parnell now focused on Home Rule – He founded the **Irish National League** – They sat together in parliament and worked as a group.
- The party's support increased and eventually, held the balance of power between the **Liberals and Conservatives**.
- **Parnell supported PM Gladstone and the Liberal party** who promised a **Home Rule Bill (1886)** which would provide a parliament in Dublin.
- This Bill was eventually defeated in the House of Commons as it was voted out by the Conservative party and Northern Unionists.

The Piggott forgeries

- The London Times newspaper attempted to frame Parnell by stating that Parnell supported the **Phoenix Park murders** (the murder of two high ranking British officials by Fenians).
- Parnell denied these claims and said that the letters were forgeries.
- Following an investigation, this was proven to be correct – The letters had been forged by **Richard Piggott**, a journalist.
- Parnell's name was cleared and his **popularity soared**.

The downfall of Parnell

- Parnell had been having an affair with **Katherine O'Shea** since 1880.
- She was married to Captain O'Shea who filed for divorce.
- The divorce was a **big scandal** but Parnell secured the support of his party despite the scandal.
- British PM Gladstone said that he could **no longer support the Home Rule Bill** if Parnell remained as leader of the Home Rule party.
- This resulted in a **split in his party** – He continued to stand for election but his health began to decline, he died in October 1891 aged 45.



Katherine O'Shea

The Significance of Parnell

1. Parnell led the majority of the people in Ireland through many difficult situations in the late 1870's and 1880's.
2. Parnell was a Protestant leader and landlord who led a Catholic population.
3. Parnell led the Land League in the Land War – This forced PM Gladstone to bring in land reform.
4. Parnell created a disciplined party who used parliamentary means to achieve their goals.
5. Parnell forced Gladstone to bring in the First Home Rule Bill.

Exam Questions 12.3

Daniel O'Connell belongs to the parliamentary tradition of Irish politics.

- a. **Name another person that you have studied who belongs to the parliamentary tradition of Irish politics**
