

Gladstone, Religion, Politics and America: Perceptions in the Press, 1868 – 1900

Stephen J. Peterson

Department of History and Politics

School of Arts and Humanities

University of Stirling

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Supervised by Professor David W. Bebbington

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I, Stephen J. Peterson, declare that this thesis has been composed by me and that the work which it embodies is my work and has not been included in another thesis.

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Abstract

This thesis examines American perceptions of William Ewart Gladstone in the religious and secular press from 1868 to 1900. The scope of the study encompasses his role as a Christian apologist and his engagement in public affairs where religion and politics converged. The opinions of Americans are examined in the general categories of evangelicals, Roman Catholics, secular news organs and to a lesser extent Unitarians and agnostics. Gladstone's reputation in the United States is followed through much of the latter half of the nineteenth century, beginning shortly after the close of the Civil War when Americans in the North held him in disrepute for his impolitic acknowledgement of Southern nationhood. This thesis demonstrates that American opinions of Gladstone were transformed as they increasingly perceived him to be a champion of Liberal reform and religious liberty and, especially for conservative evangelicals, a stalwart defender of Christian truth and civilisation against the rising tide of modern secularism. It also suggests that a pervasive anti-Catholicism inspired many in the United States to support Gladstone's political causes. Finally, this study demonstrates that Americans projected their own values and myths on to the statesman. For many, he came to embody their progressive worldview with respect to the spread of religious and political liberty.

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List of Abbreviations

Primary Source Publications

ACQR – American Catholic Quarterly Review

AR – Andover Review

BQR – Baptist Quarterly Review

CW – Catholic World

CT – Chicago Tribune

CA – Christian Advocate

CO – Christian Observer

CU – Christian Union

CON – Congregationalist

HW – Harper's Weekly

IND – Independent

MQR – Methodist Quarterly Review

TN – The Nation

NAR – North American Review

NYE – New York Evangelist

NYO – New York Observer

NYH – New York Herald

NYT – New York Times

NY.Trib – New York Tribune

SR – Springfield Republican

UR – Unitarian Review

ZH – Zion's Herald

Individuals and Books

*DWB-MoG – David W. Bebbington, *The Mind of Gladstone: Religion, Homer and Politics**

WEG – William Ewart Gladstone

GWS – George Washburn Smalley

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

William Ewart Gladstone (1809-1898) acquired prominence and fame that extended far beyond the borders of his own country. By the mid-1870s a cult of personality began to form around him throughout the English-speaking world.¹ In Great Britain, North America, Australia and New Zealand, countless towns, parks and streets were eventually named in honour of the most eminent of eminent Victorians, with no fewer than six cities called ‘Gladstone’ in the United States despite the fact that he had never set foot upon its shores. Upon news of his passing in 1898, United States Vice President Garret Hobart sent a cable to the London *Daily Chronicle* declaring: ‘Not even in his own land was Mr. Gladstone more highly esteemed and venerated than in the United States.’² Churches across the land held memorial services and eulogists compared him to Lincoln. They also hailed him as the great forerunner of the period’s growing sentiment for Anglo-American rapprochement. He was celebrated by many for his liberal reforms and for his voluminous writings on Homer, politics and religion. Moreover, his devotion to religion—including his apologetic work in its defence—was widely declared to be his life’s foundational impulse. At his passing, the Congregationalist *Independent* proclaimed: ‘His creed was his life; his life was Christianity incarnate, the best, the newest, the most convincing Christian evidence that can be offered to a keenly observant world.’³ For many Americans, Gladstone had died as the exemplar of how one should live the Christian life as a man, a

¹ See pp. 48, 49 in D.A. Hamer, ‘Gladstone: The Making of a Political Myth’, *Victorian Studies*, 22 (1978), pp. 29-50. Hamer suggests that cult Gladstone began to emerge around 1875.

² *NYT*, 29 May 1898, p. 7.

³ *IND*, 26 May 1898, p. 12.

statesman and intellectual. It is perhaps only slightly over-stated to say that for many he was their 'People's William' as well as Britain's. Yet it had not always been so and the path to such lofty status had not necessarily been an easy or straight course.

The expressions of approbation at his life's end belie the fact that Gladstone's reputation in America had actually been one of villainy in the minds of many its citizens during the Civil War era. Although he had gained a measure of admiration from Americans who followed British politics closely prior to that time, the notorious episode that catapulted him to infamy came with his speech delivered at Newcastle on 7 October 1862. In it he had declared that Jefferson Davis and the Confederacy had 'made a nation', a position which, delivered in his post as Palmerston's Chancellor of the Exchequer, violated the spirit if not the letter of British neutrality.⁴ Although Gladstone later took pains to distance himself from the remarks, it was interpreted at the time as hostile by the Lincoln administration and by Americans throughout the North. An article of 2 November 1862 in the *New York Times* entitled 'A Rebuke to Mr. Gladstone' brought the issue to national attention. It contained several reprinted articles from various British papers critical of the speech. One of them, a piece from the *Daily News*, contended that the Cabinet should either acknowledge Gladstone's statement as true or remove him from his position as Chancellor.⁵ Moreover, the speech had come just months after relations between Britain and the Union government had been strained after an incident involving the British mail carrier HMS *Trent* had raised the spectre of war between the two nations. In November 1861 the vessel was intercepted by the USS *San Jacinto* in international waters and two

⁴ Peter J. Parish in Peter John Jagger, ed, *Gladstone* (London: Hambledon Press, 1998), p. 96.

⁵ 'Seven Days Later from Europe', *NYT*, 2 November 1862, p.1.

Confederate diplomats aboard the *Trent* were taken into custody. The incident was at last resolved when the Lincoln administration agreed to release them.⁶

A second source of Anglo-American tension during the Civil War was the dispute over British-built Confederate ships which had wreaked havoc on Union merchant marine vessels. The issue at stake concerned the extent to which the British should pay for damages inflicted by vessels like the Confederate *Alabama*. The lengthy controversy was eventually resolved through international arbitration at Geneva in 1872, an event brought about in large part through the efforts of Gladstone.⁷ Yet as late as 1869, the memory of Gladstone's offence of 1862 could still be found in America's most respected newspaper, the *New York Tribune*. Its London correspondent George Washburn Smalley suggested that the statesman's regard for America was greater than during the war, but 'his acquaintance with the American question is imperfect, and he still betrays occasionally a disposition to protect or palliate the offenses of the Government which let loose the Proclamation and the *Alabama*'.⁸ 'It must be remembered', Smalley continued, 'that Mr. Gladstone has hitherto shown a singular want of tact on American questions.'⁹ By the end of the Civil War, and for some time thereafter, it was not clear if Americans in the North would take kindly to any British politician, let alone Gladstone. Certainly the *New York Tribune* and many of its readers did not.

This thesis centres on how the American religious and secular press represented Gladstone beginning shortly after the nadir of his reputation during the Civil War until his

⁶ Duncan Andrew Campbell, *Unlikely Allies: Britain, America and the Victorian Origins of the Special Relationship* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2007), pp. 145-150.

⁷ See Charles S. Campbell, *From Revolution to Rapprochement: The United States and Great Britain, 1783-1900* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1974), pp. 111-135.

⁸ GWS, *NY.Trib*, 29 June 1869, p. 1.

⁹ *Ibid.*

death in 1898 when he was greatly admired and nationally mourned. To account for the evolution of his reputation it follows their perceptions of and reactions to the statesman from his first premiership in 1868 until approximately 1900. The primary focus is on several of Gladstone's works of Christian scholarship and on his statesmanship in a few crucial instances where religion and politics intersected. The thesis does not seek to provide a complete picture of Gladstone's reputation as a political figure. The primary emphasis throughout is on religious issues with the understanding that, in at least three of the chapters that follow, politics are inseparable from the questions at hand. In such instances Gladstone's reputation in dealing with religious matters cannot be understood without political context. Thus, this study also provides a window as to how Americans perceived Gladstone relative to his work as a Liberal reformer and advocate for religious liberty. There are obvious limitations to what such an investigation can accomplish. The sheer magnitude of Gladstone's writings on public policy and his lengthy career in public office prevents a full survey of opinions about his statesmanship. His voluminous writings on Homer, politics and religion present an equally daunting task. As Frank M. Turner aptly noted, if collected Gladstone's articles alone would fill several stout volumes.¹⁰ Thus, among his published writing our study will be confined to the following: the Vaticanism pamphlets against papal infallibility of 1874 and '75; his two disputes with T. H. Huxley in the *Nineteenth Century*, the first in 1885 over 'Genesis and geology' and the second in 1890 and '91 over the New Testament account of the Gadarene demoniac; the 1888 debate in the *North American Review* with Robert Ingersoll, the popular American agnostic; his 1888 review of Mary Ward's controversial novel of lost faith, *Robert*

¹⁰ Frank Turner, review of *Reading Gladstone*, (review no. 787)
URL: <<http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/787>> Date accessed: 25 February 2013

Elsmere; and his 1896 *Works of Joseph Butler* which was accompanied by *Studies Subsidiary to the Works of Bishop Butler*, Gladstone's personal commentary on the Anglican theologian's major themes and methods. Together they constitute his primary works as a Christian intellectual.

Among those areas where Gladstone's work in public affairs intersected with religious issues, our primary emphasis will be on the following: the events of 1868 and '69 surrounding the disestablishment of the Irish Church; the imbroglio over the atheist MP Charles Bradlaugh, which remained unresolved during Gladstone's second premiership of 1880 to '85; and remembrances at the time of his death in 1898 of those acts of statesmanship that Americans had found most memorable. Second, for purposes of contextualization there is also brief treatment given to American perceptions of Gladstone's role in the reform bill of 1867 and his election in 1868; the general view held by Americans regarding his second premiership; and their perceptions of his extraordinary embrace of Irish Home Rule in 1885 and his subsequent election to a third government in 1886. Focusing largely on the primary components among his writings and statesmanship, four principal themes are explored: first, the extent to which Americans perceived Gladstone to be a man of Christian devotion and moral character and the extent to which they believed his religion carried over into acts of true statesmanship; second, the degree to which he was admired as a champion of liberty and liberal reform through his work in public affairs; third, estimates of his skill as a Christian apologist and public Christian intellectual; and fourth, consideration of misconceptions and exploitations of Gladstone by Americans, which will provide a view into their own national aspirations and attitudes as well as the extent to which they projected their own values and myths on to the statesman.

In researching the American press of the period it becomes readily apparent that writers often had more to say about the issues at stake than about Gladstone himself. Thus, there was a propensity on their part to discuss the issues raised in terms of their relationship to the United States, which allows for an examination of the various ways in which Americans may have misread Gladstone and projected on to him their core ideals and myths. In the process of our study the analysis sheds appreciable light on the growing divide in America over religion. Fissures were beginning to appear within evangelicalism over the proper role of science and higher critical study of the Bible, and the decades-old divide between Protestants and Catholics continued largely unabated for much of the period. Moreover, a growing chasm between secular and religious currents of thought was developing. American opinions of Gladstone will tell us much about Americans of the period.

For a better understanding of how Americans perceived Gladstone as a statesman and Christian apologist, it will be useful to grasp the general state of religion and politics in the United States relative to the issues we shall confront over the course of our study. Looking first to religion, the late 1860s was a period in which Western Christianity and society stood on the brink of profound changes. As George Marsden has rightly diagnosed, the old established Protestant order—consisting of a unified theory of truth between faith, science, the Bible, morality and civilisation— had been struck almost simultaneously by the convulsive forces of evolutionary naturalism, higher criticism of the Bible, and the newer Idealistic philosophy and theology.¹¹ These trends were part of what came to be known as the ‘new learning’, and by the turn of the century its influence had

¹¹ George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 16, 17, 26.

essentially wrested control of American higher education from traditional Protestantism.¹² Higher criticism was perhaps the most potent force, having its roots principally in the Tübingen School in Germany during the first half of the nineteenth under D. F. Strauss and F. C. Bauer.¹³ Such higher critics subjected the Bible to modern tools of philology, comparative religion, literary analysis and historical research which threatened the traditional understanding of the Bible's supernatural origins and by implication orthodox belief in general.

The new learning, however, was slow to penetrate most American institutions of higher education. Prior to the 1880s, America's Protestant seminaries had been aware of higher criticism but had resisted its embrace, and few men had been formally trained as critical scholars. Those who had, such as Moses Stuart of Andover Seminary and Andrews Norton of Harvard, seldom ventured far from traditional orthodoxy.¹⁴ Moreover, as late as 1880 conservatives continued to hold the major American chairs of theology at church-affiliated institutions including Yale, Andover, Union, Princeton, Chicago and Oberlin. Most were Congregational or Presbyterian and committed either to Old School or New School versions of New England Theology.¹⁵ Not until the 1880s did progressive orthodoxy, or evangelical liberalism, begin to make inroads, first at Andover Theological Seminary and then more so at Union Theological Seminary. Others would follow

¹² Mark A. Noll, *History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992), p. 393.

¹³ Alasdair I. C. Heron, *A Century of Protestant Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1980), pp. 38-60.

¹⁴ James Moorehead, *World Without End: Mainstream American Protestant Visions of Last Things, 1880-1925* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), pp. 32, 33. See also J. W. Brown, *Rise of Biblical Criticism in America, 1800-1870: The New England Scholars* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1969), pp. 45-124.

¹⁵ Gary Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology: Imagining Progressive Religion, 1805-1900* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), p. 261.

thereafter.¹⁶ A factor that sped up the pace of the new modern learning was the birth of nonsectarian and modern research universities. Financed by Gilded Age captains of industry, Cornell University (1865) and Johns Hopkins University (1876) were among the first non-sectarian private research institutions. Along with Harvard and other early pioneering state institutions like the University of Wisconsin, they adopted in the latter decades of the century the German seminar model, which emphasised specialised training and graduate studies.¹⁷ The overall trend on both sides of the Atlantic was towards specialisation and professionalism within the various academic disciplines while amateur scientists and theologians were losing prestige among the elite intellectual set.¹⁸ As we shall see later, the issue would confront Gladstone in the 1880s when he waded into the waters of scientific and theological controversy.

Three general approaches to the new learning were emerging on both sides of the Atlantic in the latter half of the century. First, there were orthodox Christians who were wary but willing to address modern developments with caution. Gladstone, as we shall see in greater detail in later chapters, was among their number. Such conservatives were open to the claims of evolutionary science and biblical criticism insofar as they did not threaten orthodox belief and traditional design arguments. All the same, by the 1880s and 1890s the new learning had penetrated deeper into mainstream society, with evolutionary science and higher critical methodology becoming the new fault lines separating orthodox moderates from reactionary biblical literalists.¹⁹ At the opposite pole stood a second much

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 292-293.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 365.

¹⁸ For developments in Great Britain see Frank M. Turner, 'The Victorian Conflict between Science and Religion: A Professional Dimension', *Isis* (69), pp. 356-376.

¹⁹ Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, pp. 22-25.

smaller but influential group comprising sceptics, atheists and agnostics who had fully embraced the new learning and who regularly exploited it to malign the Bible in particular and religious belief in general. As early as the 1840s Gladstone had come to view such infidelity as a threat and by the 1870s he believed it placed Christian civilisation in existential peril.²⁰ His confrontations with Huxley and Ingersoll were a direct result of that fear.

The third major grouping consisted of Protestant liberals who in the German tradition sought a ‘third way’ between strict orthodoxy and free-thought infidelity. They continued to believe in divine revelation and in varying degrees adhered to orthodox creeds, but they generally accepted developments in evolutionary science and higher criticism, formulating what became known as the New Theology or progressive orthodoxy. Unitarians also shared an appreciation for liberal theology. In Great Britain, the most visible expression of liberalism was seen in the Broad Church movement within the Church of England and was defined in the controversial monograph *Essays and Reviews* (1860).²¹ Especially within Congregationalism, liberals in America had built upon the romantic, pre-Darwinian mediating theology of Friedrich Schleiermacher largely through the writings of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Horace Bushnell, his chief interpreters within the English-speaking world.²² Central to the New Theology was the integration of Darwinian evolutionary theory with the romanticism of Schleiermacher. It had first been attempted by Newman Smyth in *The Religious Feeling* (1877), but the keystone of the

²⁰ David Bebbington, *Mind of Gladstone: Religion, Homer, and Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), (hereafter ‘DWB-MoG’) p. 217.

²¹ Josef L. Altholz, ‘The Mind of Victorian Orthodoxy: Anglican Responses to “Essays and Reviews”, 1860-1864’ in Gerald Parsons, ed, *Religion in Victorian Britain*, 4 vols (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), IV, pp. 28-40.

²² Noll, *History of Christianity*, p. 238; Dorrien, *American Liberal Theology*, p. xx.

liberal theology movement in America was Theodore Munger's *The Freedom of Faith* (1883).²³ Various forms of theistic evolution were also being expounded, including that of James McCosh, president of Princeton University. And evolutionary theology was first popularised by Henry Ward Beecher, pastor of Plymouth Church in Brooklyn, and Lyman Abbott, his successor both as pastor at Plymouth and as editor of the *Christian Union*, the influential evangelical newspaper.²⁴ Progressive evangelicals and Unitarians of the period had found ways to co-exist comfortably with the new learning. The extent to which Gladstone finds approval from this increasingly influential group will be an important consideration of this thesis.

Another important dimension in American religion that is germane to this study revolves around tension between Protestants and Catholics during the period. From roughly 1820 to 1860 there existed a distinct cultural uniformity that, as John F. Wilson and Donald L. Drakeman have suggested, was a 'Protestant Christian republic in substance if not in form'.²⁵ Beyond the obvious historical conflicts and doctrinal differences, bigotry towards Catholics in the United States had been provoked by a 900 per cent increase in their population between 1830 and 1860 to a total of about 3.1 million, the majority of whom had arrived from Ireland in the wake of the great famine.²⁶ The founding of the nativist American Party or 'Know Nothings' in 1850 had thrust the issue on to the national political stage. With the motto 'Americans must rule America', its members even had to

²³ Dorrien, *American Liberal Theology*, pp. 282, 293-304.

²⁴ Lindberg, David C. Lindberg and Ronald L. Numbers, eds, *When Science and Christianity Meet* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), pp. 378-383.

²⁵ John F. Wilson and Donald L. Drakeman, *Church and State in American History*, 2nd ed (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987), pp. xvii, xviii.

²⁶ Jay P. Dolan, *In Search of an American Catholicism: A History of Religion and Culture in Tension*. (Cary, NC, USA: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 58.

take an oath that they would not vote for any foreigners—Roman Catholics in particular. By 1854 the party had grown to over one million members.²⁷ Moreover, the enlightened and more distinctly American Catholicism of the early national period under Bishop John Carroll and his cousin Charles Carroll had in many quarters by 1850 given way to the ultramontane revival among American Catholic leaders.²⁸ Evangelicals, although sharply divided over nativist ‘Know-Nothingism’, were a driving force behind the fiercely anti-Catholic and anti-immigrant American Party in the 1850s, especially in New England.²⁹ Indeed, most American Protestants of the period had been taught from birth to hate Catholicism. The decades following the Civil War had only seen tensions increase over the issue of public schooling with conflicts arising as Catholics sought accommodation for their beliefs in the common schools that were ‘public’ in theory, but in reality acted as bastions of Protestantism.³⁰ Overt Protestant indoctrination and reading aloud from the King James Version of the Bible were particularly vexing practices for Catholics. Liberal intellectuals also objected strongly when Catholics sought tax support for their own parochial schools, which, for a brief period, was granted in the state of New York due to its swelling Catholic population.³¹ As we shall see later, the American reception of Gladstone’s writings and policies that centred on Catholicism would surely be coloured by the religious disruptions of the period.

²⁷ Dolan, *In Search of an American Catholicism*, pp. 14, 57.

²⁸ Patrick W. Carey, ‘Republicanism within American Catholicism, 1785– 1860,’ *Journal of the Early Republic* 3 (1983), pp. 416, 417.

²⁹ Richard J. Carwardine, *Evangelicals Politics: Antebellum America* (University of Tennessee Press, 1997), pp. 245-255.

³⁰ Dolan, *In Search of an American Catholicism*, pp. 59- 0.

³¹ Daniel Dorchester, *Romanism versus the Public School System* (New York: Phillips and Hunt, 1888); McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom*, pp. 115-116.

With respect to American politics, the post-bellum America of the 1860s and 70s had witnessed the rise of a new generation of liberal reformers centred largely in New York City and Harvard University. Most were active in the Republican party or the short-lived Liberal Republican party until 1884 when many turned to Grover Cleveland and the Democrats. The Civil War had been instrumental in the rise of modern newspapers and periodicals as news staffs were built up for the intensified reporting. After the war many experienced reporters went on to become editors or owners of their own publications.³² They were also leaders of elite liberal organs such as the *Nation*, *North American Review* and *Harper's Weekly*.³³ Leslie Butler has indicated that their 'liberalism' had as its ultimate aim the renewal of American democracy through the cultivation of each individual's moral, religious, intellectual, social and imaginative faculties. Additionally, Butler has noted that their liberalism was more a language that provided a vocabulary of reform than a set of doctrines with their primary concerns found clustered around faith in popular government, progress, justice and a commitment to orderly change and cosmopolitan open-mindedness.³⁴ A crucial aspect of their agenda was a heightened sense of nationalism born of the Union triumph over the Confederacy, which was viewed as a sign of a forthcoming global rise of democracy and the dawning of a new age. The postbellum era was one of profound upheaval aimed both at reconstructing and reforming the United States.

³² Edwin Emery, *The Press and America: An Interpretative History of Journalism*, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1962), p. 387.

³³ David Quigley, *Second Founding: New York City, Reconstruction, and the Making of American Democracy* (New York: Hill & Wang, 2004), pp. 29-31.

³⁴ Butler, *Critical Americans*, pp. 5-10.

Charles Eliot Norton, editor of the influential *North American Review*, perhaps best articulated the post-war hopes for the spread of democracy and in doing so reflected a version of American exceptionalism. Like most Victorian liberals he was influenced by John Stuart Mill's emphasis on moral education and the freedom of the individual. But for Norton and like-minded reformers, the United States had entered a new chapter in its political evolution as a result of the Civil War. The Revolution had separated Americans from Britain but had not created a nation; the war for the Union had accomplished that. This new phase was a breakthrough without parallel or exemplar that would allow 'distinctively American' political principles 'to have a fuller scope and development', and that would include full citizenship for both black men and all women.³⁵ Norton traced the nation's political evolution in an essay entitled 'American Political Ideas', which appeared in the October 1865 *North American Review*. America's uniqueness, Norton contended, lay in its republican institutions, democratic principles, moral responsibility and 'true community'. Equality, freedom and moral responsibility had produced in America a 'new type of character', more noble than anything seen in ancient Greece or Rome.³⁶ This new character had begun to emerge only in the last generation, however, especially as demonstrated by the heroism of Union troops in the Civil War. The United States, Norton suggested, was 'maturing a national character' or a 'distinct moral nationality'.³⁷ American democracy fostered the moral improvement of its people, which distinguished it from other polities. James Turner has observed that Norton's vision of a moral republic striving to attain 'the true brotherhood of man' had likely come straight out of his High

³⁵ James Turner, *Liberal Education of Charles Eliot Norton* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1999), pp. 201-204.

³⁶ Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 203.

³⁷ Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 204.

Boston Unitarianism.³⁸ The experience of the Civil War had clearly forged a new vision of democracy in America for men like Norton.

In Great Britain, democratic and institutional reforms were also commencing as the age of Gladstonian Liberalism was about to dawn. The Reconstruction-era constitutional amendments in the United States—and in Britain the 1867 Reform Act, followed by the 1868 abolition of church rate—provided major signposts confirming liberal hopes that democracy was on the march.³⁹ For many liberal reformers the triumph of the Union over the Confederacy was meaningful not only for having abolished slavery, but for its international influence. Writing in the context of Gladstone's rise to the premiership in 1868, *Harpers Weekly* expressed the following viewpoint:

The accelerated movement of progress in England, and the astonishing revolution in Spain, are both undoubtedly due to the result of our war. It is impossible that thoughtful men in any country should see such a vindication of the power and tenacity of a popular government as that of the United States without reflections that will presently take form in remarkable public changes.⁴⁰

Even before the war had ended, Charles Eliot Norton had come to believe that the conflict's purpose was not merely to end slavery, but also 'for liberal ideas and for the establishment of liberal principles'.⁴¹ While still at Oxford, Norton's friend Goldwin Smith also perceived larger implications for the war. In an 1865 letter to Norton he declared that the Union victory had demonstrated that a 'great liberal party of the world' had triumphed over the forces of illiberalism.⁴² 'English Liberals have just cause to be thankful', Smith wrote, 'for the heroic constancy and the still more heroic self-control of

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 204.

³⁹ See J. P. Ellens, *Religious Routes to Gladstonian Liberalism: The Church Rate Conflict in England and Wales, 1832-1868* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994)

⁴⁰ 'Mr. Gladstone Prime Minister', *Harper's Weekly*, 19 December 1868, p. 802.

⁴¹ James Turner, *Liberal Education*, p. 183.

⁴² Quoted in Butler, *Critical Americans*, p. 89.

the American people.⁴³ Along with an even wider group of American liberals—among them such famous names as Henry Adams, Charles Francis Adams, William Dean Howells, William James and Mark Twain—they were consciously transatlantic, having in their sphere of friendships such like-minded Britons who, among others included James Bryce, Lord Rosebery, Sir William V. Harcourt, John Morley and of course W. E. Gladstone.⁴⁴ The extent to which Americans interpreted Gladstone's statesmanship in this context will be an important question in our study.

Since the primary objective of this thesis is to locate the opinions of Gladstone held by representatives of the print culture of the period, it will be instructive to survey the newspapers and journals consulted. The sheer magnitude of new journals and newspapers during the period presents a particular challenge, with the total number of periodicals increasing from 700 in 1865 to 3,300 by 1885.⁴⁵ The study sample has been selected primarily to be representative of newspapers and journals with a national reputation during the postbellum and Gilded Age periods. Thus they come largely from the religious and secular press located in New York City, home during our period to most publications with a national circulation and to those of lesser distribution that carried significant clout with the intellectual set. It also draws from a few important papers in Boston, Philadelphia and Chicago, which we shall address presently. Such publications were also more likely to feature international news and employ correspondents in London. The sample for this

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Murney Gerlach, *British Liberalism and the United States: Political and Social Thought in the Late Victorian Age* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), p. xv.

⁴⁵ James Playsted Wood, *Magazines in the United States*, 3rd ed. (New York: Ronald Press, 1971), pp. 95-96.

study thus admittedly leaves out papers from the former Confederate states and most western states.

Among the religious press, the primary sources are found mainly in the popular newspapers and journals of evangelicals, which held the dominant place within the world of Christian publishing during the period, and also from the leading journals of Roman Catholics and Unitarians. Among secular publications, the pages of the major newspapers and influential liberal magazines of New York and Boston form the core of the primary sources. For a paper or journal seeking national prominence, New York was the centre of the publishing world in the United States, having in recent decades displaced Boston. For example, the *North American Review* moved from Boston to New York in 1878 and the *Baptist Quarterly Review* arrived from Philadelphia in 1885.⁴⁶ Amid leading periodicals during the years 1865-85, New York was home to two-thirds, and Philadelphia to one-fifth, with Boston having fallen to one-thirtieth.⁴⁷ Moreover, no other city received half as much attention in the magazines and papers of other cities, which frequently relied on New York's gritty urban environment and corrupt politics for 'good copy'.⁴⁸

Religious journals were generally published as monthlies or quarterlies during the period and religious newspapers usually appeared weekly. Journals were devoted primarily to theology and other scholarship and weekly newspapers delivered, in varying degrees, secular news and miscellany along with general religious and denominational fare. Thus, for much of the nineteenth century, religious weeklies provided secular news, literature and culture along with church and theological matters, but by the 1870s they began losing

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 33, 72.

⁴⁷ Frank Luther Mott, *History of American Magazines*, 4 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957), III, pp. 26, 78.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

subscriptions as the secular daily press became more professionalised and, with larger reporting staffs, capable of providing more up-to-date news. The trend drove many religious weeklies out of business or compelled them to abandon hard news altogether in favour of family reading and denominational news. Nevertheless, many continued to provide respectable social and political editorials.⁴⁹ At the same time, new religious and secular papers, many short-lived, were forming in the postbellum period at a dizzying pace, much of it the result of westward expansion. From 1860 to 1900 the number of monthly magazines had risen from 280 to 1,800.⁵⁰ Newspapers in particular increased 48 percent between 1860 and 1870; 69 percent between 1870 and 1880 (despite an economic depression); 66 percent between 1880 and 1890; and 38 percent between 1890 and 1900.⁵¹ The Gilded Age has rightly been called the ‘golden age of newspapers’.⁵²

Journalism had undergone profound changes during the nineteenth century. The rise of ‘penny papers’ in the 1830s led to an explosion in print that coincided with the growth of popular democracy in the Jacksonian era. Beginning with the *New York Sun* (founded 1833), early penny papers departed from the formal and dull style of the colonial press in order to create mass appeal.⁵³ Writers began to adopt informal prose and wrote sensational, and at times lurid, stories in vivid language. James Gordon Bennett’s *New York Herald* (founded 1835) continued the pattern, but made significant improvements in reporting and editing while placing increased emphasis on political and business news.⁵⁴ Religion, culture and serialised fiction were also added in order to appeal to female

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

⁵⁰ Wood, *Magazines in the United States*, pp. 95-96.

⁵¹ Ted Curtis Smythe, *The Gilded Age Press, 1865-1900* (London: Praeger, 2003), pp. 71, 98.

⁵² George H. Douglas, *The Golden Age of the Newspaper* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999)

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 1-9.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

readers.⁵⁵ The telegraph revolutionised the speed of newsgathering, especially after the transatlantic cable was laid in 1858.⁵⁶ Secular newspapers during the first half of the nineteenth century had followed largely upon partisan lines in their reporting, but, from the 1870s onwards market forces worked to reduce party fealty and a new independent spirit began to emerge within the industry. Historians in recent decades have focused increasingly on commercialisation as the driving force behind changes in the industry during the Gilded Age.⁵⁷ That is not to say that party affiliation disappeared entirely, but it was increasingly the case that publishers and editors were emboldened to criticise their parties or take a more objective editorial position to avoid alienating potential readership. Increasingly the goal became reaching the largest possible audience with news, opinion, entertainment and advertising, a model widely imitated during the Gilded Age that became known as the ‘New Journalism’.⁵⁸ The world of publishing was in a fluid state with dynamic changes taking place throughout the industry.

In the early twenty-first century newspapers and magazines have also undergone radical changes brought about by the digital revolution, a trend that has transformed the work of historical researchers as well. Recent developments in digital databases and web-based archives have greatly aided this study, in which almost all of the primary source journals and newspapers have been accessed electronically. The majority of sources are drawn from ProQuest’s *American Periodicals Series Online*, which has holdings of over

⁵⁵ Debby Applegate, *The Most Famous Man in America: The Biography of Henry Ward Beecher* (New York: Doubleday, 2006), pp. 232-233.

⁵⁶ See John Steele Gordon, *A Thread across the Ocean: The Heroic Story of the Transatlantic Cable* (New York: Walker Publishing, 2002)

⁵⁷ Gerald J. Baldasty, *The Commercialization of the News in the Nineteenth Century* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), pp. 35-40; and see Richard L. Kaplan, *Politics and the American Press: The Rise of Objectivity, 1865-1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002)

⁵⁸ Smythe, *Gilded Age Press*, pp. 19, 72-73.

1,100 periodicals. The study also draws from the ProQuest *Historical Newspapers*; the Cornell University Library *Making of America Journal Collection*; *America's Historical Newspapers*, Biblical Studies.org.uk, Chronicling America, *Historic American Newspapers*, *Harpweek* provides *Harper's Weekly*, the *Nation* digital archives and *Nineteenth Century United States Newspapers*. The publications used from each database are detailed in the bibliography.

The primary source sample for this study is drawn from both secular and religious publications, with slightly more coming from the latter due to the religious emphasis of this thesis. The central core of the sources comprises twelve religious publications and ten that are secular. Several other influential publications, listed below, were also researched thoroughly in the survey but proved inattentive to issues related to the study. Nevertheless, in at least one or two chapters they provided important insights and have been cited where relevant. Looking first to core sources in the religious press, two influential papers loom large and provide a liberal evangelical perspective, and both were influenced by the redoubtable Henry Ward Beecher. The *Independent* was technically a Congregational publication, but, as was common among religious weeklies until later in the century, it was just as devoted to secular news and other miscellany as it was to religion. Founded in 1848, it quickly became a powerhouse, largely through the anti-slavery writings and published sermons of Henry Ward Beecher.⁵⁹ Beecher, pastor of the Plymouth Congregational Church in Brooklyn, New York from 1847 until his death in 1887, had become one of the most famous men in America. Beginning in 1861, he ran the paper

⁵⁹ Gary Dorrien, *American Liberal Theology*, pp. 195-207.

along with his protégé Theodore Tilton who was the acting editor-in-chief until 1870.⁶⁰ In the postbellum era it was a loyal Republican organ until the nomination of James Blaine in 1884 when many liberal Republicans endorsed the Democratic candidate Grover Cleveland.⁶¹ Beecher left the *Independent* in 1870 following a dispute with the paper's ownership and from that time forward publisher-editor Henry C. Bowen ran it until his death in 1896. Under Bowen it began living up to its name and was increasingly nondenominational and of an independent spirit in politics.⁶² The paper featured luminaries such as Henry James, William Cullen Bryant, William Dean Howells, John Greenleaf Whittier and the highly influential liberal theologians Horace Bushnell and Washington Gladden. Its circulation levelled off in 1870 following Beecher's departure, but it maintained an important position among American weeklies throughout the period.⁶³

The second important liberal weekly was the *Christian Union* (from 1893 the *Outlook*). Like the *Independent* it was largely free of denominational control.⁶⁴ In 1870 the fledgling *Church Union* was purchased by J. B. Ford and Company publishers, and Henry Ward Beecher was brought in as editor-in-chief. At Beecher's request the name was changed to the *Christian Union*. The paper was eclectic in format but the main attraction was Beecher's printed sermons. After just three years it attained the largest circulation ever witnessed by a religious periodical, reaching over 132,000 subscribers.⁶⁵ Disaster came as quickly as success, however, with the great economic panic of 1873 and the public revelation that same year of Beecher's 1870 affair with the wife of his business

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 201.

⁶¹ Mott, *American Magazines*, vol 3, p. 281.

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 76, 282.

⁶³ Dorrien, *American Liberal Theology*, pp. 195-207.

⁶⁴ Mott, *American Magazines*, vol 3, p. 59

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 425.

partner Theodore Tilton.⁶⁶ Within two years the paper lost three-fourths of its circulation. After a period of reorganisation, Lyman Abbott was made co-editor along with Beecher until 1881 when Abbott became editor-in-chief and steered the paper more in the direction of voicing opinion.⁶⁷ ‘The Outlook’ was an important editorial column and in 1893 it became the new name of the paper.⁶⁸ Richard Hofstadter has suggested that in the 1870s the *Christian Union* was the most influential religious paper in the country and one of the first to give a fair hearing to Darwinian evolution.⁶⁹

There are several leading evangelical papers represented in the study. The two important New York Presbyterian weeklies of the period were the *Observer* and the *Evangelist*.⁷⁰ The *Observer* was launched in 1833 by Sidney E. and Richard Morse, brothers of the inventor Samuel Morse. Its long-time editor was Samuel I. Prime who in 1885 was succeeded by Charles A. Stoddard. After the Civil War it was increasingly independent of the Presbyterian Church and by the 1890s it referred to itself as ‘evangelical’ or ‘undenominational’.⁷¹ The *Evangelist* was a conservative Presbyterian weekly founded in 1830 to promote revivals, temperance and other reforms. It was strongly anti-slavery during the Civil War period and provided a variety of book reviews along with news for farmers, scientific news, bills in Congress, foreign religious news,

⁶⁶ Applegate, *Most Famous Man in America*, pp. 421-425.

⁶⁷ Mott, *American Magazines*, vol 3, pp. 425-426.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 428.

⁶⁹ Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought* (New York: George Braziller, 1959), pp. 27-28.

⁷⁰ Mott, *American Magazines*, vol 4, p. 293.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, and *APS Online*:

<<http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.lib.ou.edu/publication/26663/citation/13B85BEF0BA48B403CF/2?accountid=12964>>

progress of the gospel, and occupations for women are a few of the topics included.⁷²

Throughout our period it was under the distinguished editorship of Henry M. Field, a participant in the 1887 and '88 *North American Review* symposium wherein Gladstone confronted Robert Green Ingersoll, the popular agnostic author and orator.

Two important Methodist papers included in the study are the *Christian Advocate* of New York and *Zion's Herald* of Boston. The *Christian Advocate* was the leading weekly among the members of the Methodist Episcopal Church. It was founded in 1826 and its first editor was Nathan Bangs, the circuit rider and Canadian Methodist elder. Eventually it became the most widely circulated Methodist paper, reaching a circulation of 70,000 by 1879.⁷³ There were fifteen other regional versions, for example, the *Western Christian Advocate*. From 1880-1912 the editor of the primary organ was James Munroe Buckley, the influential Brooklyn pastor and the chief catalyst for the founding of New York Methodist Hospital.⁷⁴ Dr Theodore L. Cuyler, an acquaintance of Gladstone, whom we shall encounter several times in our study, was a regular contributor under Buckley.⁷⁵ *Zion's Herald* was formed in Boston in 1823. It was noted for its independence and advocacy of abolitionism, Methodist missions, temperance and women's rights. Its contents also included short sermons, poetry, biography, and political, literary, and scientific news items.⁷⁶

⁷² *APS Online*:

<<http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.lib.ou.edu/publication/24208/citation/13B85C26E4E2A442012/1?accountid=12964>>

⁷³ Mott, *American Magazines*, vol 3, p. 70.

⁷⁴ George Preston Mains, *James Monroe Buckley* (New York: The Methodist Book Concern, 1917), p. 100.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 102

⁷⁶ *APS Online*:

<<http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.lib.ou.edu/publication/24380/citation/13B85C98282209AD4E7/3?accountid=12964>>

Influential among the Congregational churches was the Boston *Congregationalist*, which began in 1849 as a voice for the New Divinity school of theology. It absorbed the Boston *Recorder* in 1867 becoming the *Congregationalist and Boston Recorder* until reverting to the *Congregationalist* in 1870.⁷⁷ It remained staunchly conservative in the latter-half of the century and was influential within the denomination. The paper helped ignite a controversy over academic freedom when it editorialised against the invitation in 1881 to the liberal theologian Newman Smyth to succeed Edwards A. Park at Andover Seminary, an offer subsequently retracted by the board of trustees.⁷⁸ In addition to denominational news it featured American and international news, new book notices and other miscellany. Frank L. Mott, in his *History of American Magazines*, has referred to it as among the ‘outstanding journals of Congregational faith or flavor’.⁷⁹

Protestant theological reviews were generally focused on theological issues and thus had little to say about Gladstone, but two that did in at least half of topics of our study were the *Methodist Review* and the *Unitarian Review*. Launched in 1841, The *Methodist Review* was one of America's oldest religious journals. Modelled after the *Arminian Magazine* of the English Methodists, it frequently published extracts from that magazine and others. Under Daniel D. Whedon, its editor from 1856 to 1884, it achieved its highest point of general influence. Whedon wrote vigorously, giving attention to general literature, public affairs, education, and science as well as to theology and church polity.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Howard A. Bridgman in Albert E. Dunning and Joseph Edwin Roy, eds, *Congregationalists in America: A Popular History of the Origin, Belief, Polity, Growth and Work* (Boston: Pilgrim Press, 1894), p. 478.

⁷⁸ Dorrien, *American Liberal Theology*, pp. 290-291.

⁷⁹ Mott, *American Magazines*, vol 3, p. 76.

⁸⁰ *APS Online*:

<<http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.lib.ou.edu/publication/35593/citation/13B8597E9CA719F9531/5?accountid=12964>>

In the 1890s under William Valentine Kelly it became more literary than theological.⁸¹

The *Unitarian Review* was a Harvard-influenced monthly that became the journal of record among Unitarians after the *Christian Examiner* ceased publication in 1869. It had numerous editors in its relatively short life yet featured an impressive array of contributors. Among them were Frederick H. Hedge and George E. Ellis of Harvard Divinity School, and Henry W. Bellows, the longtime pastor of All Souls Church in New York City. In 1892 the review was succeeded by the quarterly *New World*, which was a leading voice for topics such as comparative religions, sociology, literature and international relations. Among its renowned contributors were George Santayana, Josiah Royce, William James, Lyman Abbott and Moncure Conway.⁸² The *Baptist Quarterly Review*, which represented the interests of those who in 1907 organised as the Northern Baptist Convention, also provided important commentary, but in only two chapters of our study.

Catholic opinion is drawn primarily from the *Catholic World* (1865-1906) and the *American Catholic Quarterly* (1876-1924). The editors of each saw their mission to stand as a bulwark against modern secular trends. The *Catholic World* was founded by the Paulist priest Father Isaac Hecker to be a synthesis of Roman Catholicism with American identity. He was a leader in the emergence of a distinctive ‘Americanism’ that appeared in the 1870s and continued until condemned by Rome in the 1890s.⁸³ The review shared with most evangelicals of the period a fear and loathing of atheism along with a concern to

⁸¹ Mott, *American Magazines*, vol 4, p. 291.

⁸² *Ibid.*, pp. 294-95.

⁸³ See Gerald P. Fogerty, *The Vatican and the Americanist Crisis: Denis J. O'Connell, American Agent* (Rome: Gregorian University, 1974); and William L. Portier, ‘Isaac Hecker and the First Vatican Council’, *Catholic Historical Review*, 71 (1985), pp. 206-227.

promote temperance and the welfare of blacks and working men.⁸⁴ *The American Catholic Quarterly* was published in Philadelphia and was never as widely distributed as the *Catholic World* but had a similar Americanist tone. Its principal editor was James Corcoran, who had opposed the infallibility ruling during the First Vatican Council.⁸⁵ *Brownson's Journal* was also an important Catholic organ, but only to our first two chapters as it ceased publishing in 1875. The highly respected Catholic organ was founded in 1844 by Orestes Brownson, the transcendentalist convert to Catholicism. The review had always functioned primarily as a vehicle for his views. Brownson ceased publication in 1864 but continued again from 1873 to 1875.⁸⁶ A leading voice of American Catholic thought for decades, Brownson had been a champion of the liberal Catholic movement in the 1850s, but after the papal promulgation of the Syllabus of Errors retreated into strict Catholic conservatism.⁸⁷

Among the important religious reviews that appear infrequently in the study but were researched thoroughly are the following: the *Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review*, the leading organ of Old School Presbyterians; *Bibliotheca Sacra*, the Congregational organ affiliated with Andover Seminary until Edwards Amasa Park, its editor, had it relocated to Oberlin, Ohio, in 1884;⁸⁸ the *Andover Review*, which arose in 1884 and became a leading voice of progressive orthodoxy;⁸⁹ the venerable Congregational *New Englander* which in 1892 became the *Yale Review*; the *Reformed*

⁸⁴ Ronald Lora and William Henry Longton, eds, *The Conservative Press in the Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century America* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), pp. 369-371.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 381.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 358.

⁸⁷ McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom*, pp. 45, 89.

⁸⁸ Lora, *Conservative Press* pp. 91-101.

⁸⁹ Dorrien, *Making of American Liberal Theology*, pp. 291,292.

Quarterly Review; the *Episcopalian Church Review*; the *Quaker Friends' Review*; and the *Universalist Quarterly*.

The principal secular sources represented in our study include the following ten publications. The *New York Herald* and the *New York Tribune* by the 1840s were the two powerhouses of the newspaper world and continued to be influential national papers for much of the nineteenth century.⁹⁰ The two great rivals eventually merged in 1924 into the *New York Herald Tribune*. The *Tribune* was founded by Horace Greeley in 1841 and became the most widely respected paper in the nation. Greeley saw his role as that of public intellectual and his paper was aligned first with the Whigs, then with the Republicans, and officially with Liberal Republicans for whom in 1872 he was nominated for president along with the Democratic party. Despite party affiliations, however, under Greeley, and his longtime editor and successor Whitelaw Reid, the *Tribune* remained independent and freely criticised political parties. James Gordon Bennett was the brilliant owner of the *Herald* from its founding in 1835. In 1866 he turned the paper over to his son James Jr. By 1870 the paper had the largest staff of reporters in the Anglo-American world with twenty-three. *The Times* of London by comparison had nineteen.⁹¹ The *Herald* was the most popular American newspaper in Europe for much of the nineteenth century.⁹²

The *New York Times* was founded in 1851 by Henry J. Raymond and was very successful by the 1860s and 70s. Although Raymond was active in Republican politics, he envisioned the paper to be an impartial news source that would avoid the excesses of

⁹⁰ Douglas, *Golden Age*, pp. 23-24.

⁹¹ Smythe, *Gilded Age Press*, p. 58.

⁹² Emery, *Press and America*, p. 290.

sensationalism often practised by other New York papers such as the *Sun* and the *Herald*.⁹³ The *New York Times* was nominally Republican but in 1872 endorsed the Liberal Republican presidential candidate Horace Greeley and in 1884 bolted with other Republican ‘Mugwumps’ to the Democratic candidate Grover Cleveland. The paper lost significant readership in both instances.⁹⁴ Although its circulation was often well below some of the larger papers in New York, its importance to the present study stems from its strong emphasis on political commentary and its loyal following among the elite.⁹⁵

The most important transatlantic journal of opinion during the period was the *North American Review*. In association with James Russell Lowell, Charles Eliot Norton, scion of the prominent Eliot and Norton families of Boston, assumed the primary editorship in 1863 and the venerable but steadily declining journal was transformed into an organ for radical Republicanism and Millian liberalism.⁹⁶ Its editors built up a staff of contributors which included Edwin L. Godkin, Charles Francis Adams, Jr, James Parton, and George William Curtis, an editor of *Harper's Weekly*. It was subsequently edited by a Harvard professor of history, the liberal-minded Henry Adams from 1869 to 1876.⁹⁷ The review underwent more change in 1877 when Allen Thorndike Rice, who in only his mid-twenties took over as owner and editor and changed it from a quarterly to a bi-monthly and eventually to a monthly.⁹⁸ Circulation of the magazine increased markedly under Rice when placed greater emphasis on current events and courted prominent authors like Gladstone who contributed numerous articles. It soon came to rival the popular illustrated

⁹³ Douglas, *Golden Age*, pp. 119-130.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 120; and Smythe, *Gilded Age Press* pp. 20-21.

⁹⁵ Smythe, *Gilded Age Press*, pp. 176-177.

⁹⁶ Turner, *Liberal Education*, pp. 187-190.

⁹⁷ Mott, *American Magazines*, vol 3, p. 263.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

magazines in popularity.⁹⁹ Rice also began to emulate the symposium format that had been so successful for James Knowles' London-based *Nineteenth Century*.¹⁰⁰ Such controversies could prove highly profitable, especially when famous personalities were the featured writers.

Another important magazine in our sample, and perhaps the most influential among the liberal elite, was the *Nation*. Founded in 1865 as the Civil War was winding down, it was conceived as an organ of abolitionism, radical reconstruction and liberal reform. It also advocated a broad program of social and scientific reform premised on an educated electorate, with common schools and public libraries playing a crucial role.¹⁰¹ Charles Eliot Norton, then editor of the *North American Review*, became one of the driving forces in its founding and enlisted his new friend Edwin L. Godkin, the Irish expatriate formerly of the London *Daily News*, to be its editor.¹⁰² Godkin acquired a national reputation first at the *Nation* and in the 1880s as editor-in-chief of *New York Evening Post* which in 1881 acquired the *Nation*. Henry Villard, the journalist turned railroad magnate, purchased the *Nation* from Godkin and it became a weekly supplement to *New York Evening Post* until 1900.¹⁰³ As editor of the *Post*, Godkin remained in charge of the *Nation*. Although never widely circulated—it had only 8,000 subscribers by 1880—the *Nation* exerted strong influence on intellectuals and featured famous authors such as Longfellow, Lowell, both Henry Jameses and Norton himself, who regularly contributed book reviews.¹⁰⁴ Beyond

⁹⁹ 'Death of Allen Thorndike Rice', *CT*, 17 May 1889, p. 4.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 37-38.

¹⁰¹ Quigley, *Second Founding*, p. 31.

¹⁰² Turner, *Liberal Education*, pp. 185, 197.

¹⁰³ Arthur J. Kaul, 'Edwin Lawrence Godkin', in McKerns, Joseph P., ed, *Biographical Dictionary of American Journalism* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989), pp. 277-279.

¹⁰⁴ Mott, *American Magazines*, vol 3, pp. 40, 329-346; and Turner, *Liberal Education*, p. 197.

politics, Godkin's *Nation* gave a favorable place to evolutionary writings. Its reviewers were among the first to praise Darwin, Wallace and Spencer.¹⁰⁵

Our study relies on another influential and widely circulated liberal magazine, *Harper's Weekly*. Inspired by the success of *London Illustrated News*, Fletcher Harper of Harper & Brothers publishing company in New York founded it in 1857. It had been preceded by *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* (1850), which was devoted primarily to republishing literature from other magazines.¹⁰⁶ *Harper's Weekly* rose quickly in popularity due to its illustrated coverage of the Civil War by skilled artists such as Winslow Homer and Thomas Nast. Although eclectic in its content, *Harper's* offered much in the way of political commentary and became a leading organ of the Republican party after the war. Its fame spread in 1871 when, along with the *New York Times*, it exposed the corrupt Tweed Ring of Tammany Hall in New York City.¹⁰⁷ Like several other reform-minded Republican papers, it supported Democratic candidate Grover Cleveland for president in 1884. It was also among the major voices for reform of the civil service.¹⁰⁸ *Harper's* merged with the *Independent* in 1916, which itself then merged with the *Outlook* in 1928.

Two important papers outside of New York that appear prominently in our study are the *Springfield Republican* of Springfield, Massachusetts and the *Chicago Daily Tribune*. Under the ownership of Samuel Bowles III, by 1860 the *Republican* had established a national reputation second only to the *New York Tribune* and became one of

¹⁰⁵ Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism*, pp. 23-24.

¹⁰⁶ Wood, *Magazines in the United States*, p. 73.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 86-92

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 80; and Mott, *American Magazines*, vol 4, p. 211.

the great newspapers of the nineteenth century.¹⁰⁹ Bowles was an influential activist in the Republican party who, along with Charles Eliot Norton and E. L. Godkin among others, wrote the party platform in 1866.¹¹⁰ The other influential paper in this study lying outside of New York is the *Chicago Tribune*, which was founded in 1847 by John L. Scripps. From 1855 to '64 the paper rose to prominence with Joseph L. Medill as co-owner and managing editor.¹¹¹ The *Tribune* was instrumental in the nomination of Abraham Lincoln in 1860 and became the leading Republican paper in Chicago as well as the entire Midwest for its excellent reporting from war correspondents during the Civil War.¹¹² After the war Horace White was installed as editor-in-chief and in 1872 the paper was loyal to the Liberal Republicans. The *Tribune* also took a radical stand towards the Freedmen following the war, advocating black suffrage.¹¹³ Chicago itself by the 1880s had become a vital national center of commerce. As Jackson Lears has observed, 'It was the Rome of the Great West; all (rail)roads led to it.'¹¹⁴ By 1880 Chicago was the fourth largest city in America and by 1890 it was second only to New York. The *Chicago Tribune* had a national reputation and represented a major population centre of the period, thus making it a compelling contribution to the study sample.

Two important publications bring a slightly different perspective to the study. The first is the Boston *Investigator*, a leading freethought paper throughout the nineteenth century. It was founded in 1831 by Abner Kneeland, a former Baptist minister turned

¹⁰⁹ Emery, *Press and America*, p. 241.

¹¹⁰ Turner, *Liberal Education*, p. 209.

¹¹¹ Douglas, *Golden Age*, p. 50

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 64.

¹¹³ Eric Foner, *The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2010), pp. 331-332.

¹¹⁴ Jackson Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877-1920* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2009), p. 141.

agnostic who was the only person ever imprisoned for blasphemy in Massachusetts, having been indicted in 1834.¹¹⁵ Horace Seaver was its editor from 1839 to 1876 and Lemuel K. Washburn, whom we shall encounter later in our study, presided as editor from 1876 until it suspended publication in 1904. Washburn was a former Unitarian minister and a freethinker in the manner of Robert Ingersoll, whom we shall encounter in chapter 6.¹¹⁶ The second journal, which becomes an important source in later chapters of our study, is the *Critic*. The literary review journal was formed in 1881 by the brother-sister team of Joseph and Jeanette Gilder. Among its many celebrated contributors were Walt Whitman, Julia Ward Howe, William H. Rideing and Edward Everett Hale. The *Critic* published both American and British authors, but, as Frank Mott has observed, there was a tendency to be ‘unusually severe’ towards the latter.¹¹⁷ Several other secular papers and magazines are part of the survey but generally had little to say about Gladstone and the themes of this thesis. They are cited in those instances where they did and include the following: the *Atlantic*, the *Washington Post* (a fairly new paper founded in 1877), *Literary World*, *Scribner’s Monthly* (The *Century* from 1881), and the popular *Littell’s Living Age*, which featured articles about Gladstone re-printed from British magazines.

As we turn from the primary source literature to the secondary, it is interesting to note that the published literature about Gladstone included over 600 items as of 2012.¹¹⁸ With no slowing in sight, perhaps the continued fascination with the statesman may be explained by the fact that, as Colin Matthew has suggested, ‘an assessment of Gladstone is

¹¹⁵ Roderick, Bradford, *D. M. Bennett: The Truth Seeker* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2006), pp. 97-102.

¹¹⁶ Bill Cooke, ‘Boston Investigator’, Tom Flynn, ed, *New Encyclopedia of Unbelief* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2007), p. 150.

¹¹⁷ Mott, *American Magazines*, vol 3, pp. 548-551.

¹¹⁸ Ruth Windscheffel, ‘Introduction’, in Quinault, Roland and others, eds, *William Gladstone: New Studies and Perspectives* (London: Ashgate, 2012), p. 3.

a personification of an assessment of Britain's moment in world history'.¹¹⁹ That enduring allure has taken Gladstonian historiography through several important stages along the way.¹²⁰ John Morley's monumental three-volume *Life of William Ewart Gladstone* (1903) stood largely unchallenged until the arrival in the 1960s of the conservative British school of 'high politics'. The revisionist scholars within the movement, as Richard Brent has suitably summarised, 'sought to rid the study of politics of the prevailing liberal highmindedness which was seen as its most characteristic element in the 1960s'.¹²¹ Although by no means a unified school of thought, the focus of study stemmed from the premise of a 'sociology of power', wherein the locus of political supremacy was seen to lie not in public opinion or the institutions of democracy, but rather in the world of political manoeuvre among parliamentary elites who merely offered the illusion of being influenced by public opinion.

Chief among the progenitors of the school were Maurice Cowling, Richard Shannon, A.B. Cooke and John Vincent.¹²² When such a construct was applied to Gladstone's policies, especially in Ireland, they were interpreted in a more politically calculating and conspiratorial frame of reference. For example, Gladstone's motives for disestablishing the Irish Church were viewed by Vincent as opportunism to unite the disparate factions of the Liberal party against Disraeli, thus creating a political dividend

¹¹⁹ H. C. G. Matthew, *Gladstone, 1809-1898* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 645.

¹²⁰ See Ruth Windscheffel, 'Introduction', in Quinault, Roland and others, eds, *William Gladstone*; see also Mark Nixon, 'Constructing the People's William: popular biographies of Gladstone' [unpublished conference paper], Gladstone Umbrella, St Deiniol's Library, May 2005.

¹²¹ Richard Brent, 'Butterfield's Tories: "High Politics" and the Writing of Modern British Political History', *The Historical Journal*, 30 (1987), p. 945.

¹²² *Ibid*, pp. 946-950.

both for Gladstone and the Liberal party.¹²³ Within Gladstonian studies, the high politics school found its most potent force in the iconoclastic works of Richard Shannon such as his 1999 *Gladstone: Heroic Minister, 1865-1898*. If this more critical phase of scholarship proved too critical for many, it had nonetheless accomplished the task of demythologising Gladstone and it stimulated reappraisals of Victorian politics. The extent to which Americans perceived political machinations at work in Gladstone's motives for promoting public policies will appear as a leitmotif within our survey.

Gladstonian studies experienced a sea-change with the appearance of the fourteen-volume edition of *The Gladstone Diaries* (1968-1994).¹²⁴ Inaugurated by Michael Foot, it was largely the work of Colin Matthew whose introductions to various volumes were subsequently revised and published as two volumes of biography in 1986 and 1995 and combined in 1997 as the single-volume *Gladstone: 1809-1898*. Matthew's biographical work is widely recognized as the yardstick for Gladstone scholars. The *Diaries* became the catalyst for new and less conventional studies. Additionally, both the centenary of the statesman's death (1998) and the bicentenary of his birth (2009) were commemorated with academic conferences that also stimulated fresh approaches to Gladstonian scholarship. Following the 1998 conference, the *Gladstone Centenary Essays*, edited by David Bebbington and Roger Swift, was published in 2000.¹²⁵ The 2009 conference gave birth to the 2012 collection of essays entitled *William Gladstone: New Studies and Perspectives*. In it Ruth Clayton Windscheffel has deftly summarised the impressive panoply of

¹²³ Ian St John, *Gladstone and the Logic of Victorian Politics* (London: Anthem Press, 2010), pp. 134-37.

¹²⁴ M. R. D. Foot and H. C. G. Matthew, eds, *The Gladstone Diaries: With Cabinet Minutes and Prime-Ministerial Correspondence*, 14 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968-1994)

¹²⁵ David Bebbington and Roger Swift, eds, *Gladstone Centenary Essays* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000)

Gladstonian scholarship that has emerged in the wake of these events. Touching upon David Bebbington's analysis following the 1998 centenary conference, Windscheffel noted that throughout much of the twentieth century, biographers placed an inordinate emphasis upon Gladstone's political career, with the debate among historians centred largely on Gladstone's relationship to currents of popular politics and radicalism against those of high politics and Victorian elites.¹²⁶ Nevertheless, as Windscheffel informs us, greater insight into the interconnectedness of Gladstone's 'public' and 'private' worlds, informed by the *Diaries*, combined with new developments in social history and postmodernism, have opened fertile fields for Gladstonian scholars. Thus, for example, recent studies have examined Gladstone's relationship to women; the influence of books on his inner life and public policies; linguistic analysis of his Victorian-era rhetoric; and representational interpretations through the study of visual and material culture, to name a few.¹²⁷

Windscheffel has also highlighted the important development of innovations in the study of Gladstone's intellectual world, the most salient study being David Bebbington's *The Mind of Gladstone: Religion, Homer, and Politics* (2004). Building upon several authors of the 1980s and 90s,¹²⁸ Bebbington has delineated the evolution of the Gladstone's thought on the relationship of church and state, the nuances of his High Church theology, the religious impulses that fuelled his prolific Homeric studies, the theological underpinnings of his Christian apologetics (the fundamental motivation of the

¹²⁶ Windscheffel in Quinault and others, eds, *William Gladstone*, pp. 3-4.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 4-9.

¹²⁸ Perry Butler, *Gladstone: Church, State and Tractarianism: A Study of his Religious Ideas and Attitudes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982); Agatha Ramm, 'Gladstone's Religion', *Historical Journal*, 28 (1985), pp. 327-340; Boyd Hilton, *The Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought, 1785-1865* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); P. J. Jagger, *Gladstone: The Making of a Christian Politician: The Personal Religious Life and Development of William Ewart Gladstone, 1809-1832* (Allison Park, PA: Pickwick Publications, 1991) J.P. Parry's *Democracy and Religion: Gladstone and the Liberal Party, 1867-1875* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986)

statesman's mature adult life) and the essential rationale for Gladstonian Liberalism. In his introduction, Bebbington has stressed the importance of Colin Matthew, who in his biography demonstrated the significant connection between Gladstone's religious convictions for interpreting his policies. Matthew traced in particular the High Church theme of religious nationality that informed the statesman's writings on Vaticanism (the subject of our third chapter), the Bulgarian atrocities and his view of the Concert of Europe. Additionally, Frank Turner stressed drove the religious point home at the 2009 bicentenary conference where he noted that the complexity of Gladstonian Liberalism cannot be properly understood apart from an overwhelmingly Protestant religious impulse.¹²⁹ Turner also noted that Gladstone was the first leader of a liberal democracy to stress the importance of religion in his own life and in the culture of the nation. Gladstone's religious views have become an important prism through which to view his personal and political motivations.¹³⁰ Yet, despite the many innovations to the study of Gladstone, relatively few have touched upon his relationship to the United States with any great depth up to the present.

Gladstone, it is true, has long been included in transatlantic studies. However, other than a few exceptions that we shall come to presently, attention has been largely confined to his relationship with the United States at two crucial events related to the Civil War: the infamous Newcastle speech of 1862 and the events surrounding the *Alabama* claims. Morley devoted several pages to both, but included little else concerning America,

¹²⁹ Frank M. Turner, 'Gladstone: A Political not a Social Radical' in Quinault, ed, *William Gladstone*, pp. 24-28.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

and major biographers Philip Magnus and Roy Jenkins followed a similar pattern.¹³¹ Peter J. Parish and Roland Quinault have further illuminated Gladstone's views on slavery, and his resignation to a Southern victory, which extended beyond the Newcastle speech to his sympathies with the Southerners in likening their struggle for regional autonomy to that of Italian unification. Parish also included a brief paragraph on Gladstone's eloquent 'Kin Beyond Sea' essay in the *North American Review* in 1878, which was not only an important milestone for Gladstone's personal rapprochement with the United States, but for the two nations as well.¹³²

In 'Kin Beyond Sea' Gladstone gave high praise for the American system of government before outlining the intricacies of the British system. Most memorably, however, Gladstone had flattered Americans by predicting the United States' ascent to global economic dominance beyond even that of the British Empire: 'But there can hardly be a doubt, as between the America and England of the future, that the daughter, at some no very distant time, will, whether fairer or less fair, be unquestionably yet stronger than the mother.'¹³³ A more recent study in the tradition of Charles S. Campbell's 1974 transatlantic work, *From Revolution to Rapprochement: The United States and Great Britain, 1783-1900*, is Duncan Andrew Campbell's *Unlikely Allies: Britain, America and the Victorian Origins of the Special Relationship* (2007). In it he followed the well-trodden path over the Civil War, but he also included significant analysis about the meaning of 'Kin Beyond Sea', calling it the 'first published declaration by a British

¹³¹ Morley, *Gladstone*, vol 2, pp. 76-78, 405-406, 394-397; Philip Magnus, *Gladstone: A Biography* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1954), pp. 153, 206-207; Roy Jenkins, *Gladstone: A Biography* (New York: Random House, 1995), pp. 341, 354-360, 237-239.

¹³² Roland Quinault, 'Gladstone and Slavery', *Historical Journal*, 52 (2009), pp. 363-383; Parish in Jagger, ed, *Gladstone*, pp. 90-93, 102.

¹³³ WEG, 'Kin Beyond Sea', *NAR*, 127 (1878), pp. 179-213.

statesman underlining political, cultural and social links between Britain and the United States'.¹³⁴ He also noted its significance in the origin of the idea of an Anglosphere, or a 'common Anglo-American cultural and political heritage based not only on the English language, but on similar notions of liberty and freedom, representative government, the supremacy of the law, the separation of political powers, and so forth'.¹³⁵ As a result of 'Kin Beyond Sea', Campbell noted, Gladstone was elected a 'foreign honorary member' of the American Academy of Arts, and received countless invitations to visit the United States, including an offer to lecture at Harvard, which he declined to accept.¹³⁶

The first monograph devoted to placing Gladstone in an Anglo-American context other than the Civil War was Robert Kelley's *The Transatlantic Persuasion: the Liberal-Democratic Mind in the Age of Gladstone* (1969).¹³⁷ In it he sought to locate a common set of political principles among the Liberal parties of Great Britain and Canada and the Democratic Party in the United States. Most notably, he identified the statesman as the catalyst for a transatlantic political culture which had inherited a common worldview established by Adam Smith, Edmund Burke and Thomas Jefferson. Kelley located in Gladstone a tradition of applying political moralism to a host of social, economic and international issues. Although a valuable comparative study of a shared Anglosphere and of Gladstone's crucial importance to it, Kelley's treatment of the United States focused largely on liberal currents in the Democratic party of the 1880s to the neglect of its earlier roots among Republicans. Moreover, the spotlight of the study is directed primarily on

¹³⁴ Campbell, *Unlikely Allies*, p.3, 203-206.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 203-205.

¹³⁷ Robert Kelley, *The Transatlantic Persuasion: The Liberal-Democratic Mind in the Age of Gladstone* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969)

party leaders Samuel Tilden and Grover Cleveland, with little attention paid to American opinions of Gladstone and virtually none at all to the popular press.

To date, Murney Gerlach's *British Liberalism and the United States: Political and Social Thought in the Late Victorian Age* (2001) has offered the most comprehensive treatment of Gladstone's relationship to the United States. His survey of the relationship between British Liberals and the United States in the late nineteenth century included unprecedented treatment of Gladstone's important role in Anglo-American history. Gerlach incorporated most of Gladstone's influential writings and policies that found resonance on both sides of the Atlantic during the period. He focused primarily on Gladstone's role in public affairs, but he also discussed Gladstone's *North American Review* controversy with Robert Ingersoll. Gerlach drew extensively on the Gladstone Papers and on the letters and papers of his many American friends and acquaintances. His chief concern, however, was with the influence of America upon leading British Liberals, which is the opposite tack to that taken in this study.¹³⁸ Moreover, he included little analysis of the American press. Nevertheless, Gerlach's research is a remarkable contribution to both Gladstonian and nineteenth-century transatlantic studies and has provided crucial guidance for undertaking this project.

In the pages that follow, chapter two has as its primary emphasis an examination of American perceptions of Gladstone during the passage of the Irish Church Act in 1868 and 1869. Gladstone's legislative proposal for the disestablishment of the Church in 1868 propelled him into the premiership for the first time ahead of his great rival Benjamin Disraeli. The policy was viewed by Gladstone as important first step in pacifying Fenian

¹³⁸ Gerlach, *British Liberalism and the United States*, *Ibid.*, p. xv.

violence, and it found resonance in the United States due to the tensions that existed between Irish-Catholic immigrants and the Protestant establishment. Secondly, there is also brief consideration given to American estimates of Gladstone for his role in the ill-fated Reform Bill of 1867.

Chapter three centres on another Roman Catholic issue, that concerning the controversy over Gladstone's 1874 politically charged pamphlet *The Vatican Decrees in their Bearing on Civil Allegiance: A Political Expostulation* and his answer to his critics three months later, *Vaticanism: an Answer to Reproofs & Replies*. Gladstone's central charge declared the decree of infallibility a dangerous theological innovation that subordinated Catholics in all lands to the dictates of the pope, not merely in matters related to faith and morals, but in public affairs as well. The prominence of issues ancillary to the principal themes of *Vatican Decrees* will also be explored before an examination of how American opinion stood in relation to its claims.

Chapter four looks at the reaction of Americans to the challenge Gladstone faced when the avowed atheist Charles Bradlaugh was elected to the House of Commons. The extent to which Americans approved of the prime minister's handling of the on-going dispute will be the major focus of this chapter. Gladstone's reputation as a Christian statesman and a champion of liberty was tested at various stages in the dispute over whether or not an atheist could be prevented from taking his seat in the Commons. His introduction of an Affirmation Bill in 1883 became a crucial development in the controversy. For the purpose of contextualization, prior to addressing Bradlaugh, the chapter gives brief consideration to the American reception of the 'Kin Beyond Sea' essay, the Midlothian Campaigns and Gladstone's election as prime minister in 1880.

Chapter five gives consideration to Gladstone's two debates with T.H. Huxley in the British review the *Nineteenth Century*. Their first dispute of 1885 and '86 over 'Genesis and Geology' revisited the earlier nineteenth-century debates over the scientific accuracy of the Genesis creation narrative. The second controversy of 1890 and '91 was a dispute over the encounter between Jesus and the Gadarene demoniac of the New Testament gospels. The major themes of that debate included Mosaic dietary law, property rights and the ethnic and national identity of Gadara. The extent to which Americans regarded Gladstone as a credible and effective spokesman for issues related to science and advanced biblical exegesis will be the primary focus of this chapter. The chapter begins with a brief survey of American perceptions of Gladstone at the time of the first Huxley debate. Estimations of the statesman's Home Rule policy and his overall performance during his second government are considered afterwards.

Chapter six looks first at Gladstone's May 1888 review in the *Nineteenth Century* of Mary Ward's novel of lost faith *Robert Elsmere*. The crucial issue Gladstone confronted in the Ward review was the excesses of higher critical methodology. Especially popular among Unitarians, the theology embraced by the Elsmere character of the novel was associated with the rationalistic German theology of the Tübingen School. Ward was the granddaughter of the influential Rugby headmaster Thomas Arnold and niece of poet and essayist Matthew Arnold, both of whom were sympathetic to higher criticism. Gladstone's review sparked a serious debate in the United States over liberal theology and opinions about the statesman's effectiveness as a spokesman for orthodoxy. The second half of the chapter concerns Gladstone's much heralded 1888 foray into Christian apologetics with his *North American Review* debate against the colourful American

agnostic Robert Ingersoll. Gladstone joined what had begun in August 1887 as a symposium on faith and agnosticism between Ingersoll and Henry Field, editor of the *New York Evangelist*. Gladstone's bold defence of orthodox faith also included a lengthy reprimand of the agnostic's irreverent prose. Ingersoll's riposte was an assault on orthodoxy and Gladstone entitled 'Col. Ingersoll to Mr. Gladstone' and appeared in the subsequent edition.

Chapter seven examines American perceptions of Gladstone as a Christian scholar, a religious man and Liberal statesman from 1896 to 1900. Attention is focused initially on his 1896 magnum opus, his published edition of the *Works of Joseph Butler* in two volumes accompanied by *Studies Subsidiary to the Works of Bishop Butler*, a monograph devoted to analysis of the Anglican theologian's major themes and methods. Examination of the 1896 literature will provide important clues about Gladstone's reputation as a Christian scholar and insight into whether or not he made a convincing case for Butler's relevance amidst the rising influence of higher criticism and modern science. The latter half of the chapter surveys American opinions of Gladstone at his death, a theme which has been briefly addressed at the start of this chapter. The emphasis is on the various ways Americans remembered and celebrated the legendary statesman at his passing in 1898 relative to his religious devotion, Christian scholarship and Liberal statesmanship. Collectively these six chapters will explore the various ways in which Americans perceived William Ewart Gladstone relative to religion and politics, a previously unexamined dimension of his life.

CHAPTER TWO

THE IRISH CHURCH ACT

In the removal of this establishment I see the discharge of a debt of civil justice, the disappearance of a national, almost a world-wide reproach, a condition indispensable to the success of every effort to secure the peace and contentment of that country: finally relief to a devoted clergy from a false position, cramped and beset by hopeless prejudice, and the opening of a freer career to their sacred ministry. William Gladstone¹

The Irish Church Act of 1869 disestablished and disendowed the Church of Ireland, the state arm of the Church of England since the Act of Union in 1800, a source of unremitting affront to the island's Roman Catholic majority.² The bold proposal made by Gladstone in 1868 became the decisive political question of that year and propelled him into office over his great rival Benjamin Disraeli for the first of his four terms as British Prime Minister. His successful endorsement of the policy was a major success for the extension of religious equality in the United Kingdom.³ In his biography John Morley celebrated the event by asserting, 'as a monument to difficulties surmounted . . . I know not where in the records of our legislation to find its master'.⁴ As events in Parliament began to unfold in 1868 and carried into 1869, both mainstream and religious publications in the United States reported on its significance for Ireland, Great Britain and the future of liberal democracy. The London correspondent for the *New York Evangelist* proclaimed, 'not in the annals of our history, has there occurred an event more important'.⁵ It was declared in the *New York Herald*: 'The current of events in England shows us that the

¹Quoted in Morley, *Gladstone*, vol 2, p. 257.

²P. M. H. Bell, *Disestablishment in Ireland and Wales* (London: SPCK, 1969), p. 26.

³Parsons, 'Irish Disestablishment', in *Religion in Victorian Britain*, 4 vols, Gerald Parsons, ed, (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1988), II, p. 125.

⁴Morley, *Gladstone*, vol 2, p. 258.

⁵'Our Correspondence', *NYE*, 25 March 1869, p. 2.

success of popular government in the United States is destined soon to revolutionize the world.’⁶ As we shall see, not all commentators employed such high-flying prose, but Gladstone’s measures with regard to disestablishment were followed closely in the American press.

American interest in British policy towards Ireland had been piqued in the late 1860s when Fenian violence erupted in North America, Ireland and Britain, further complicating transatlantic relations. Among these new immigrants a fervent Irish nationalism could be found from the 1840s onward. One of the earliest expressions of Irish nationalism in America was the repeal movement. It was catalysed by the Irish Radical Daniel O’Connell whose call for the repeal of the Act of Union gained supporters in America through local clubs. In the 1840s they appeared in nearly every state, and President Tyler’s son Robert even became the movement’s national leader. When the repeal movement waned the Fenian Brotherhood stepped into the vacuum. The organisation was founded in 1858 by Young Ireland expatriates John O’Mahoney and Michael Doheny. The failed 1848 rebellion sent them and other Young Ireland refugees to the United States where they provided leadership for the cause of liberating the Irish homeland.⁷ The Fenians represented the American wing of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, also founded in 1858 by James Stephens in Dublin. American Fenians were highly motivated and in 1868 attracted over 100,000 protesters to a rally in New York. However, the Brotherhood never had more than 45,000 active members and trouble was already brewing in 1865 when Fenians splintered into two factions, one led by O’Mahoney

⁶ *NYH*, 23 July 1869, p. 4.

⁷ Lawrence J. McCaffrey, *The Irish Catholic Diaspora in America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976), p. 144.

who refused to step aside after losing re-election as president, the other an anti-O'Mahoney group called the Senate Wing. When Fenians led ill-fated military expeditions into Canada in 1866 and 1870 the movement lost much of its appeal and political clout and was all but dead by the mid-1870s.⁸ Large numbers of American Irish turned to the Clan na Gael as the better expression of Irish nationalism, as did members of the Irish Republican Brotherhood. Jerome J. Collins had founded Clan na Gael in 1867, but the organisation came to be dominated by John Devoy, who arrived in the United States in 1871 after being paroled from a British prison.⁹ These events, combined with the general ethos of anti-Catholic and anti-immigrant prejudice, doubtless caused the American press to be especially attuned to the issue of Irish Church disestablishment.

Before examining American perceptions of Gladstone's role in the Irish Church Act, it will be worthwhile to consider two crucial themes: first, there are the immediate events surrounding Gladstone and the Irish Church and the evolution of his views on Church-State relations; and second, we will also need to consider his reputation in postbellum America prior to the Irish Church Act. With respect to the first theme, in an 1867 letter to the radical John Bright he reflected upon his changed opinion following his resignation in 1845 from the Peel cabinet over the Roman Catholic Maynooth grant. 'I became free', Gladstone wrote, 'with respect to all Irish ecclesiastical questions, and on first standing for Oxford, in 1847, I declined pledging myself in principle to the Irish Established Church.'¹⁰ He had become free from the view he had put forth in his *The State*

⁸ Thomas N. Brown, *Irish-American Nationalism, 1870 - 1890* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1966), pp. 38-41.

⁹ McCaffrey, *Irish Diaspora*, p. 157.

¹⁰ WEG, 'Letter to John Bright', 10 Dec 1867, in Lathbury, D. C., *Correspondence on Church and Religion of William Ewart Gladstone*, 2 vols (London: John Murray, 1910) I, pp. 154-155.

in Its Relation with the Church (1838). In that youthful work he had envisioned a confessional state governed by the morals and tenets of the United Church of England and Ireland.¹¹ His belief that state power was impeding missionary work in Ireland lay at the root of his transformation. In his 30 March 1869 speech before the Commons he said as much:

No doubt, many persons may believe that the Disendowment of the Irish Church would be an injury to the Church of England. I claim for myself the liberty to hold an entirely opposite opinion. I maintain that to relieve the Church of England from a position which politically is odious and dangerous, and which socially is unjust, will be to strengthen her foundations, and give her fair play in the exercise of her great mission.¹²

This is not to say that he had endorsed separation of church from state in Great Britain in the same that it was understood by Americans. On the contrary, religion and politics remained indissolubly linked in his mind.¹³ Nevertheless, his opinion towards Ireland had clearly softened.

Gladstone's mature views on the Irish Church were partially rooted in the principle that government should not take precedence over those denominations of the Church catholic which held sway in any nation. That conviction was also a major influence on his foreign policy in regard to Eastern affairs.¹⁴ But, the modern condition of religious pluralism in Ireland had made the establishment untenable.¹⁵ In answer to those who believed disestablishment would prove injurious to Protestantism in Ireland, Gladstone stated in a 30 March 1868 speech before the Commons that the maintenance of the

¹¹ J. P. Parry, *Democracy and Religion: Gladstone and the Liberal Party, 1867-1875* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 153.

¹² WEG, 'The Irish Church', *Speeches on Great Questions of the Day*, 2nd ed (London: John Camden Hotten, Piccadilly, 1869), p. 153.

¹³ Parry, *Democracy and Religion*, p. 153.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 174-176.

¹⁵ David Bebbington, *William Ewart Gladstone: Faith and Politics in Victorian Britain* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1993), p. 147.

establishment had been accompanied by ‘an immense increase in the proportion of Roman Catholics to Protestants in Ireland’.¹⁶ In an 1865 letter to the English judge Robert Phillimore he admitted of the Irish Church, ‘I am not loyal to it as an Establishment’, but also acknowledged he would not take action on disestablishment until it was political practicable to do so.¹⁷ That opportunity arose in December of 1867 when action was required on the heels of recent unrest, including the bloody Fenian assault on Clerkenwell prison, which resulted in twelve killed and over a hundred injuries in an unsuccessful attempt to free several prisoners.¹⁸ However, it is entirely possible that Gladstone had the additional inducement of a planned Catholic university in Ireland which he and the Liberal party opposed.¹⁹ Nevertheless, in a letter to the Queen’s secretary Gladstone had succinctly stated his policy: ‘our purpose and duty is to endeavour to draw a line between the Fenians & the people of Ireland, & to make the people of Ireland indisposed to cross it’.²⁰ Gladstone publicly announced his goal of disestablishment in a speech at Southport on 19 December 1867.²¹ The relationship of Fenianism to necessary action in Ireland was unveiled in his 16 March 1868 speech before the House of Commons:

Who will deny the connexion between Fenianism and the dissatisfied state of feeling which exists in Ireland? Who will deny the connexion between that dissatisfied state of feeling and the policy that has been pursued by England? It is time now for us to examine this question.²²

¹⁶ WEG, *Speeches on Great Questions of the Day*, 2nd ed., (London: John Camden Hotten, 1869.), pp. 155-156.

¹⁷ WEG, ‘Letter to Sir R. Phillimore’, 4 April 1868, in Lathbury, *Correspondence on Church and Religion*, vol 1, p. 153.

¹⁸ Bell, *Disestablishment*, p. 81.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 81-82.

²⁰ Quoted in Matthew, *Gladstone*, p. 194.

²¹ Akenson, *Church of Ireland*, p. 234.

²² WEG, ‘State of Ireland, House of Commons 16 March 1868’, *Speeches on Great Questions*, p.109.

Gladstone was now ready to act in Ireland. As part of his 1868 general election bid, he released his *Chapter of Autobiography* (1868) in order to justify his transformed views. In it he wrote of his changed position as stated in *The State in Its Relation with the Church*:

My opinion of the Established Church of Ireland now is the direct opposite of what it was then. I then thought it reconcilable with civil and national justice; I now think the maintenance of it grossly unjust. I then thought its action was favourable to the interests of the religion which it teaches; I now believe it to be opposed to them.²³

He expressed a similar sentiment in a speech delivered in the town hall at Warrington on 12 October 1868, wherein he called the Irish Church a ‘contradiction of all the principles on which Church Establishments ever have been founded’.²⁴ Gladstone’s Irish Church policy was thus rooted firmly in his reverence for establishments of religion and his abiding respect for, and devotion to, the Church of England. As a foreign graft, the Church of Ireland had become an embarrassment and would be nobler if disestablished.²⁵

The drive for disestablishment of the Irish Church, as D.H. Akenson has suggested, came in two distinct phases. The first phase unfolded when the Irish Catholic Church made it clear to British Liberal politicians that there would be no tranquillity in Ireland without disestablishment. The leading voice of agitation for reform of land, Church and education was Archbishop Paul Cullen and his National Association, founded in Dublin in 1864. Ironically, the National Association took the position of voluntarism (no state religion) whereas standard Catholic dogma mandated that the Roman Catholic Church should replace the Anglican Church as the Established Church of Ireland. Practicality,

²³ WEG, *Chapter of Autobiography* (London: J. Murray, 1868), p. 21.

²⁴ WEG, ‘Speech Delivered in the Town Hall, Warrington 12 October 1868’, in *Speeches of the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone, M.P.: Delivered at Warrington, Ormskirk, Liverpool, Southport, Newton, Leigh, and Wigan in October 1868* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, & Co., 1868) p. 15.

²⁵ Parry, *Democracy and Religion*, p. 178.

however, necessitated the voluntaryist position because it was crucial to forge an alliance with British Liberals in order to placate anti-Catholic sentiment and temper cries of ‘no Popery’.²⁶ The approach bore fruit: the National Association of Ireland soon entered into negotiations with the Liberation Society, which was eager to exploit disestablishment in Ireland as a first step towards disestablishment of the Church of England. The alliance was also crucial in giving Gladstone a parliamentary majority after the 1868 general election.²⁷ Thus the second phase involved Gladstone’s framing and passing of the Irish Church Act. The bill was prepared by Gladstone himself in consultation with selected advisers. Following stiff opposition in Parliament and the House of Lords, the Irish Church Act passed into law on 26 July 1869 and had 1 May 1871 set as its start date. Under its provisions, the Irish Church received adequate reimbursement—some said far more than adequate—for its disendowment. The Roman Catholic Maynooth College and the Presbyterian *Regium Donum* grants were terminated, with both churches receiving lump sum payments as compensation.²⁸ As we shall see below, the American press was extremely motivated to report on developments in Ireland.

Before we examine the American press reports about disestablishment, a brief survey of what was being written about Gladstone in postbellum America prior to the statesman’s election in 1868 will provide some context. Some evidence exists that as early as 1866 he had already begun to redeem himself in the eyes of some in the United States despite the damage of the 1862 Newcastle speech. His central role in the Reform Bill of 1866, as Lord John Russell’s Chancellor of the Exchequer, had won him the admiration of

²⁶Akenson, *Church of Ireland*, p. 227.

²⁷ Bell, *Disestablishment*, pp. 41-43.

²⁸Akenson, *Church of Ireland*, pp. 268-273.

many Americans. In spite of the bill's defeat, the *New York Times* contended that Gladstone's efforts in seeking its passage had been hailed by every American. The statesman had received praise for his Liberal politics, his political skills and his personal disposition, the writer having also declared: 'Mr. Gladstone's is a name held in the highest esteem by intelligent and high minded Liberals all over the world.'²⁹ Moreover, the *New York Times* writer suggested that if his accession to the Liberal ranks had been recent, 'his conversion has been so thorough and his enthusiasm so great, that he has distanced them all in the practical and beneficial character of his measures'.³⁰ Even in the wake of Gladstone's resignation as party leader in 1867, the popular *Harper's Weekly* observed that no country 'is so rich in leaders that it could afford to lose so thoroughly-trained and able a man as Mr. GLADSTONE'.³¹ Additionally, when Liberals had triumphed in the 1868 general election a reporter for *Harper's Weekly* proclaimed that a true ally of America had taken office: 'With the accession of Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Bright the friends of America in England come into power. We may justly anticipate even a generous policy in the settlement of difficulties between us.'³² Moreover, if Gladstone's evolution from youthful High Tory to Peelite conservative and finally to Liberal led some to question his motives, a second *New York Times* article described him as a 'genuine Liberal and a statesman, with nothing of the demagogue in his composition'.³³ Its author observed that he had been gradually advancing in political theory to the most liberal stand-point. He had been

²⁹ 'Mr. Gladstone and the Reform League', *NYT*, 2 September 1866, p. 4.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ 'Mr. Gladstone and the English Liberals', *HW*, 4 May 1867, p. 275.

³² 'Mr. Gladstone Prime Minister', 19 December 1868, *HW*, p. 802.

³³ 'English Reform Bill', *NYT*, 6 April 1866, p.4.

sufficiently identified with liberal reforms to have gained a solid reputation among reform-minded Americans by 1868.

Nevertheless, at least one important liberal paper, Horace Greeley's *New York Tribune*, voiced some lingering doubts about Gladstone. In an April 1868 comment, an author saw little hope that Gladstone would pursue reform in Ireland apart from the Irish Church:

But Mr. Gladstone himself, should he come to power, would recoil from the task of touching the Irish Landlord question, or manhood suffrage, or the revival of the Irish Parliament, or representation according to population, and most of all from that question which is the essence of Fenianism, viz.: Irish Nationality. On these issues, which go to the core of Ireland's wrongs, Gladstone would be found as stolid and insensibly conservative as Disraeli.³⁴

Additionally, in a June 1869 article for the *Tribune* George Smalley suggested that the statesman's regard for America was greater than during the war, but 'his acquaintance with the American question is imperfect, and he still betrays occasionally a disposition to protect or palliate the offenses of the Government which let loose the Proclamation and the *Alabama*'.³⁵ 'It must be remembered', Smalley insisted, 'that Mr. Gladstone has hitherto shown a singular want of tact on American questions.'³⁶ Smalley seems to have been referring to a speech given by Gladstone in Parliament on 6 March 1868 about the matter of the *Alabama* claims. The offending remark was the statesman's expression of doubt about reparations in which he said the following: 'I certainly am not prepared to make the admission which my hon. Friend thinks will universally and without question be made,—that reparation is due from us to America in the matter of the *Alabama*.'³⁷ In fact

³⁴ *NYT*, 18 April 1868, p. 6.

³⁵ GWS, *NY.Trib*, 29 June 1869, p. 1.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ WEG, *Hansard*, vol 190, 1196, 6 March 1868.

Gladstone was merely responding to John Stuart Mill's contention that reparations should go forward without any arbitration whatsoever. Regardless of the statesman's true intentions, as a veteran Civil War reporter Smalley was uncertain of the statesman's intentions towards the United States and questioned his motives in the Irish Church question. No doubt memories of the 1862 Newcastle speech still lingered in his mind and that of the *Tribune's* publisher Horace Greeley.

Over the roughly year-long period from Gladstone's introduction of the Irish Church bill until its final passage, a few informative American opinions about Gladstone the man, his personal integrity and Christian statesmanship were published in stories related to disestablishment. 'Mr Gladstone is an honest statesman', the *Springfield Republican* asserted, 'by the convictions not less of his enemies than of his friends.'³⁸ The paper further declared: '[He] is honest from the earnestness of his devotion to political principles, and from his royal wholeheartedness. There is nothing negative about his integrity'.³⁹ The conservative Presbyterian *New York Observer*, one of the important journals in the period after the Civil War, was perhaps the most generous in its praise of the statesman. He was 'the purest as well as the wisest of living English statesmen'.⁴⁰ Providence had 'let loose upon us one worthy and noble in heart as he is powerful in intellect' and, Gladstone's career was 'one of the brightest and best ever run by a British statesman'.⁴¹ With the Irish Church Act he had achieved a victory for the right 'more signal and momentous than any leader before him'.⁴² In another article, the *Observer's*

³⁸ *SR*, 2 May 1868, p. 4.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ 'Great Ministerial Defeat', *NYO*, 9 April 1868, p.114.

⁴¹ *NYO*, 29 July 1869, p. 238.

⁴² *Ibid.*

London correspondent reported his anticipation of the presence of devout men in the new Parliament, stating, ‘the power of religion will be felt in it, more than in the one that has become extinct’.⁴³ The reason, he declared, was that ‘four of the men who are to move in its very highest circles are not ashamed anywhere to acknowledge their allegiance to Jesus Christ’. The four men included ‘Mr Gladstone, Sir Roundell Palmer, Mr Coleridge, and Mr Bright’.⁴⁴ The *Independent* reported that recent events called out for statesmanship and ‘the Liberals were fortunate in a leader who was equal to the occasion’.⁴⁵ Gladstone had received high praise in America both for his faith and personal moral bearing from evangelical and secular publications.

At the same time, however, there was at least one unflattering story about Gladstone going the rounds that suggested a character flaw. An author with E.L. Godkin’s recently founded *Nation* magazine (1865) certainly agreed with his disestablishment policy, but misgivings were expressed about the statesman’s demeanour. Gladstone possessed ‘an offensive tact at best, and he is devoured by “earnestness”’, the column read. Moreover, the difficulties of the Irish Church were sure to challenge Gladstone. The correspondent believed the statesman’s ‘great intellectual power and dexterity will need to be largely supplemented by tact and sympathy and forbearance—qualities for which he is not remarkable’.⁴⁶ This was a fairly common sentiment in Britain as well at that time. As Jonathan Parry reminds us, in the late 1850s and 1860s members of the British Liberal establishment distrusted Gladstone’s judgment, fearing he lacked stability.⁴⁷ If by 1868

⁴³ ‘New British Parliament’, *NYO*, 24 December 1868, p. 413.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ ‘An Ecclesiastical Cancer Removed’, *IND*, 9 April 1868, p. 4.

⁴⁶ ‘The Political Result in England’, *TN*, 26 November 1868. p. 434.

⁴⁷ Jonathan Parry, *The Rise and Fall of Liberal Government in Victorian Britain* (New Haven, CT:

some Americans expressed admiration of Gladstone for his personal qualities, it was not yet a universal sentiment.

There were also a few comments that suggested political calculation lay at the root of Gladstone's decision to pursue the Irish Church Bill rather than a true statesman-like desire to establish religious liberty. In the *New York Tribune*, George Smalley suspected that the sweeping away of the supremacy of an alien church in Ireland was being resolved not on its own merits, but essentially as an act of *Realpolitik*. 'It is not ecclesiastical freedom that is sought', Smalley wrote, 'as an end desirable in itself, but the conciliation of the Irish people as a means to their better government.'⁴⁸ It was similar to Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, which, Smalley insisted, was not issued for its virtue but rather as a war measure.⁴⁹ Smalley grasped the realities of political manoeuvre for bringing about changes in policy. Gladstone's co-religionists at the *Episcopalian American Quarterly Church Review* expressed a measure of uncertainty about his true intentions, suggesting that the sentiment was in the public consciousness. Nevertheless, the author of the article seemed to give him the benefit of the doubt:

While all appearances indicate a selfish ambition resolved on power at any price, yet Mr. Gladstone may have been animated by a large and profound statesmanship, reading the future with prophetic glance, and endeavoring to avoid anticipated ruin by timely concession.⁵⁰

Gladstone had received a couple of unfavourable comments about his temperament and the purity of his motives for pursuing disestablishment from some of the leading papers in the country. Yet there was a strong endorsement of his religious devotion and Christian

Yale University Press, 1993), pp. 258-259.

⁴⁸ GWS, *NY.Trib*, 16 March 1869, p.1.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *American Quarterly Church Review*, 1 (1870), p. 153.

statesmanship from the Presbyterian *New York Observer* while the highly influential liberal organ, the *Springfield Republican* had high praise for his moral character.

Gladstone's decision to pursue the Irish Church Act also prompted a writer at the *Springfield Republican* to address his standing as a genuine Liberal reformer *vis-à-vis* his Tory past, and to comment on the related accusation that he was prone to changing his views on important issues for the purpose of political gain, a charge frequently levelled by his critics. Following one of Gladstone's April 1868 speeches, the *Springfield Republican* saw a validation of his Liberal *bona fides*: 'Mr Gladstone made a masterly speech in support of his resolutions for the abolition of the Irish church establishment, placing himself on a line with the most advanced members of the liberal (sic) party on this question.'⁵¹ As the Irish Church question entered American public consciousness in April 1868, the *Republican* took issue with the sentiment that Gladstone lacked consistency in his policy positions. Observing that hardly anyone in England looked upon the Irish Church as they had ten or twenty years ago, the correspondent added, 'Is Mr Gladstone alone to be denied participation in the great advance of liberal sentiments?'⁵² He also suggested that the statesman was not alone in changing his position:

The spirit with which he meets the issues of today is the same loyal, courageous spirit which he has ever displayed in public life. The Irish church is now universally seen and felt to be what only the most advanced and most radical thinkers saw and felt it to be a generation ago—an institution that violates the rights of race, nationality, property and conscience.⁵³

⁵¹ 'The Irish Question', *SR*, 4 April 1868, p. 5.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*

Moreover, it was just like Gladstone to take the side of justice and humanity. He was the same man, but he was now ‘inspired with the spirit of a wiser and a better age’.⁵⁴ This was a significant endorsement of Gladstone among American liberals because under the ownership of Samuel Bowles III the weekly edition of the *Republican* had by 1860 established a national reputation second only to the *New York Tribune*.⁵⁵

Another category for consideration relates to commentary that contained critical analysis of the Irish Church Bill itself rather than of the statesman. With these opinions we get a clearer picture of how enthusiastic Americans were about disestablishment and whether or not they had misgivings about the bill. Support for disestablishment was practically universal in the United States, but there were several editorials of a more measured tone about what the bill could realistically accomplish in bringing justice and peace to Ireland. In April 1869 a correspondent for the *Nation* expressed the view that the Irish Church Bill was important chiefly because it would lead to agitations for other Irish concessions of a far more serious kind.⁵⁶ He was under no illusions that the Church Act alone would pacify Ireland. After the bill’s passage, in a January 1870 article, a realistic view of where things stood in Ireland was again proffered by *The Nation*: ‘In peaceable fashion or violent fashion we have to go through a revolution, of which no man can foretell the progress or the end.’⁵⁷ Destroying the Irish establishment had been a great act of justice in the last session of Parliament, but the Irish question ‘seems to increase and grow more complex’ and the issue of land was likely to be more difficult because of landed

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* p. 4

⁵⁵ Emery, *Press and America*, p. 241.

⁵⁶ ‘England’, *TN*, 8 April 1869, p. 273.

⁵⁷ ‘England’, *TN*, 20 Jan 1870, p. 41.

interests in both the House of Lords and the Parliament.⁵⁸ Similarly, an article in *Harper's Weekly* called the bill a radical improvement in English feeling toward Ireland, but insisted the Irish Church question was in itself comparatively unimportant. The 'intolerable condition of the land laws was the much graver problem that lay ahead'.⁵⁹ The *New York Tribune* observed that the Irish Church question was superficial in comparison to the issues of land reform and universal manhood suffrage, but Gladstone was 'equally right in foreseeing that not to enter upon Reform is only to hasten Revolution'.⁶⁰ The reporter believed that the idea of Irish nationality would not be satisfied and the measures of the English Parliament would prove futile to avert revolution.⁶¹ The *New York Herald* rejoiced over the Church Act, but insisted 'the ball still must be kept moving', towards tenant reform.⁶² Despite their obvious approval of disestablishment, several leading liberal papers were tepid in their expectations of what disestablishment could accomplish. Among the religious papers the *Catholic World* was alone in expressing lowered expectations. An author noted that few persons had expected the passing of Gladstone's bill to establish a golden age in Ireland. Demonstrating an understanding consistent with Gladstone's, the correspondent asserted that leading promoters of the measure never regarded it as one that was complete, but rather 'as a necessary prelude to certain reconstructive measures more powerful and important than itself'.⁶³

Another complaint levelled at the Irish Church Act, albeit by relatively few American writers, was with its terms of disendowment. Following Gladstone's clear

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *HW*, 10 April 1869, p. 227.

⁶⁰ *NY.Trib*, 18 April 1868, p. 6.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² 'The Irish Church Disestablished-What next in Great Britain?', *NYH*, 1 August 1869, p. 6.

⁶³ 'Ireland's Mission', *CW*, 62 (1870), p. 1.

majority victory in the November 1868 elections, a faction of Tory opponents, hoping then for their most favourable outcome, rallied around ‘concurrent endowment’, a plan whereby the assets of the Irish Church would be reallocated among the three major Irish denominations, Catholic, Anglican and Presbyterian.⁶⁴ To a lesser degree, concurrent endowment already existed in Ireland since the British government funded the Maynooth seminary for Catholics and the *Regium Donum* for Presbyterians, but state support for these denominations would have increased greatly under the Conservative plan.⁶⁵ Concurrent endowment was favoured by Disraeli and many Tories, but also by some Whig-Liberals, most notably Lord John Russell.⁶⁶ With Gladstone ensconced firmly as Prime Minister in December 1868, a pitched battle in Parliament ensued between the Lords and Commons, the temper of which the *Times* of London reported as ‘rapidly becoming dangerous’ with the majority in each House ‘degenerating into mobs’.⁶⁷ The Irish journalist Justin McCarthy was on a lecture tour in the United States at the time and attempted to raise awareness of the disendowment policy. The Irish author noted that after unsuccessful attempts by the Lords to achieve concurrent endowment, a compromise over the distribution of Church assets was eventually achieved in a final negotiated settlement accomplished by Lord Granville on behalf of an ailing Gladstone and Lord Cairns on behalf of the Lords. In compensation for vested interests, for benefices and curacies, in the sale, on nominal terms, of glebe houses to their present occupants, and so forth, half of the recovered national fund was to be handed over to the Irish Church again. A small lump

⁶⁴ Parsons, *Religion in Victorian Britain*, vol 2, p. 127.

⁶⁵ Donald Harman Akenson, *The Church of Ireland: Ecclesiastical Reform and Revolution, 1800-1885* (London: Yale University Press, 1971), p. 227.

⁶⁶ Matthew, *Gladstone*, p. 195.

⁶⁷ ‘A Settlement of the Irish Church Bills’, *The Times*, 23 July 1869, p. 9.

sum, about one-sixth of that to be given to that Church, was to be divided between the Roman Catholics and the Dissenters, as compensation for the Maynooth grant and the *Regium Donum*.⁶⁸ The compromise over disendowment was generally unsatisfactory to all parties in Ireland, a point that for the most part was overlooked by the American papers.

Yet a couple of articles appeared suggesting that at least some were attuned to the issue of disendowment. In an article highly critical of the House of Lords, a writer for the *Independent* believed the act was an indication that ‘the spirit of sectarian ascendancy no longer animates the councils of British administrations’.⁶⁹ It nevertheless remained true that the ‘disestablished and disendowed church is still left rich with the ill-gotten spoils of a persecuted sect and a conquered people’.⁷⁰ The *Catholic World* implored its readers to consider that although the act was a significant admission of the ‘utter failure of the experiment’, the partial restitution contemplated ‘bears no corresponding comparison with the magnitude of the evils borne’.⁷¹ There existed in the American press, therefore, a strain of opinion, albeit a distinct minority, that was critical of the compromise over disendowment and arguably more consistent with Gladstone’s understanding of what the Irish Church Act could accomplish without other reforms.

Although there were a few critical assessments of the type we have examined, the most common responses to the Irish Church Act were those that celebrated it as a major triumph for religious liberty. Among this category there were two distinct groupings. The first saw the policy of disestablishment as revolutionary for Ireland with no suggestion that

⁶⁸ Justin McCarthy, ‘Irish Church Dethroned’, *Galaxy*, 8 (1969) pp. 399-404.

⁶⁹ ‘The Surrender of the House of Lords’, *IND*, 29 July 1869, p.4.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ ‘The Irish Church Act of 1869’, *CW*, p. 238.

further reforms were needed. This reaction was most common in evangelical papers. A second group also saw the act as transformative for Ireland but went even further, declaring that disestablishment of the Irish Church was characteristic of a rising tide of liberal reform that had been building on both sides of the Atlantic. This kind of writer believed the act portended the disestablishment of the Church of England as well, with some even suggesting it also signalled the demise of the British aristocracy. And in a couple instances a form of American exceptionalism was invoked to explain the spread of liberty to Great Britain. This type of commentary, therefore, focused neither on Gladstone specifically nor on what disestablishment meant for Ireland, but rather about what the event foreshadowed for the future. Both types of commentary give insight into how the Irish Church reform was interpreted and how they may have influenced perceptions of Gladstone.

In the first group evangelicals predominated and were nothing short of euphoric about disestablishment in Ireland. A few reported on the event with explicit declarations of triumphalism and hints of postmillennialism. The *New York Observer* called the policy ‘tantamount to an ecclesiastical revolution’. Among the British public, it asserted, ‘all invest it with a grandeur and importance second to no event in English history since the Revolution’.⁷² The British correspondent for the *New York Evangelist* waxed millennial in describing Gladstone’s April 1868 speech in the Commons:

Ireland is in ecstasies. She has had a glorious victory. . . . My pen is feverish with excitement. . . . I feel just now as if I saw “the beginning of the end” of ages of unquestionable wrong and the introduction of cycles of ages of unquestionable right. A hoary-headed iniquity is about to be entombed without the hope of a resurrection—a giant evil is being cut through at the root.⁷³

⁷² ‘Great Ministerial Defeat’, *NYO*, 9 April 1868, p.114.

⁷³ Caledonia, ‘The Disestablishment of the Irish Church’, *NYE*, 30 April 1868, p. 1.

The *Independent* declared Gladstone's resolutions to be 'the most radical and revolutionary measure that had been proposed in Parliament since the time of the Duke of Wellington's Emancipation Act'.⁷⁴ Upon news that the initial resolutions had carried, the Methodist *Christian Advocate* reported that 'a revolution more extensive and more powerful in its results than any heretofore inaugurated by civil war is now silently, but certainly, going on in England'.⁷⁵ Its commentator was confident that established abuses were going down, while education, voluntary Christianity, and oppressed people were being brought up. The echo of postmillennial tones could also be heard with the declaration that the 'providential events' were nothing less than a sign that 'Christ's kingdom spreads and triumphs among men'.⁷⁶ A writer for the *Western Christian Advocate* believed it 'amounts almost to an Irish revolution, a revolution that Americans would not be afraid to trust, because it is on the side of liberty and progress'.⁷⁷ Among secular publications, the nationally-circulated, freethought *Boston Investigator* described the Irish Church Act as a 'revolution which has been silently pressing forward, removing every obstacle as it advances'.⁷⁸ In this instance, the paper's secular agenda could find common ground with the wider goal that evangelicals sought for religious equality. Still under the ownership of James Gordon Bennett Sr, the *New York Herald* matched evangelical zeal, calling disestablishment 'a modern revolution'.⁷⁹ With evangelicals leading the way, some in the American press saw

⁷⁴ 'An Ecclesiastical Cancer Removed', *IND*, 9 April 1868, p. 4.

⁷⁵ *CA*, 14 May 1868, p. 156.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ 'Disestablishment and Disendowment', *Western Christian Advocate*, 22 April 1868, p. 132.

⁷⁸ 'The English Revolution', *Boston Investigator*, 11 August 1869, p. 117.

⁷⁹ *NYH*, 8 April 1868, p. 6.

providential or revolutionary implications in the removal of the Irish Church establishment.

The second group within this category included liberal reformers, both secular and evangelical, who looked forward to the end of all established religion in Britain. Among evangelical publications, the *New York Observer* believed the act was ‘one long step toward the separation of the Church and State, and the emancipation of England’.⁸⁰ A *New York Evangelist* reporter concurred. When the Establishment was removed in Ireland there would remain ‘no reasoning from scripture or common sense why they should be maintained in England or Scotland’.⁸¹ If the injustice in England did not exactly parallel that of Ireland, the *Evangelist* writer nevertheless insisted that ‘the principle is the same, and that the wrong in the two cases differs only in degree’.⁸² The *Western Christian Advocate* perhaps best articulated the voluntaryist position:

Let what will come, we hear the footsteps of liberty, the distant tread of progress. Whoever triumphs, Ireland is to be the gainer, and England, too. It may be that this is but the beginning of total disestablishment. Liberty and religion are to take a giant stride. Religion is to be disentangled, unopinioned. No temporal head to the Church of God in any part of Britain will then stand between it and its true and only head.⁸³

Roman Catholic opinion was just as sanguine as that of evangelicals. *The Catholic World* expressed the ‘portentous magnitude’ of the act, and contended that ‘it has become apparent to everyone there that the fall of the Irish establishment is but the first act in the

⁸⁰ ‘The Great Ministerial Defeat’, *NYO*, 9 April 1868, p. 114.

⁸¹ ‘The Irish Presbyterian Church’ *NYE*, 2 July 1868, p. 2.

⁸² ‘A Peaceful Revolution’, *NYE*, 25 March 1869, p. 1.

⁸³ ‘Disestablishment and Disendowment’, *Western Christian Advocate*, 22 April 1869, p. 132.

drama of the total severance of church and state in the entire British empire'.⁸⁴ Religious publications believed the Irish Church Act was a prelude to further disestablishment.

Among secular publications a similar point of view could be found. The *New York Herald* declared ancient institutions to be 'crumbling away like mouldering stones of some venerable ruin'.⁸⁵ Established religions were the remains of a dead past that would soon disappear from view, and the gulf separating the modern from the ancient world would be broad and deep. 'This changing state of things', the *Herald* proclaimed, 'visible all over Europe, is particularly noticeable at the present moment in Great Britain.'⁸⁶ Another article in the *Herald* declared: 'The cry will soon be loud against the Church of Scotland. It will soon be loud against the Church of England.'⁸⁷ In an essay in the *North American Review* Goldwin Smith also foresaw the eventual demise of the English Church. He recounted the history of steps towards religious toleration in England and concluded: 'It remains only to pass by a final step from toleration to religious equality, and to complete the victory of modern civilization over the Middle Ages by declaring all religions equal before the law, abolishing the State Church, and renouncing State interference with religion.'⁸⁸ The enthusiasm shown by Americans for the complete removal of established religion in Britain supports earlier comments that hailed Gladstone as a champion of liberty.

Within the same body of opinion were those who took their expectations even further and believed that the Irish Church Act signalled not only the abolition of

⁸⁴ 'The Irish Church Act of 1869', *CW*, 50 (1869), p. 238.

⁸⁵ 'Mr. Gladstone's Resolutions on the Irish Church', *NYH*, 25 March 1868, p. 6.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ 'The Irish Church Bill-the Revolution Averted-the Compromise', *NYH*, 23 July 1869, p. 4.

⁸⁸ Goldwin Smith, 'Ecclesiastical Crisis in England', *NAR*, 110 (1870), p. 159.

established religion but all forms of aristocratic privilege. The sentiment could be found in the pages of both religious and secular papers. *Zion's Herald* proclaimed it to be not only a harbinger for the future of the Church of England but a 'severe blow to the peerage itself'.⁸⁹ The London correspondent for the *New York Evangelist* insisted that everybody knew the Church establishments of Great Britain 'are neither more nor less than the preserving grounds for the sons and other relatives of the British aristocracy'.⁹⁰ A correspondent for the *New York Herald* foresaw a coming assault on upper-class privileges: 'Aristocratic institutions, primogeniture, entail and hereditary peerages will during this period be fiercely assailed from more than one quarter; other times and a different state of society gave birth to them, and their proper place is to be found in medieval history.'⁹¹ In the *Chicago Tribune* an author suggested in 1868 that Gladstone's resolutions were 'but one sign of the breach which democracy is making in the defences of English Conservatism'.⁹² 'The Church Establishment', he declared, 'did not have long to live and the reign of caste in Great Britain will come to an end.'⁹³ Following the defeat of the Irish Bill in the Lords in 1869, another *Tribune* article made a comparison between the plight of the Irish and the aristocratic system that perpetuated American slavery: 'It is only historic justice that such a conflict should grow out of the irrepressible Irish question which for two centuries has stood in the same relation to English politics as the question of African bondage sustained to ours.'⁹⁴ Some Americans were expressing their belief that a true state of liberty was only possible when both establishments of religion and hereditary

⁸⁹ 'The Irish Church Bill', *ZH*, 8 July 1869, p. 318.

⁹⁰ 'The Doomed Establishment', *NYE*, 16 July 1868, p. 1.

⁹¹ 'The Irish Church Disestablished-What next in Great Britain?', *NYH*, 1 August 1869, p. 6.

⁹² 'Democratic Movements in England', *CT*, 4 April 1868, p. 0_2.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ 'The Crisis in England', *CT*, 23 July 1869, p. 0_2.

privilege were removed. Their hopes that all of Britain was about to follow such a course had been aroused by Gladstone and the Irish Church Act. Moreover, based on earlier commentary that made specific mention of Gladstone it may be inferred that they imagined him to be a primary instrument in the realisation of their hopes.

More than a few Americans were projecting aspects of their own worldview on to Gladstone. This comes in to even sharper relief through editorial comments related to the Irish Church Act that articulated a version of American exceptionalism. A few papers published articles that saw in Gladstone's policy the intrinsic superiority of America as a model for democracy. The *Methodist Review* believed the act would have far-reaching consequences: 'It is the most powerful impulse which has of late been given to the movement going on through Europe for remodeling the relations between Church and State in accordance with the principles which prevail in our country.'⁹⁵ Although the *Round Table* is outside the study sample, it provided one of the clearest statements of American exceptionalism. It was a 'compliment to American principles' that Europe was separating church and state, and the fall of the Irish Church was 'remarkable proof of the advancement of American ideas in England'.⁹⁶ It was yet another step taken in 'the grand process of "Americanizing" that empire'.⁹⁷ The *Princeton Review* made the case that disestablishment would be beneficial for the Protestant faith in its competition with Catholics for souls in Ireland. The United States provided the evidence:

Not only has religion not died out in America for lack of an Establishment, but it is just here that more Irish Roman Catholics have embraced Protestantism within fifty

⁹⁵ 'Foreign Religious Intelligence', *MR*, 21(1869) pp. 601-602.

⁹⁶ 'The Divorce of Church and State', *Round Table*, 204 (1868), p. 399.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

years than in the three centuries of the regime of the Establishment in Ireland itself.⁹⁸

Developments in Ireland reassured some Americans that their system of government was remarkable and the inevitable path to be followed by all progressive nations.

More explicit statements of American exceptionalism came from two New York daily papers. The *New York Herald* published an article that suggested disestablishment in Ireland was a sign that the ‘success of popular government in the United States is destined soon to revolutionize the world’, and was a sign that ‘the example set by the United States of favor to none and toleration to all has already been widely contagious’.⁹⁹ In another article the *Herald* printed an even more explicit statement of American exceptionalism and support for republican government:

The current of events in England shows us that the success of popular government in the United States is destined soon to revolutionize the world. It has been our mission to rouse the people to the knowledge and exercise of their power, and to teach them the true value of coronets and crowns.¹⁰⁰

The *New York Times* also published views promoting American exceptionalism. ‘There is much in our history and in the character of our institutions’ the correspondent reported, ‘which compels us to watch with an attentive and sympathizing interest the progress of genuine reform in all parts of the world.’¹⁰¹ He believed that America, more so than England had been in the past, would increasingly be identified with the progress of popular institutions. ‘Our success in self government’, he declared, ‘which has inspired the nations with hope, offers, at the same time, a guarantee of ultimate success to all who wisely and

⁹⁸ ‘Disestablishment’ *Princeton Review*, 2 (1869), p. 267.

⁹⁹ ‘The Irish Church Bill’, *NYH*, 23 July 1869, p. 4; and ‘The Irish Church and the Progress of Religious Liberty’, *NYH*, 8 April 1868, p. 6.

¹⁰⁰ ‘Irish Church Bill’, *NYH*, 23 July 1869, p. 4.

¹⁰¹ ‘Mr. Gladstone and the Reform League’, *NYT*, 2 September 1866, p. 4.

patiently struggle for their rights.’¹⁰² Clear statements that American-style democracy was a seminal force behind Gladstone’s Irish Church policy could be found in both the religious and secular press in America.

A final category of opinion gives us additional insight as to why Americans may have been so favourably disposed towards Gladstone’s Irish Church policy. Among the sentiments most commonly printed over the course of the debate were those expressing Protestant bigotry directed at Catholics. A quote in the *Methodist Review* provides a window into the way Irish-Catholic immigrants were viewed by the Protestant establishment of the period. Gladstone’s policy was supported by the author because of its potential to restrain the flow of unwelcome Irish into the United States:

Americans may well congratulate themselves on this grand example of statesmanship, for it will have an important bearing on our own country. England has cursed this country by the curses her policy has inflicted on Ireland. That policy has degraded Ireland, and her degradation, in its very refuse, has been poured in upon our Republic.¹⁰³

The correspondent for the *Methodist* conceded that Ireland had given to America ‘many noble citizens’, but her ‘Popish masses’ were a source of corruption and constituted ‘the worst and most dangerous element of our political and moral life’. Moreover, the Irish were ‘perverting our municipal governments, and crowding our penal and pauper institutions’.¹⁰⁴ The effect of the bill would allow Ireland to rise morally and intellectually as well as politically, and her people would be better able to live at home.¹⁰⁵ Irish-Catholic bigotry could thus be cloaked in the language of democracy. It was not simply the spread

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ Quoted in *NYE*, 1 April 1869, p. 6.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

of Catholicism that alarmed most Protestants, but fear of the menacing influence of the Pope in the affairs of government, an apprehension that was certainly shared by Gladstone.

The conservative *Princeton Review*, under the editorship of theologian Charles Hodge, also expressed blatant paranoia about Catholicism. One author described the faith as a stately tree that still bore fruit and foliage, but, he warned, ‘it is decayed at the heart’. Disestablished religion would lead to the triumph of Protestant truth over ‘error’ with the result that ‘bigotry will disappear; and persecution on account of creeds will cease for ever’.¹⁰⁶ Another *Princeton Review* article reflected concern for the future of Irish Presbyterianism. Disestablishment was not without risk as ‘Romanism is yet a wily foe, prompt to turn any change of affairs to denominational account’.¹⁰⁷ Conversely, the *Independent* saw in disestablishment the promise that Catholicism would begin to decline in Ireland: ‘With the disseverance of the Irish Church from all connection with the state we confidently look forward to a constant increase of its numbers, and a decrease of the power of its great rival, the Romish Church, in Ireland.’¹⁰⁸ A second piece in the *Independent* asserted that state endowments had left the Irish Church a ‘monstrous reproach’ while Catholics in Ireland ‘flourished like a green bay tree’, a reference to Psalm 37:35, which speaks of the wicked spreading like a green bay tree.¹⁰⁹ But the 1868 elections had brought out more than just prejudice against the Catholics of Ireland. Writing about the landed Catholics in England who helped defeat Gladstone in Lancashire, the *Independent* charged they were ‘men who have the religious bigotry of the Ultramontane . . . more bigoted to the mere dogmas of their faith than their Irish

¹⁰⁶ *Princeton Review*, July, 3, 1868, p. 409.

¹⁰⁷ ‘Disestablishment’, *Princeton Review*, 2 (1869), p. 290.

¹⁰⁸ ‘An Ecclesiastical Cancer Removed’, *IND*, 9 April 1868, p. 4.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

brothers'.¹¹⁰ As such they were naturally opposed to the principle that would divorce any church from any state. Moreover, the writer continued, 'they are generally Papists, in the bitterest sense of the word. They are for Rome and the pope, above all other considerations'.¹¹¹ The mistrust of Catholics by evangelicals of the period was palpable.

The *New York Observer* depicted the general election of 1868 as a victory for the true faith, observing that throughout England and Scotland not a single Catholic was returned. The British correspondent believed it was an indication that 'Protestant feeling prevails among us'. If anyone thought Presbyterian support for Gladstone's Irish Church policy was due to greater acceptance of Catholicism they were mistaken: 'I need not say that the very reverse of this is the case, and that Mr. Gladstone's movement is supported, at least by Presbyterians, in the interest of Protestantism.'¹¹² Although anti-Catholic sentiment in the Irish Church affair was voiced primarily by evangelical periodicals, *Harpers Weekly* published this overt anti-Papist opinion in an article comparing Gladstone and Disraeli. The author referenced the religious simpleton in Henry Fielding's comic novel *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling*: 'Even Squire Western can see that the "Papists" rejoice at the disestablishment of the English Church in Ireland, and that is enough. To please the Papists is to encourage Popery, and to encourage Popery is to endanger the Protestant succession.'¹¹³ Whether directed against Irish immigrants in the United States or the forces of ultramontanism, anti-Catholic rhetoric had found its way into the American press, especially among Presbyterian publications concerned about the fate of their Irish co-religionists.

¹¹⁰ 'The English Elections', *IND*, 3 December 1868, p. 4.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² 'The New British Parliament', *NYO*, 24 December 1868, p. 413.

¹¹³ *HW*, 17 October 1868, pp. 658-659.

Several conclusions may be drawn from this examination of the reception of the Irish Church Act in the United States press. We have seen that Gladstone's reputation among Americans, even before introduction of the Irish Church Bill, had begun to recover from its low ebb during the Civil War. This was no doubt due to his prominent role in seeking to pass the Reform Bill in 1866. If questions about his Conservative past remained, several major religious and liberal organs in the press believed his conversion to the Liberal party was genuine. Gladstone found support for his credentials from important Republican papers such as the *New York Times*, *Springfield Republican* and *Harper's Weekly*, along with influential evangelical papers like the *Independent* and the *New York Observer*. Expressions of profound admiration with regard to his personal character and Christian devotion also appeared in the *Springfield Republican* and the *New York Observer*. However, liberal standard-bearer the *Nation* raised concerns about Gladstone's temperament, and the *New York Tribune's* George Smalley believed Gladstone could not yet be trusted on issues related to America. The Episcopalian *American Quarterly Church Review* and again George Smalley suggested that personal and political motives lay underneath his Irish Church policy. Although direct statements about Gladstone's religious devotion and moral leadership were few in number, a picture of how he was perceived by Americans was beginning to emerge.

Negative commentary was almost entirely absent from American opinion with the exception of a couple complaints about the terms of disendowment, which were seen to leave too much property under control of the Irish Church. The *Independent* and, perhaps unsurprisingly, the *Catholic World* both took exception to the compromise that had been reached over the terms of compensation. Additionally, although not of a negative tone,

there were also opinions in several secular publications that considered disestablishment to be only an important first step towards Irish reform and by no means a panacea. Among them, the *Nation*, *Harper's Weekly*, the *New York Herald* and the *New York Tribune* published opinions of a more measured tone with regard to what Irish Church disestablishment could realistically accomplish. These papers correctly acknowledged, as Gladstone understood, that disestablishment was only the starting point for reform in Ireland. He was under no illusions that disestablishment alone would solve the Irish question, and he understood that the peasantry of Ireland was bitterly resentful of the landlords and their invidious system of rents and evictions.¹¹⁴ In having studied the Irish question, Gladstone realised it would require land and educational reforms to bring about his intended outcome, Ireland's continued adherence to existing institutions and political parties.¹¹⁵ In this respect only a few commentators aligned themselves with the perspective of Gladstone.

By contrast, the majority of opinions voiced considered disestablishment to be a major triumph for Ireland and for the larger goal of establishing democratic institutions. Perhaps the most salient finding of this chapter is that, apart from anti-Catholicism, the most prevalent themes addressed in the American press were the least Gladstonian. Those themes revolved around the liberal belief that Irish Church disestablishment was emblematic of a larger democratic trend that was revolutionary in nature. Evangelicals were noticeably united in the conviction and that it was a providential event. Along with evangelicals, the secular press revealed a passionate hope for the possibility of English Church disestablishment and perhaps even the fall of the aristocracy. Given the

¹¹⁴ Bebbington, *William Ewart Gladstone*, p. 149.

¹¹⁵ Matthew, *Gladstone*, p. 194.

momentum of democratic reforms in the ante-bellum era, these expectations were not unfounded. There were not, however, strictly Gladstonian. Neither English Church disestablishment nor the removal of aristocratic privileges ever became a part of his hopes and desires for England. Indeed, however much this view was shared on both sides of the Atlantic, it stood in sharp relief to those of the statesman who looked upon the Irish Church Act as only one part of the solution to put an end to agitation and to ward off further social revolution.¹¹⁶ As David Bebbington has demonstrated, Gladstone's political philosophy contained aspects of classical liberalism in the vein of the Manchester school, but his conservative sensibilities did not allow him to embrace social egalitarianism. He maintained a solid support for the monarchy and the aristocracy.¹¹⁷ 'England', Gladstone declared in 1871, 'is a great lover of liberty, but of equality she has never been so much enamoured.'¹¹⁸ American liberals were much more radical in their conception of democracy than the author of Irish disestablishment. Thus, however much a reform-minded Liberal Gladstone was, with respect to his Irish policy in 1868 and '69 there were no traces of political radicalism or social revolution.

Americans, particularly evangelicals, also revealed an unambiguous anti-Catholic bias over the course of the debate. Their trepidations that ultramontane papal interference would ensue once the Irish Church was disestablished were apparent in all the major evangelical Presbyterian papers. But there was also the belief expressed by the *New York Evangelist* that disestablishment would stem the flow of Irish immigrants to America. The exuberance in America over disestablishment was doubtless based, at least in part, on

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 257-268.

¹¹⁸ Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 265.

Protestant fears of encroaching Catholicism in the United States. As might be expected, evangelical commentators voiced the lion's share of anti-Catholic views, with the notable exception of *Harper's Weekly*. With their apprehension about increased Catholic dominance in Ireland, American evangelicals struck a note that corresponded closely with Gladstone's own view, but, in a couple instances, for reasons that were more germane to the United States than Ireland.

In sum, evangelicals in the American press were nearly universal in their exuberance for Irish Church disestablishment. Although secular publications also celebrated the news of disestablishment, a few papers were less likely than evangelicals to interpret it as providential or to proclaim it as 'revolutionary' without suggesting further reforms in land and education. Moreover, evangelicals largely abstained from critical or nuanced analysis of the measure. On the whole, evangelical and secular publications shared with Gladstone an anti-Catholic bias that was based upon fears of ultramontane meddling in government affairs. Roman Catholic support for Gladstone's Irish Church policy was obviously focused primarily on correcting the injustices in Ireland. With respect to political liberals, they were largely united in seeing Gladstone's policy in Ireland as part of a growing trend in transatlantic reform, with a few giving voice to a form of American exceptionalism. However incorrectly Americans had perceived Gladstone in the late 1860s, a few were beginning to take notice of him as a principled statesman and most considered him to be leading figure in Liberal reforms.

CHAPTER THREE

THE VATICAN DECREES

England is entitled to ask and to know in what way the obedience required by the Pope and the Council of the Vatican is to be reconciled with the integrity of Civil Allegiance. William Gladstone ¹

As the above quote suggests, the Vatican Council's 1870 decree of papal infallibility created consternation in Gladstone over the civil loyalty of English Catholics. For reasons we will explore later, Gladstone waited until his first term as Prime Minister had ended before unveiling in November 1874 his politically charged pamphlet *The Vatican Decrees in their Bearing on Civil Allegiance: a Political Expostulation*. Its central charge declared the decree of infallibility a dangerous theological innovation that subordinated Catholics in all lands to the dictates of the pope, not merely in matters related to faith and morals, but in public affairs as well. Most troubling of all for Gladstone, he believed the decree had rendered Catholics in England incapable of concurrent loyalty to both crown and church. The infallibility decree also represented for Gladstone a significant threat to his hopes for Christian unity, which he hoped would provide a united front against disbelief. *Vatican Decrees* became the most widely distributed of Gladstone's writings.² Given his stature as a statesman, the impolitic and 'no popery' tenor of the pamphlet created an immediate controversy, which stimulated demand in Great Britain, the

¹ WEG, 'The Vatican Decrees in Their Bearing on Civil Allegiance; A Political Expostulation' in Philip Schaff, ed, *The Vatican Decrees in Their Bearing on Civil Allegiance; A Political Expostulation. By the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone, M.P. To which are added: A History of the Vatican Council; Together with the Latin and English text of the Papal Syllabus and the Vatican Decrees* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1875), p. 31.

² DWB, *MoG*, p. 225.

European continent and in North America. Its reception in the American press will be the focus of this chapter.

In Britain, *Vatican Decrees* provoked over twenty published Catholic replies, most of which were highly critical in tone. A writer for *The Times* noted its frosty reception among Catholics in Ireland, whose cause had been a primary focus of his premiership: ‘All that Mr. Gladstone had done for the Irish Roman Catholics was forgotten at once, and he was denounced as if he had been the wildest Orangeman.’³ Among the London papers *The Times* and the *Pall Mall Gazette* led public criticism of the pamphlet.⁴ A correspondent for *The Times* believed Gladstone had over-reacted. The practical lesson of the controversy was to view with calmness the ‘terrible weapons’ that Gladstone had identified in the armoury of the popes. ‘The guns may look formidable’, the writer suggested, ‘but they require men to fire them; and if the word of command should ever be given, the obedience rendered to it will be too irregular to produce any dangerous results.’⁵ Moreover, he insisted, it was delusional to suppose the commands of the clergy or the pope went unquestioned by the English laity.⁶ Gladstone also had critics in his own party. Behind the scenes, leading Whig-Liberals such as Halifax, Harcourt, Lowe and Layard largely agreed with *The Times* about the loyalty of English Catholics. Additionally, they were already wary of Gladstone’s attempts in his recent ‘Ritual and Ritualism’ article to equate Old Catholicism with Protestantism, and they disagreed with his views on the Public Worship Act, worrying that his emphasis on freedom of local ecclesiastical practice might

³ ‘Mr. Gladstone on the Vatican Decrees and Civil Allegiance’, *The Times*, 7 November 1874, p. 7.

⁴ Parry, *Democracy and Religion*, p. 424.

⁵ *The Times*, 14 November, 1874, p. 9.

⁶ *Ibid.*

lead to further calls for disestablishment.⁷ The most prominent critiques came early in 1875, when the two leading Catholic figures in England published their rebuttals. The first came from his estranged friend, the ultramontane archbishop, and soon-to-be cardinal, Henry Manning, who published *The Vatican Decrees, in their Bearing on Civil Allegiance*. The second, the *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk*, was penned by the famous Catholic scholar and former Tractarian John Henry Newman. Their monographs (summarised below) added intellectual weight to the controversy and forced a rejoinder from Gladstone in February 1875 entitled *Vaticanism: an Answer to Reproofs & Replies*, wherein he largely restated his former position. Among the Catholic reviews were two of a more favourable tone submitted to *The Times* by prominent liberal laymen, Lords Acton and Camoys.⁸ Nonconformists quite naturally approved of Gladstone's pamphlets. Among his many well-wishers he received an address from the Nonconformist ministers of Launceston and vicinity thanking him for the pamphlet.⁹ Nevertheless, as the *New York Tribune* reported, if the dispute had called a great number of pens into activity, the attention of the world was concentrated on Gladstone, Manning and Newman.¹⁰ This certainly proved true among United States publications, where mention of Gladstone's critics, when included in published articles, was generally reserved for Manning and Newman. The *Vatican Decrees* controversy had attracted the attention of the entire Western world.

The high demand for Gladstone's *Vatican Decrees* in Britain and the United States was confirmed by several reports that appeared in the American press in the days following

⁷ Parry, *Democracy and Religion*, p. 425.

⁸ For Acton see *The Times*, 24 November 1874, p. 6; for Camoys see *The Times*, 14 November 1874, p. 9.

⁹ 'Mr. Gladstone and the Vatican Decrees', *NYT*, 22 December 1874, p. 6.

¹⁰ *NY.Trib*, 6 March 1875, p. 6.

its release. George Smalley reported on 24 November 1874 that the interest excited by the sudden appearance of Gladstone's manifesto 'can hardly be exaggerated'.¹¹ Smalley cited the brisk early sales of the pamphlet, which he placed at more than 3,000 a day around 14 November, noting that 500 a day would be thought considerable.¹² Although he did not specify if it included sales in the United States, John Morley placed the total number printed by the end of December at 145,000 copies.¹³ The *Christian Union* reported on 25 November that 'its waves reach all countries in which the Church of Rome has a foothold'.¹⁴ A writer for the *Unitarian Review* declared: 'No political pamphlet of recent times has had so wide a circulation as this'.¹⁵ Early on in the controversy stories appeared almost daily in James Gordon Bennett Jr's *New York Herald*. Boasting the largest circulation in the country, and known for its sensationalised reporting, its readers were met with bylines such as 'The Religious War', 'WAR OF THE CHURCHES' and 'His Rallying Cry to England Against the Papacy'.¹⁶ Other major papers covered the dispute to such an extent that Gladstone wrote a letter on 22 January 1875 to the American church historian Phillip Schaff requesting that he should place a statement in United States papers communicating the statesman's regret over his inability to answer the innumerable inquiries and letters he had received.¹⁷ Gladstone also thanked Schaff for his recently published and expanded edition of *Vatican Decrees*, to which the historian had added his

¹¹ GWS, 'Polemics in England', *NY.Trib*, 24 November 1874, p. 1.

¹² GWS, *NY.Trib*, 2 Dec 1874, p. 6.

¹³ Morley, *Gladstone*, vol 2, p. 519.

¹⁴ *CU*, 25 November 1874, p. 414.

¹⁵ 'Mr. Gladstone and Catholic Loyalty', *UR*, 2 (1875), p. 186.

¹⁶ *NYH*, 19 November 1874, p.4; 28 November 1874 p.3; 15 November 1874, p.9.

¹⁷ Reported in 'Editorial Notes', *NYE*, 11 February 1875, p. 4.

own ‘History of the Vatican Council’, along with ‘The Papal Syllabus’ and Latin and English translations of *Vatican Decrees*.¹⁸ Gladstone wrote the following to Schaff:

The inquiries, correspondence and further proceedings in the matter of the Vatican Decrees have so absorbed my mind and time that I am unable to keep pace with the packs of letters that I have received. I have once or twice made this known in the English newspapers, and it would be a kindness if any one would secure the insertion of a similar intimation on your side of the water, by way of apology to unanswerable correspondents.¹⁹

Americans were obviously well-informed about the controversy.

Before examining *Vatican Decrees* in more detail and the reactions that followed, it will be beneficial for the purpose of context to consider some of the political and religious events leading up to and surrounding the Vatican Council. It was convoked by Pope Pius IX on 29 June 1868 against the backdrop of what had been nearly a century of intense conflict between Roman Catholicism and liberal reform movements in Europe. Especially since the 1789 French Revolution, the Catholic Church felt increasingly threatened by the central tenets of modern liberalism: freedom of thought and education; freedom of worship and conscience; and freedom of the press and assembly. By 1869, the increased secularity of modern life and the rise of liberal nation-states had combined to create a crisis for the Vatican hierarchy, thus prompting the first ecumenical council since Trent some 300 years earlier.²⁰ At the same time a flourishing Catholic revival in the early to mid-nineteenth century, influenced heavily by ultramontanism, had intensified the gaping chasm between liberals and Catholics—and between Protestants and Catholics—both in Europe and the

¹⁸ WEG, *Vatican Decrees in Their Bearing on Civil Allegiance; A Political Expostulation*. By the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone, M.P. To which are added: *A History of the Vatican Council; Together with the Latin and English text of the Papal Syllabus and the Vatican Decrees* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1875)

¹⁹ ‘Religious Items’, *ZH*, 4 March 1875, p. 70.

²⁰ Emiliana Noether, ‘Vatican Council I: Its Political and Religious Setting’, *The Journal of Modern History*, 40 (1968), p. 218.

Americas. By 1850 the revival had left its mark in the United States.²¹ Fuelled primarily by the Jesuit order, ultramontanism was characterised by intense devotional piety, bitter opposition to developments in secular liberalism, control of Catholic education and intellectual life along with greater centralisation of authority within the Vatican.²² With its emphasis on loyalty to the pope over national allegiance, ultramontanism was repellent to the kind of radical, often anti-clerical, nationalism sweeping across Europe. Beginning with the outbreak of revolutions in 1848, events in Europe soon began to influence American society and politics as well. The battle between secular liberal nationalism and Catholic ultramontanism during the period led to the expulsion of the Jesuits from Switzerland in 1847 followed by their departure from Italy, Spain, Germany and France between 1859 and 1880. Expelled Jesuits, along with many other Catholic migrants, found their way to the United States, where their views clashed with nativist Protestants who already harboured anti-Catholic sentiments. Jesuits in America also faced opposition from disillusioned anti-Catholic radicals from Europe, who had also found their way to the United States in significant numbers during the middle decades of the nineteenth century.²³ A clash of cultures was taking place on both sides of the Atlantic.

The nationalist movement for a unified Italy or *Risorgimento* had an especially profound influence on Pope Pius IX and events leading up to the Vatican Council. Pius had endeared himself to liberals at the beginning of his pontificate in 1846 and 1847, having passed several reforms in the Papal States. However, he soon abandoned any

²¹ Jay P. Dolan, *American Catholic Experience: a History from Colonial Times to the Present* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1985), p. 59.

²² Joseph A. Komonchak, 'Modernity and the Construction of Roman Catholicism', *Christianesimo nella storia*, 18 (1997), pp. 353-385.

²³ John T. McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom: A History* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2003), pp. 19-25; and Dolan, *American Catholic Experience*, p. 130.

pretence of liberalism after the 1848 Italian revolution. An author in the Episcopal *American Church Review* quipped in 1874 that Pius had started as a ‘Protestant Pope’ but the Jesuits had ‘transubstantiated’ him.²⁴ The 1848 conflict had forced his temporary desertion of Rome and had precipitated the overthrow of the Papal States to popular acclaim. In 1850 Pius was restored to Rome and regained the Papal States, but then lost the latter permanently to Count Cavour and the nationalist movement in 1860.²⁵ Rome was Pius’ final bastion for temporal power, but his days were numbered there as well. Pius’ attraction to ultramontanism grew and political events in Italy doubtless contributed to his 8 December 1864 issuance of the encyclical *Quanta Cura*, to which was appended a catalogue or ‘Syllabus’ of eighty errors anathema to the church.²⁶ Among other things, the so-called ‘Syllabus of Errors’ condemned nationalism, rationalism and any assertion that ‘the pope could and should reconcile himself and come to terms with progress, liberalism, and modern civilization’.²⁷ The 1870 Vatican decree on infallibility reflected an even greater ultramontane influence within the Roman Catholic Church. Its ruling on infallibility stated:

The jurisdiction of the Roman Pontiff, which is truly episcopal, is immediate; to which all . . . submit not only in matters of faith and morals, but also in those that appertain to the discipline and government of the Church throughout the world. . . .The Roman Pontiff, when he speaks *ex cathedra* . . . is possessed of that infallibility with which the Divine Redeemer willed that his Church should be endowed for defining doctrine regarding faith and morals.²⁸

²⁴ ‘Catholicism and the Vatican’, *American Church Review*, 26 (April 1874), p. 257.

²⁵ Christopher Duggan, *Force of Destiny: A History of Italy since 1796* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2008), pp. 209, 210.

²⁶ Emiliana Noether, ‘Vatican Council I: Its Political and Religious Setting’, *The Journal of Modern History*, 40 (1968), p. 222.

²⁷ Quoted in Noether, ‘Vatican Council I’, p. 224.

²⁸ ‘Dogmatic Decrees of the Vatican Council’, in Schaff, ed, *Vatican Decrees*, pp. 160, 167, 168.

The Syllabus had been appalling enough for Protestants like Gladstone—and more than a few liberal Catholics—but the Vatican Council was seen as a blatantly anti-liberal attempt to regain a hold on temporal power that had been lost to nationalism.²⁹ Pius, however, would lose even more with the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war in 1870. The conflict cut short the Vatican Council and required Napoleon III to remove the French army from Rome. The vacuum was quickly filled by Italian troops and the seizure of Rome was almost complete, depriving the pope of all temporal power other than the Vatican compound ('Vatican City' from 1929).³⁰

The Vatican Council also highlighted the internal division that existed within the Catholic Church. The greatest strain existed between the ultramontane party and the 'liberal' or 'Old Catholics' who were seeking rapprochement between the church and the modern world and who generally opposed raising infallibility to the status of church dogma. Among the leading liberal anti-infallibilists were the German theologian Ignaz von Döllinger, the French aristocrat Charles de Montalembert and the English MP and journalist Lord Acton. In America the priest Isaac Hecker, founder of the Paulist Fathers order and the *Catholic World*, and Orestes Brownson, founder of *Brownson's Journal*, were among the leading voices of liberalism. Hecker had attended the Vatican Council in an official capacity and worked on behalf of the minority anti-infallibilist faction. Prior to the council he had co-operated with Acton and Döllinger, whom he had met through his friend, the English author and liberal Catholic Charles Simpson.³¹ Henry Manning was a

²⁹ Matthew, *Gladstone*, p. 248.

³⁰ Duggan, *Force of Destiny*, 255-257.

³¹ William L. Portier, 'Isaac Hecker and the First Vatican Council' *The Catholic Historical Review*, 71 (1985), pp. 209-215.

principal infallibilist both prior to and during the Vatican Council. He had been a defender of the ‘Syllabus of Errors’ in 1864, and his 1869 pastoral, *The Oecumenical Council and the Infallibility of the Roman Pontiff*, helped to establish the framework of the ultramontane definition that eventually prevailed at the council. Manning’s role at the council, however, was not chiefly that of a theologian, but that of a diplomat securing the passage of infallibility.³² The majority Infallibilist party prevailed against a challenge from the minority which had offered a compromise decree. The ultramontane influence had reached its zenith.

Gladstone sympathised with liberal Catholics and greatly admired Döllinger with whom he had formed a friendship in the 1840s and had visited in Munich just prior to publishing *Vatican Decrees*.³³ Döllinger’s outspoken opposition to infallibility during the Vatican Council led to his excommunication on 18 April 1871.³⁴ In a letter of 21 July 1871 Gladstone wrote to console him:

Nor can I charge myself with any exaggeration in the belief I entertain that you are at this moment, by the Providence of God, the foremost in all Europe among the champions of the only union which can save the world: the union of Faith and Reason. It is I believe the union in which historically the Gospel of Christ laid its first foundations, and those foundations cannot be altered or destroyed.³⁵

During the proceedings of the council Gladstone’s views on infallibility had been informed largely through letters from Döllinger’s former pupil Lord Acton, who was an active anti-infallibilist in Rome during the council, albeit in an unofficial capacity. As Gladstone’s

³² Robert Gray, *Cardinal Manning: A Biography* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1985), pp. 230-31; and E. R. Norman, *The English Catholic Church in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), pp. 263, 266-267.

³³ DWB, *MoG*, pp. 224-25.

³⁴ Baumgarten, Paul Maria. ‘Johann Joseph Ignaz von Döllinger’, *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. vol 5 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1909), 1 July 2012 <<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05094a.htm>>

³⁵ Matthew, *Gladstone Diaries*, vol 8, p. 11.

eyes and ears he once referred in a letter to ‘this insane enterprise’ in an appeal for the premier to sound an alarm before it was too late.³⁶ Along with Acton and Döllinger, Gladstone believed that the Syllabus and the Vatican decree on infallibility served only to strengthen the cause of secularists and materialists. ‘The proclamation of Infallibility,’ he said to Dr Moriarity, the Unionist bishop of Kerry, ‘I must own I look upon as the most portentous . . . of all events in the history of the Christian church’.³⁷ In a letter to Acton of 1 December 1869 he wrote: ‘Ultra-montanism and secularism are enemies in theory and in intention, but the result of the former will be to increase the force and better the chances of the latter.’³⁸ And on 8 January 1870 in another letter to Acton he called ultramontanism an ‘antisocial power’ which had never ‘more undisguisedly assumed that character than in the Syllabus’.³⁹ Gladstone had thus concluded that ultramontanism was a threat to the true cause of Christianity. As the *Vatican Decrees* and *Vaticanism* would reveal, the statesman was ostensibly most concerned about the effect the infallibility decree would have on English Catholics.

The central thesis of *Vatican Decrees* was derived from Gladstone’s article ‘Ritual and Ritualism’, published in the October 1874 number of the *Contemporary Review*. The latter piece was written at the height of debate over the Public Worship Regulation Bill, which was an attempt to purge the Church of England of ritualistic practices that some feared would lead to ultramontanism.⁴⁰ In it Gladstone had opposed the erastian practice

³⁶ DWB, *MoG*, p. 224.

³⁷ WEG, quoted in Morley, *Life of Gladstone*, vol 2, p. 512.

³⁸ Lathbury, *Correspondence on Church and Religion*, vol 2, p. 50.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

⁴⁰ G. I. T. Machin, *Politics and the Churches in Great Britain, 1869 – 1921* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), pp. 78, 79.

of suppressing ritualism, and he also interjected a single reference to Roman Catholicism that became the basis for the four propositions of *Vatican Decrees*:

[1] Rome has substituted for the proud boast of *semper eadem* a policy of violence and change in faith; [2] Rome had ‘refurbished and paraded anew every rusty tool she was fondly thought to have disused; [3] when no one can become her convert without renouncing his moral and mental freedom, and placing his civil loyalty and duty at the mercy of another; [4] and when she has equally repudiated modern thought and ancient history.’⁴¹

Gladstone had included this thinly-veiled reference to the Vatican decrees in order to dismiss the possibility that a handful of ritualistic Anglican clergy could Romanise the English establishment. The language of the four propositions, however, may not have been entirely of Gladstone’s own creation. He had in part quoted *The Times*, which in a recent article had reported on the conversion to Catholicism of the statesman’s ex-colleague, the Marquess of Ripon. There an author had insisted Ripon had ‘renounced his mental and moral freedom’ and that ‘a statesman who becomes a convert to Roman Catholicism forfeits at once the confidence of the English people’.⁴² Ripon’s secession had been yet another occasion of sadness for the devoted Anglican statesman. In addition to his disappointment over Manning’s conversion in 1855 he had also been vexed by his sister’s flight to Catholicism. The secession of Ripon, G. I. T. Machin has suggested, may have provided an immediate catalyst for his central proposition.⁴³ Regardless of Gladstone’s true intentions, the statement had created controversy enough to require a much larger explanation, which was soon forthcoming in *Vatican Decrees*.

Gladstone began *Vatican Decrees* with an expression of desire to avoid religious bigotry and theological controversy. ‘Indeed’, he stated ‘with theology, except in its civil

⁴¹ WEG, ‘Ritualism and Ritual’, *Contemporary Review*, 24, (1874), p.674.

⁴² Machin, *Politics and the Churches*, p. 79.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

bearing—with theology as such—I have here nothing whatever to do.’⁴⁴ Nevertheless, he insisted that Roman theology had thrust itself into the temporal domain and ‘necessarily comes to be a frequent theme of political discussion’.⁴⁵ It was to be a political expostulation. As he would write later in *Vaticanism*, the four points were essentially just two:

- I. That Rome had reproduced for active service those doctrines of former times, termed by me “rusty tools,” which she was fondly thought to have disused.
- II. That the Pope now claims, with plenary authority, from every convert and member of his Church, that he “shall place his loyalty and civil duty at the mercy of another:” that other being himself.⁴⁶

Gladstone explained in *Vatican Decrees* that the ‘rusty tools’ could be summarised in eighteen bullet points drawn from the ‘Syllabus of Errors’. Among them Gladstone highlighted attacks upon liberty of the press, of speech, and of worship; Vatican claims of the right to use force; the insistence that civil law cannot prevail over ecclesiastical law when they come into conflict; and Pius’ rejection of the notion that abolition of the temporal power of the papacy would be highly advantageous to the Church.⁴⁷ But the main thrust of the pamphlet was contained in the second major point concerning the political dimensions of the Vatican decree on infallibility and Gladstone’s contention that the civil loyalty of British Catholics was jeopardised by their adherence to Rome. ‘Indeed’, he insisted, ‘that spirit of centralization, the excesses of which are as fatal to vigorous life in the Church as in the State, seems now nearly to have reached the last and furthest point of possible advancement and exaltation.’⁴⁸ The political implications were

⁴⁴ WEG, *Rome and the Newest Fashions*, ‘Vatican Decrees’, p. xxi.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ WEG, *Rome and the Newest Fashions*, ‘Vaticanism’, p. 18.

⁴⁷ WEG, ‘Vatican Decrees’, pp. xxvii-xxix.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. xliv.

all too clear in the mind of the Gladstone. He saw in the Vatican decrees a revolution in the episcopal order.

To bolster his plea for English Catholics to declare their loyalty (it was the chief purpose of the essay), Gladstone reminded his readers of the struggle for Catholic emancipation and the assurances of loyalty to the Crown given by Catholics at that time. From the 1826 ‘Declaration’ of the governing Vicars Apostolic, he cited the following: ‘The allegiance which Catholics hold to be due, and are bound to pay, to their Sovereign, and to the civil authority of the State, is perfect and undivided.’⁴⁹ Additionally, he quoted the 25 Jan 1826 ‘Pastoral Address to the Clergy and Laity of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland’ from the Hierarchy of the Roman Communion, which stated: ‘They declare on oath their belief that it is not an article of the Catholic Faith, neither are they thereby required to believe, that the Pope is infallible.’⁵⁰ But Gladstone feared the assurances of 1826 had been undone, first in the Syllabus and the Encyclical and finally with the decree of infallibility. Thus he concluded that:

Under the circumstances such as these, it seems not too much to ask of them to confirm the opinion which we, as fellow-countrymen, entertain of them, by sweeping away, in such a manner and terms as they may think best, the presumptive imputations which their ecclesiastical rulers at Rome, acting autocratically, appear to have brought upon their capacity to pay a solid and undivided allegiance; and to fulfil the engagement which their Bishops, as political sponsors, promised and declared for them in 1825.⁵¹

That confirmation, he suggested, could best be satisfied by a ‘demonstration’—essentially a reaffirmation of the 1826 declaration—that British Catholic civil allegiance would not be

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. xlii.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. xlii.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. lv.

impaired by the Vatican decrees.⁵² Gladstone had audaciously challenged English Catholics to affirm their loyalty through a public statement.

Gladstone explained further that it was not his intention to cause public alarm, and he had no fear that a foreign foe or domestic treason could ‘at the bidding of the court of Rome, disturb these peaceful shores’.⁵³ Yet at the same time he was confident that the temporal claims of Gregory VII, Innocent III and Boniface VIII had not simply been ‘disinterred in the nineteenth century, like some hideous mummies picked out of Egyptian sarcophagi, in the interests of archaeology’.⁵⁴ ‘It must be for some political object of a very tangible kind’, Gladstone insisted, ‘that the risks of so daring a raid upon the civil sphere have been deliberately run.’⁵⁵ As a case in point, Gladstone noted it was difficult to deny that the claims of the Vatican were primarily responsible for the present conflict between German and Roman enactments.⁵⁶ He also alluded briefly to the failed Irish University Bill of 1873, giving an indication that the cause of his recent political defeat was not far from his mind: ‘But the Roman Catholics of Ireland thought fit to procure the rejection of that measure, by the direct influence which they exercised over a certain number of Irish Members of Parliament, and by the temptation which they thus offered—the bid, in effect, which (to use a homely phrase) they made, to attract the support of the Tory Opposition.’⁵⁷ A final statement worth noting was Gladstone’s passing reference to the United States. If the net of the papacy was cast much wider in Europe, then America,

⁵² *Ibid.*, p.lvi.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. lvii.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. lvii.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. lix.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. lx.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. lxx.

which was a bastion of church-state separation, was itself subjected to conflicts between the two institutions:

Even in the United States, where the severance between Church and State is supposed to be complete, a long catalogue might be drawn of subjects belonging to the domain and competency of the State, but also undeniably affecting the government of the Church; such as, by way of example, marriage, burial, education, prison discipline, blasphemy, poor relief, incorporation, mortmain, religious endowments, vows of celibacy, and obedience.⁵⁸

As a final plea Gladstone implored his Roman Catholic countrymen to oppose the decree of infallibility as their co-religionists had when resisting the Spanish Armada.⁵⁹ Gladstone had laid out a compelling historical narrative that Protestants and liberals on both sides of the Atlantic received as an ominous warning about the current Catholic leadership.

The answer from Manning came early in 1875 with *The Vatican Decrees, in their Bearing on Civil Allegiance*. In it he argued that for centuries popes had exercised the same power, observing that ‘The Vatican Council did not make the Pope infallible. He is not more infallible after it than before.’⁶⁰ Thus, for Manning, no change had taken place at the Vatican Council with regard to the reality of infallibility. He also insisted the council had not addressed church-state issues and that the ‘Deposing Powers’ of the pope no longer existed by reason of the fact that the world was no longer exclusively Roman Catholic. He summarised his major points as follows:

First, that the Vatican decrees have in no jot or tittle changed either the obligations or the conditions of civil allegiance. Secondly, that the relations of the Catholic Church to the civil powers of the world have been immutably fixed from the beginning, inasmuch as they arose out of the Divine constitution of the Church, and out of the civil society of the national order. Thirdly, that any collisions now

⁵⁸ WEG, *Rome and the Newest Fashions in Religion*, p. liii.

⁵⁹ WEG, ‘Vatican Decrees’, p. lxxvi.

⁶⁰ Edward Henry Manning, *The Vatican Decrees in Their Bearing on Civil Allegiance*, (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1875), p. 14.

existing have been brought on by changes, not on the part of the Catholic Church, much less of the Vatican Council, but on the part of the civil powers, and that by reason of a systematic conspiracy against the Holy See. Fourthly, that by these changes and collisions the civil powers of Europe are destroying their own stability. Fifthly, that the motive of the Vatican Council in defining the infallibility of the Roman Pontiff was not any temporal policy.⁶¹

Manning also addressed Gladstone's demand for a 'demonstration' from English Catholics that the Vatican decrees would not affect their civil allegiance:

I have shown that the Pope is not able, by the Vatican Council, to make any claim in the name of faith, nor in the name of morals, nor in the name of the government or discipline of the Church, which he was not able to make before the Vatican Council existed. I have no need to declare myself ready to repel and reject that which the Pope cannot do. He cannot do an act contrary to the Divine Law; but to impair my Civil Allegiance would be contrary to the Law of God.⁶²

On the issue of the deposing power of the popes, Manning articulated that such authority only applied to 'Christian Princes' in cases where 'their laws deviate from the law of God'. In such instances, he declared, 'the Church has authority from God to judge of that deviation, and by all its powers to enforce the correction of that departure from justice'.⁶³ Manning had delivered a stern rebuke to his former friend in delineating the major tenets of ultramontanism.

Newman's reply to Gladstone in 1875 was entitled *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk*, having its origin in a request made by the duke that he should respond publically to the controversy. Like Manning, Newman refuted what he perceived as Gladstone's misunderstanding of the Syllabus and the Vatican decrees, but from a different perspective. 'I deeply grieve', he wrote, 'that Mr. Gladstone has felt it his duty to speak with such

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 359-360.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 41.

⁶³ Manning, *Vatican Decrees*, p. 51.

extraordinary severity of our religion and of ourselves.’⁶⁴ Newman insisted the defeat of the 1873 Irish Education Bill had been a motivating factor behind Gladstone’s tirade. After detailing the flaws of the bill he posed the following question: ‘Why, then, must Mr. Gladstone come down upon the Catholic Religion, because the Irish love dearly the Green Island, and its interests?’⁶⁵ To Gladstone’s claim that infallibility represented an innovation in Catholic theology, Newman insisted the pope’s authority was reserved only for matters of faith and morals. ‘His infallibility’, Newman instructed, ‘bears upon the domain of thought, not directly of action, and while it may fairly exercise the theologian, philosopher, or man of science, it scarcely concerns the politician.’⁶⁶ Most importantly, and in sharp contrast to Manning, Newman minimised the nature of the pope’s infallibility by reasoning it carried no authority for commands of action, nor could the pope’s command violate individual conscience. Moreover, there would never come a time when English Roman Catholics would be forced to choose between their church and their country. In such an event, however, his position was clear: ‘I should decide according to the particular case, which is beyond all rules, and it must be decided on its own merits.’ He would also seek the counsel of theologians, bishops and clergy as well as revered friends.

The American press was quick to respond to the controversy. Most articles revolved chiefly around summaries of the major claims and merits of Gladstone’s *Vatican Decrees* with occasional references to Manning and Newman. *Vaticanism* was the focus of far fewer comments although in a few cases the two pamphlets were addressed in the same

⁶⁴ John Henry Newman, *A Letter Addressed to the Duke of Norfolk on Occasion of Mr. Gladstone's Recent Expostulation*, (New York: The Catholic Publication Society, 1875), p. 4.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 165-166.

article. If most authors were focused on the issues at hand, there were a few statements of unmitigated praise both for Gladstone's moral character and Christian statesmanship.

Writing for the *Evangelist*, Theodore Cuyler, the eminent pastor of the Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church in Brooklyn, declared the 'brilliant manifesto' had been written by the 'most powerful living Englishman'. 'His strength lies not only in his brain and a generous culture' he added, 'but in a lofty conscientiousness of moral purity. If any deserve it, he surely deserves the name of a Christian statesman.'⁶⁷ Moreover, Cuyler believed Gladstone had no care for his political fortunes in writing the pamphlet: 'He has had a full cup of civil honors already and disclaims any thirst for another drop.'⁶⁸ In a comparison of Gladstone and Bismarck, a writer for the *New York Tribune* believed there would be no lack of discussion in England or on the Continent of the positions assumed by the great commoner and the hitherto invincible prince. 'It would be hard to imagine', he declared, 'two men more utterly unlike in moral or personal characteristics—the one embodied conscience, the other embodied force.'⁶⁹ Americans were once again reading about Gladstone's Christian sensibilities in the American press.

By contrast, a second category of articles contained descriptions of Gladstone that were entirely negative. The London correspondent for the *New York Times* likened him to the most fanatical teetotalers who privately felt a weakness for drink. This, he believed, was the likely explanation of his foaming opposition to the pope. 'Two of a trade never agree', the correspondent quipped, 'and Mr. Gladstone is himself Pope enough for the

⁶⁷ *NYE*, 3 December 1874, p.1.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ 'Cases of Conscience', *NY.Trib*, 23 November 1874, p. 4.

whole terrestrial system.’⁷⁰ Gladstone, he concluded, had been corrupted by the same sort of sycophancy as the pope and ‘has himself been led to believe in his own greatness and infallibility’.⁷¹ The *New York Herald* used the occasion to resurrect a scathing 1864 editorial on Gladstone by Professor Bonamy Price of Oxford University who was visiting the United States in 1874. The piece was introduced with mention of its timeliness in relation Gladstone’s defeat on the Irish University bill, his failure to hold his party together, his ‘practical abnegation of leadership’, and ‘now his remarkable demonstration in the pamphlet against the Vatican Decrees’.⁷² Price had criticised Gladstone as ‘the most uncertain of statesmen’ suggesting he ‘was not formed to be a leader, but would be invaluable as an auxiliary’.⁷³ Moreover, Gladstone was plagued by a peculiar mental constitution with a marked singularity to combine ‘the extreme of impressionableness with the extreme of want of intuition’.⁷⁴ Price was unmerciful in his assessment of Gladstone’s discernment:

Never, probably, was there a statesman so perfectly accessible to the influence of every intellectual element of every question, so ready to surrender himself to it, and yet so destitute of the light within, of the judging faculty, to enable him to assign to each its proper weight and power.⁷⁵

The *Herald* also published a letter from the Catholic Archbishop of Baltimore, J. Roosevelt Bayley, who remarked: ‘It would not require the help of one of “the eleven wise men of Greece” to find out the particular form of monomania which Mr. Gladstone is laboring

⁷⁰ *NYT*, 2 February 1875, p. 5.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² ‘A Sketch of Mr. Gladstone’, *NYH*, 26 November 1874, p. 5.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

under.⁷⁶ Readers of at least two of America's leading newspapers found scathing criticisms of Gladstone's character in their pages.

Another category reflected mixed opinions of Gladstone, and could be found even among those who heartily agreed with him on *Vatican Decrees*. Given his recent political defeat and subsequent retirement as party leader, there were several articles that questioned his character traits and leadership abilities, but also included words of commendation as well. A writer for the *Congregationalist* suggested that 'Mr. Gladstone's character—like the punch which the English love—is compounded of various and opposite elements; and with that bluntness and hasty disregard of little properties which sometimes characterize great men, he has at times in presenting to various classes of persons disagreeable aspects of himself; so that while, in general, the Liberals have been proud of him, they have not over-much loved him.'⁷⁷ In the Methodist *Christian Advocate* he was described simultaneously as 'the champion of true citizenship in every land', and 'impulsive, and sometime ill-tempered'.⁷⁸ An article appeared in the *Nation* on 18 February 1875 entitled 'Mr. Gladstone's Retirement' that reflected a nuanced opinion of the statesman's temperament. The author conveyed words of high praise for the statesman:

There is also a moral elevation about him, imaginative amplitude of conception, a sensitiveness of conscience, which, though they have sometimes led him into mistakes, have been of the greatest service in raising the whole tone of English politics and public men.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Archbishop J. Roosevelt Bayley, Archbishop of Baltimore, *NYH*, 22 November 1874, p.5.

⁷⁷ 'Exit Mr. Gladstone', *CON*, 21 January 1875, p.4.

⁷⁸ *CA*, 3 December 1874, p. 388.

⁷⁹ 'Mr. Gladstone's Retirement', *TN*, 18 February 1875, p. 109.

Yet, why had Gladstone been driven from office in the previous year? The author focused on his personal traits, asserting that no man had more conspicuously displayed what the French call *les défauts de ses qualites* (everyone betrays the defects of their own qualities):

His force spends itself on occasions when it is not really wanted. His ardor runs away with him, betrays him into imprudences, causes him to attach an undue importance to things the rest of the world cares little about. The wonderful activity of his mind makes him anxious to exhaust the possible views of a question; and he often goes on stating one proposition after another with so many qualifications and restrictions that his hearers become altogether puzzled.⁸⁰

If most of the charges against him had been unjust, it had to be confessed that Gladstone was ‘too neglectful of the small but legitimate arts by which popularity is won and retained.’⁸¹ Questions about the statesman’s temperament were in evidence even among his admirers.

Other writers addressed the subject of Gladstone’s motives, in a few instances suggesting they were ulterior to his stated concern about the loyalty of English Roman Catholics. One such suspicion was that his motives were entirely political. Within this group, perhaps the accusation that had fallen most wide of the mark came from an American Catholic writer in the *New York Herald*. He declared the statesman’s true motive to be nothing less than repeal of Catholic Emancipation. Should Gladstone again come to power he would introduce measures against the Catholic Church. Thus, it was ‘manifest that Gladstone means or threatens to repeal wholly or in part the act of Emancipation’.⁸² In March 1875 the *New York Herald* reported that Bishop Lynch of Charleston delivered a lecture in New York’s St Stephen’s Catholic Church where, according to the writer, he echoed the charge that Gladstone was trying to raise a no-

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ ‘Mr. Gladstone’s Retirement’, *TN*, 18 February 1875, p.109.

⁸² Prudentius, ‘Infallibility’, *NYH*, 22 November 1874, p.5.

Popery cry as a way to regain power.⁸³ The *Springfield Republican* insisted the more interesting aspect of the dispute was not on its merits but on the secret motives. ‘Why this uproar at this time?’ a correspondent asked. ‘We can perceive no cause for this no-popery move of Gladstone’, he contended, ‘except that he is again in politics.’ Catholics had done nothing to arouse suspicion. Instead, Gladstone had set the nation in an uproar in hopes of recovering his place as the master of Protestant England. ‘It may be statesmanship’, the writer observed, ‘but it looks very much like politics.’⁸⁴ At least a few reviewers perceived raw politics to be the reason behind Gladstone’s pamphleteering.

A second group of authors played up the political angle as well, but insisted that Gladstone’s true motive was found in his bitterness over the defeat of his government on the Irish University Bill. The *New York Evangelist* reported that it was the attitude of Irish Liberals in parliament to his Irish University Bill that had brought home to Gladstone the truth of the charges made in the *Vatican Decrees*. His offer of higher education open to Catholics had been ‘indignantly spurned’ at the behest of Irish Catholic prelates.⁸⁵ The author and Episcopalian clergyman Julius H. Ward wrote in the *American Church Review* of his belief that the pope was behind the rejection of Gladstone’s Irish University Bill by the Irish Catholic Members of Parliament. ‘Hence the Political Expostulation’, Ward insisted.⁸⁶ A writer for the *Unitarian Review* made the same accusation, insisting the vote on the Irish University Bill had come by the express direction of the papacy. The event had fully opened Gladstone’s eyes to ‘the peril of a foreign power entering in the garb of

⁸³ ‘The Gladstone Controversy’, *NYH*, 8 March 1875, p.6.

⁸⁴ ‘Protestantism and Popery’, *SR*, 18 November 1874, p.4.

⁸⁵ ‘Mr. Gladstone’s Impeachment of the Papacy’, *NYE*, 3 December 1874, p. 4.

⁸⁶ *American Church Review*, 1 July 1875, p. 441.

religion and assuming to dictate political results'.⁸⁷ Readers of the *New York Herald* were informed of the same allegation through published excerpts of an interview conducted by one of its foreign correspondents in Munich with Ignaz von Döllinger on 15 November 1874. 'The fact is', Döllinger was quoted as saying, 'that Mr. Gladstone sees clearly the danger which the decrees of the Vatican Council will produce in Ireland and wherever there is a large Irish population, as in the United States.'⁸⁸ He further insisted that the vote against the Irish University bill was by order of the bishops. In a remarkable quote, Döllinger declared:

Though Mr. Gladstone does not say this in his pamphlet you may read it between the lines; and he says so in a clear way, and at the same time his conviction is that in future at every new opportunity the same thing will be repeated. The members in Parliament are entirely dependent on the bishops, and the bishops receive their instructions from Rome, consequently from the Jesuits in the last instance.⁸⁹

Similarly, the London correspondent for the *New York Times* had little doubt about the influence of the defeat. 'It is evident', he insisted, 'that Mr. Gladstone took to heart his defeat on the Irish University Bill and that he throws the blame of it upon the Roman Catholics, of whose support he thought himself assured.'⁹⁰ There were a number of stories in the American press that gave readers pause about Gladstone's true intentions for writing *Vatican Decrees*.

There was at least one paper, the *New York Tribune*, which addressed the subject by giving Gladstone the benefit of the doubt. Noting the tendency in the press to impute base motives to Gladstone for writing *Vatican Decrees*, one writer insisted he was 'not

⁸⁷ 'Mr. Gladstone and Catholic Loyalty' *UR*, 3 (1875), p. 191.

⁸⁸ 'Dr. Döllinger', *NYH*, 5 December 1874, p. 4.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ 'Gossip from England', *NYT*, 19 November 1874, p.1.

consciously influenced by any other motive than that of a sincere desire to throw light on what seemed to him a subject of paramount importance'.⁹¹ In a review of *Vaticanism*, another correspondent for the *Tribune* addressed the topic of political motives:

If any suspicion still lingers, it ought now to be removed. No one can read this new pamphlet on "Vaticanism," or the recent paper on the speeches of the Pope, without perceiving what a strong impression the religious aspects of this question have made upon Mr. Gladstone's mind.⁹²

If the *Times* and the *Herald* thought otherwise, the *Tribune* apparently had little doubt that the statesman's motives were well intentioned. Assessments of Gladstone's motives had been voiced in three of the major New York papers with the result being mixed opinions.

Another topic that appeared in reports related to Gladstone and the *Vatican Decrees* was the situation in Germany. A crucial issue was the struggle between Catholicism and liberalism unfolding in Bismarck's newly-formed German empire. With it had come the so-called *Kulturkampf*, a series of anti-Catholic laws instituted during the 1870s. If Gladstone had not blatantly endorsed Bismarck's policy in *Vatican Decrees*, he had placed a greater share of blame for the cultural struggle on Rome.⁹³ The situation was doubtless on his mind given his recent meeting with Döllinger in Munich. *Kulturkampf* legislation was politically motivated and had as its primary goal the strengthening of support among Bismarck's former enemies, the National Liberals. It was also part of a much wider agenda aimed at consolidating the diverse and unstable factions of the empire including socialists, Jews and other ethnic minorities.⁹⁴ The *Kulturkampf* had grown out of much

⁹¹ 'Cases of Conscience', *NY.Trib*, 23 November 1874, p.4.

⁹² *NY.Trib*, 6 March 1875, p. 6.

⁹³ WEG, 'Vatican Decrees', p. lx.

⁹⁴ Lynn Abrams, *Bismarck and the German Empire, 1871-1918* (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 25, 26-48; and Edgar Feuchtwanger, *Imperial Germany, 1850-1918* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 65.

earlier conflict between Protestant liberals and Catholics to shape German society. Tensions had been exacerbated by the 1864 Syllabus of Errors and the 1870 promulgation of infallibility at the Vatican Council.⁹⁵ The crucial elements of Prussian *Kulturkampf* legislation were contained in the 1873 and 1874 May Laws or Falk Laws (after their author, Liberal Minister of Culture Adelbert Falk). Among other things, the laws extended state control over Catholic education and the appointment of clergy and provided for confiscation of parish endowments and the imprisonment of dissident priests and bishops. It had also led to the expulsion of Jesuits from the country.⁹⁶ In the United States, Bismarck's policy was met by general approval in Republican organs such as the *New York Times*, *Harper's Weekly*, the *New York Tribune*, the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Nation*.⁹⁷ The German struggle against ultramontanism was widely appreciated within the dominant Protestant culture in America.

In several instances American writers agreed with Gladstone's assertion that greater blame lay with the papacy for the difficulties in Germany, but they often went even further in their denunciations. The *New York Evangelist* included Germany in a list of nations where ultramontane interests had meddled with the affairs of the state. The other nations he mentioned were Belgium, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, and the United States. 'All over the world', the correspondent proclaimed, 'it is making itself especially obnoxious. It is inviting collision with the State, and grasping at political power to effect its ambitious designs.'⁹⁸ The author stipulated, however, his belief that ultimate success by Rome was impossible. Heman Lincoln of the *Baptist Quarterly* also expressed concern over papal

⁹⁵ D. G. Williamson, *Bismarck and Germany, 1862-1890* (London: Longman, 1998), p. 54.

⁹⁶ Williamson, *Bismarck and Germany*, p. 55.

⁹⁷ McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom*, p. 99.

⁹⁸ 'Priestly Power Abroad and at Home', *NYE*, 14 Aug 1873, p. 4.

tyranny in Germany, romanticising Gladstone as a new ally coming to the aid of Bismarck just as the Black Knight had succoured Ivanhoe.⁹⁹ There is little doubt the analogy rang true for Bismarck who had ensured that a German translation of *Vatican Decrees* was distributed.¹⁰⁰ A writer for the *Unitarian Review* insisted Bismarck was right to decline diplomatic relations with Rome, a power that at any time might demand of its adherents the forcible overturn of the government he represented. Nor could the policy of banishing the Jesuits from the empire be seriously blamed, when they were not only actively opposing its statutes, but presumably plotting revolution in order to restore the church to what they thought its rightful position.¹⁰¹ An author for the *Nation* noted that in Germany the church was allowed to hold the position of an *imperium in imperio*, i.e. to retain practices and powers built up during the Middle Ages. ‘Its relegation to a position of complete subordination to the state’, he contended, ‘was, in fact, a necessary part of the revolution’.¹⁰² In the *New York Times* a reporter declared: ‘The English-speaking public is now much better informed respecting the grave issues which agitate Germany, and which, in one form or another, are likely, sooner or later, to excite the earnest attention of the other Protestant and Roman Catholic nations.’¹⁰³ The fact that several major publications saw a connection between Gladstone’s *Vatican Decrees* and the *Kulturkampf* in Germany demonstrates that a significant number of Americans shared the statesman’s concerns over the infallibility decree.

⁹⁹ ‘The Vatican Council and Civil Allegiance’, *BQR*, 2 (1875), p. 201.

¹⁰⁰ Machin, *Politics and the Churches*, p. 79.

¹⁰¹ ‘Mr. Gladstone and Catholic Loyalty’, *UR*, 2 (1875), pp. 190-191.

¹⁰² ‘The Catholic Clergy and the German Government’, *TN*, 1 April 1875, pp. 217-218.

¹⁰³ *NYT*, 18 March 1875, p.10.

A topic Gladstone made only the briefest passing allusion to in *Vatican Decrees* was the threat posed by ultramontanism to American education.¹⁰⁴ Yet, although by no means universally present among the sources, a significant number of writers in the American press seized upon the hot-button issue of public education in the context of their reporting on *Vatican Decrees*. Among evangelicals there were several instances where exploitation of the Gladstone controversy took the form of commentary on the public school conflict. Eugene Lawrence, editor of *Harper's Weekly* and a staunch critic of the papacy, accused the Catholic bishops of repeating the pope's language and assailing public instruction in the United States. In an article entitled 'The Ultramontanes in Ohio', Lawrence gives us a sense of how the conflict over education played out in Cincinnati, a major centre of ultramontane Catholicism. 'Its Catholic vote', Lawrence warned, 'is apparently held in rigid obedience by its bishop and its papal press.'¹⁰⁵ Commenting on a recent 'papal celebration' in the city where the prominent Bishop M'Quaid spoke on education, Lawrence wrote:

Bishop M'Quaid, the Catholic knight-errant of the lecture-room, delivered a violent attack upon the American common schools. He had been invited to Cincinnati for the purpose, and one chief object of the ultramontane gathering was evidently to mark out for the Democracy that policy in educational matters which they will hereafter be expected to pursue.¹⁰⁶

M'Quaid, Lawrence noted, had decried the fact that Catholics had to pay taxes for 'Godless' schools, and his address was received with loud approval. Lawrence believed that 'The immense assembly of ultramontanes inaugurated anew the war upon the common

¹⁰⁴ See quote by WEG, current chapter, p. 87.

¹⁰⁵ Eugene Lawrence, 'The Ultramontanes in Ohio', *HW*, 24 July 1875, p. 603.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

schools.’¹⁰⁷ He informed his readers that ‘the American system of education is the first of our institutions which we are called upon to surrender to our European Church’.¹⁰⁸ Ohio, he warned, was to be the scene of a memorable contest. Although Lawrence had not referred to Gladstone directly in this piece, it was essentially contemporaneous with the *Vatican Decrees* dispute and provides an indication of just how volatile the issue of public education had become.

Gladstone’s *Vatican Decrees* served to highlight and to arouse Protestant suspicions about the motives of Roman Catholics in the public school system. The Reverend M. S. Terry of the Eighteenth Street Methodist Episcopal Church in New York delivered what the *New York Herald* described as ‘a very sensational sermon’ entitled ‘Romanism as America’s Dangerous Enemy’. Terry concurred thoroughly with Gladstone’s central premise regarding civil allegiance and alerted his flock to the recent movements of ‘Romanism’ within the United States, noting that *Vatican Decrees* illuminated the question because Catholics had ‘become a very powerful political element’.¹⁰⁹ ‘For fifty years’, Terry declared, ‘Romanism has stood in opposition to our school system, and now the question of parochial schools comes up.’ Highlighting the divergent views on the condition of public education, Terry quoted from an unnamed Catholic paper that read: ‘Let the public schools go where they came from—the devil’.¹¹⁰ The *Independent* called the present policy of Rome ‘aggressive’, stressing that good Catholics in many countries had of late been forced to choose between pope and king. The author hoped the conflict would not be precipitated in England or America, but added that

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ ‘Eighteenth Street Methodist Episcopal Church’, *NYH*, 26 April 1875, p. 4.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

‘certain utterances of Catholic journals about our common schools do not strengthen this confidence’.¹¹¹ For Heman Lincoln, the Vatican decree of infallibility had forced a direct conflict between medieval and modern civilization. His essay in the *Baptist Quarterly* declared the papist threat had begun in Germany, was brewing in France and Spain, was approaching in England and could not ‘be averted in the United States, where the hierarchy is in league to destroy the system of public education’.¹¹² Even the more liberal *Christian Union*, which, as we will see below, printed opinion critical of *Vatican Decrees*, felt compelled to qualify the conciliation by declaring that ‘wherever the priesthood tries to break up our common school system, we are for uncompromising hostility to their attempt.’¹¹³ Evangelicals had made a connection between their trepidation over papal interference in the schools and the alarm sounded by Gladstone in the *Vatican Decrees* regarding ultramontaniam.

Among secular and liberal publications, the freethought *Boston Investigator* accused the pope of plotting to overthrow American public schools by making them Catholic:

The despot in this religion is *the Pope*,--a superstitious old man living at Rome in a palace. He has satellites all over the globe, and when he gives the word or pulls the wire they obey. . . .It is the Pope who instigates the attack on public schools, plotting against the very life-blood of the AMERICAN REPUBLIC!¹¹⁴

A correspondent for the Republican *Chicago Tribune* contended that ultramontaniam was a threat because, among other things, it claimed the right of Catholic hierarchy to control education by coming between the parent and the state. He contended that it was opposed

¹¹¹ ‘Gladstone’s Manifesto’, *IND*, 3 December 1874, p. 14.

¹¹² Heman Lincoln, ‘The Vatican Council and Civil Allegiance’, *BQR*, 2 (1875), p. 212.

¹¹³ *CU*, 25 Nov 1874 p. 414.

¹¹⁴ *Boston Investigator*, 12 May 1875, p. 4.

to the free-school system as it existed in the United States because ‘it demands that the child be educated in the spiritual dogmas of the Church, and that its education shall be under priestly surveillances’.¹¹⁵ There were visible signs that Americans took the perceived threat to public schooling very seriously.

Gladstone’s central assertion concerning the threat posed by papal infallibility to intellectual freedom and civic loyalty produced numerous responses in the American press. The commentary ranged from entirely negative to highly favourable (we shall come to both of them presently), with a few papers offering more nuanced opinions. Among the latter group were the *Christian Union* and the *New York Times*. Lyman Abbott’s *Christian Union* published an article in which the author insisted the case made by Gladstone was in some aspects a very strong one. Unquestionably, he believed, the Church of Rome demanded undivided allegiance from its members and the pope was in theory an autocrat. He conceded that Gladstone ‘urges with great force that there is at present in Europe a real collision between the claims of the Pope and the claims of the civil governments’.¹¹⁶ But, with respect to the Catholic’s alleged loss of moral and intellectual freedom, he observed that Protestants practised a similar appeal to a higher law of God as they understand it; yet in America, he believed, there were no better citizens than Protestants. Similarly, the author asked, ‘may not the Catholic’s allegiance to the Pope be found practically compatible with good citizenship?’¹¹⁷ The *Christian Union* could only agree with Gladstone in theory, affording a measure of trust in the average Roman Catholic’s capacity

¹¹⁵ *CT*, 25 November 1874, p. 414.

¹¹⁶ *CU*, 25 November 1874, p. 5.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

to respect democratic principles. Gladstone had gone too far in questioning their loyalties to the crown.

The London correspondent for the *New York Times* also offered analysis of a more measured tone regarding Gladstone's central critique. He believed there was no fear that Gladstone's demonstration of the logical consequences of the new ultramontane creed embodied in the Syllabus and the dogma of infallibility would lead English Roman Catholics to renounce their allegiance to the Crown. Gladstone's remonstrations might have the opposite effect of 'establishing a strong and influential body of dissenters in the midst of the Roman Catholic community'.¹¹⁸ Still, the reporter contended, on the whole the discussions Gladstone had started would be a good thing. He described the ultramontanes as humiliated and insisted English Catholics would henceforth be ashamed to commit to its precepts, which would produce among English Roman Catholics a wholesome result. 'The effect of his recent writings', the correspondent argued, 'has at least been to shake up ideas on the subject, and to place the natural and necessary consequences of modern Popery in a highly-instructive light.'¹¹⁹ Thus, in a couple instances reporters agreed with Gladstone in theory but felt he had placed too little faith in the loyalty of English Catholics.

A second and considerably larger body of editorials suggests there was significant opposition to Gladstone's primary contentions with respect to the intellectual freedom and civic loyalty of Roman Catholics. A second reporter for the *New York Times* took a much more critical view of the *Vatican Decrees* than the London correspondent mentioned in the previous paragraph, asserting that Gladstone was wrong to question the loyalty of British

¹¹⁸ *NYT*, 12 March 1875, p. 1.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

and Irish Catholics. He recalled that Irish Catholics had acted against the dictates of the pope in the past by fomenting rebellion against England, thus they might also disregard his mandate in an opposite case. ‘As to the Catholics of England’, he demanded, ‘I do not believe that any section of the population is more loyal’.¹²⁰ Therefore it was quite unnecessary and ‘highly unbecoming’ to ask them what they would do if their loyalty were to be very severely tried after a manner in which it was not likely to be tried at all. Gladstone, he proclaimed, was no longer content ‘that our Catholic fellow-subjects should cry, “God save the Queen.” He wishes them also to exclaim, “God curse the Pope”’.¹²¹ Reflecting its role as a leader in the growing trend towards more independent news reporting, the *New York Times* published opinions that agreed with Gladstone on certain points while offering dissatisfaction on others.

Roman Catholics were the one group that was predictably hostile to Gladstone’s indictment of the papacy. The *New York Herald* reported that American Catholics were assembling to hear *Vatican Decrees* denounced by church leaders. The paper reported a capacity crowd had turned out at Cooper Union in New York on 21 December 1874 to hear the New York theologian and social reformer Father Edward McGlynn. The priest instructed his listeners that the pope had certain limitations. He could not, for example, claim as faith that which violates natural law or contradict revealed religion or previously defined dogmas. There was ‘no danger that the Church will invade the State’, McGlynn

¹²⁰ *NYT*, Nov 26, 1874, p. 5.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

insisted.¹²² In an instructive quote, he revelled in the unlikelihood of American Catholics coming into conflict with the state:

Here, in our favored land there can be no danger of such a strife, as long as we remain faithful to the principles of the fathers of the Republic. It was on this account that two popes declared that the Church was freer in the United States than in any European country.¹²³

In March 1875 the *Herald* informed its readers that an immense congregation had assembled in St. Stephen's church, East Twenty-Eighth Street in New York to hear Bishop Lynch of Charleston reply to Gladstone's expostulation. Lynch echoed the charge that Gladstone was trying to raise a no-Popery cry as a way to regain power.¹²⁴

In late November the *Herald* published a letter to the editor by Archbishop Bayley of Baltimore. 'The only thing I have to say, at this time', Bayley declared, 'against Mr. Gladstone's declaration is that it is false—a shameful calumny.'¹²⁵ Yet he did have more to say. He insisted Gladstone's expostulation had no foundation either in the words of the infallibility decree or in any possible logical deduction from its words. Indeed, he claimed, it 'never entered into the mind of any member of the council'.¹²⁶ Moreover, the Vatican canon did not change in one iota the relations of Catholics to the civil power, any more than it changed those of Protestants. 'It left that important matter' Bayley insisted, 'as connected with the order of civil society, where the New Testament leaves it—where our blessed Lord left it, when he told us to "render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's"'.¹²⁷ The *Herald* also featured several articles written by

¹²² 'Gladstone Answered', *NYH*, 22 December 1874, p. 5.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ 'The Gladstone Controversy', *NYH*, 8 March 1875, p.6.

¹²⁵ J. Roosevelt Bayley, 'Infallibility', *NYH*, 22 November 1874, p.5.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

an American Catholic who wrote under the pen name 'Prudentius'. In one he accused Gladstone of unfairness in translating and conveying the meaning of the Latin text of the Syllabus. He also entreated his readers that the 'Syllabus' had not addressed basic rights of speech or the press but slander, blasphemy, and every obscene abomination. 'Pray think not of us here in America', he declared to Gladstone, 'but look across St. George's Channel at the doings of your model and master, Bismarck, and of your allies in Switzerland and Italy.'¹²⁸ The *New York Herald*, sensitive to Catholic and Democratic readers, had provided a major platform for criticisms of Gladstone.

The newly formed *American Catholic Quarterly* (1876) had as its chief editor James Corcoran. He had played an integral role as a theologian at the Vatican Council, having authored the failed 'Spalding Formula' (after Archbishop Spalding) which attempted a compromise on infallibility whereby it would be implied but not stated.¹²⁹ In his inaugural issue Corcoran published a twenty-eight-page review of Gladstone's *Vatican Decrees* authored by Father Edward McGlynn entitled 'The Bugbear of Vaticanism'. McGlynn rightly suggested that Gladstone's motive in writing the *Contemporary Review* article was to weaken the notion that Anglican ritualism necessarily leads to Rome. At the same time, however, he had attempted to defend himself against the repeated charge that he was a Catholic. Thus he 'would show that he could abuse the Pope and his authority, as roundly as the loudest no-popery ranter of them all'.¹³⁰ In the matter of *Vatican Decrees*, McGlynn quoted the Gladstone thesis on the threat of the Vatican decrees and alleged that

¹²⁸ Prudentius, *NYH*, 8 December 1874, p. 12.

¹²⁹ James T. Hennesey, 'James A. Corcoran's Mission to Rome: 1868-1869' *Catholic Historical Review*, 48, (1962), pp. 157-181.

¹³⁰ Edward McGlynn, 'The Bugbear of Vaticanism', *ACQR*, 1, (1876) p. 74.

‘he himself has come to believe in the bugbear conjured up in his own imagination’.¹³¹ The pamphlets of Gladstone were part of the attacks of ‘the gates of hell’ against which Christ had built His Church.¹³² He also objected to Gladstone’s call upon English Catholics to prove their loyalty, just as he would object to an American Roman Catholic having to do. Gladstone, McGlynn proposed, ‘has entertained fears of disloyalty based upon some possible, but quite problematic contingency’.¹³³ The priest then went on to clarify infallibility, noting that *ex cathedra* did not involve sermons or the writing of theological works. It was rather defining of doctrines that have always been handed down from the apostles. The amount of definable doctrine was not unlimited, and he suggested that a time may come when there will be no more. At this present moment, he contended, there must be but few doctrines ‘that are not already defined’. The pope, therefore, was custodian of the moral order, but could not change ‘one tittle of the natural or the revealed positive law’.¹³⁴ If popes in the middle ages on rare occasions excommunicated despots, they were ‘acting in their acknowledged capacity of the supreme judges of Christendom’ and ‘simply decided a delicate case of morals for people who sought their judgment, and had the will and the power to put it into execution’.¹³⁵ He ultimately believed Gladstone’s apprehensions were unfounded and more likely to provoke than prevent a collision between church and state; and he judged *Vatican Decrees* to be nothing more than a pretext to attack the princes of the church. Through McGlynn, the *American Catholic*

¹³¹ *Ibid.* p. 75.

¹³² *Ibid.* p. 77.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.97-98.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 99-100.

Quarterly had presented a well reasoned critique of Gladstone and had avoided ultramontane propaganda.

Isaac Hecker's *Catholic World* reflected his post-Vatican Council position. Although he had been among those who dissented from the infallibility decree, he came to accept the council's ruling. He would, however, continue to promote an Americanist view of Catholicism through the *Catholic World*.¹³⁶ Although all of the *Catholic World's* articles in the wake of Gladstone's pamphlets were published anonymously, it may be assumed that Hecker either wrote them or condoned their content. In a summary of the events of 1874, an article that briefly mentioned *The Vatican Decrees* summarised the pamphlet as follows:

[It is] an attempt altogether unworthy the high character of the distinguished author . . . his latest exploit could only be described as a vulgar "No Popery" appeal to the worst classes and most degraded passions of English society, delivered in bad taste and worse faith¹³⁷

In another article entitled 'Pius IX and Mr. Gladstone's Misrepresentations', a writer for the *Catholic World* imputed no impure motives to Gladstone, but sought to point out the inaccuracies of his pamphlets. In describing and quoting the Vatican decrees and Syllabus, Gladstone had 'published statements so incorrect and so misleading as to subject the author, were he less eminent for honor and scrupulous veracity, to the charge either of criminal ignorance or of willful intention to mislead'.¹³⁸ The author then addressed Gladstone's 'rusty tool' metaphor as he had applied to the practice of deposing princes. He noted that this was seldom used in the past and not under the authority of infallibility

¹³⁶ William L. Portier, 'Isaac Hecker and the First Vatican Council' *Catholic Historical Review*, 71 (1985), pp. 206-227.

¹³⁷ 'The Year of our Lord 1874', *CW*, 20 (1875), pp. 568-569.

¹³⁸ 'Pius IX and Mr. Gladstone's Misrepresentations', *CW*, 21 (1875), p. 148.

but at times when the Pontiff was acknowledged ‘the Supreme Judge of Christianity’ and when the Holy See, ‘by the common consent of the nations, was the tribunal to which appeal was made in the great contests of sovereigns and nations’.¹³⁹ Far from ‘parading anew’ this abstract right, he claimed, the Holy Father repudiated the allegation and believed such conditions were unlikely to be found in modern days. Finally, the author asserted that the limits of obedience to sovereigns had been clearly set forth by Pius IX in his address to an Austrian deputation of 18 June 1871 where he said: ‘your obedience and fidelity have a limit to be observed. Be faithful to the sovereign whom God has given to you; but when necessity calls, let your obedience and fidelity not advance beyond, but be arrested at, the steps of the altar’.¹⁴⁰ It was concluded that Gladstone possessed the deplorable state of mind of a man who could find nothing in the speeches of Pius IX but ridicule, sarcasm, and invective. Isaac Hecker had travelled a considerable distance from his former opposition to the decree on infallibility. In his *Catholic World* he had defended Pius IX and denounced one of his chief critics in Gladstone.

Gladstone also faced withering criticism from the highly respected Catholic organ *Brownson's Journal*. A leading voice among American Catholics for decades, Orestes Brownson became a champion of the liberal Catholic movement in the 1850s, but after the Civil War retreated into conservatism.¹⁴¹ In one article he derisively called the statesman ‘an ordinary man’ and insisted ‘he has not and never had any prestige’.¹⁴² For Brownson, both Manning and Newman had made Gladstone look like a small man and ‘thoroughly

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom*, pp. 45, 89.

¹⁴² ‘Literary Notices and Criticisms’, *Brownson's Quarterly Review*, 3 (1875), p. 281.

demolish the only defence on which Protestantism in our day rely'.¹⁴³ In a separate article, he contended that Roman Catholics were more submissive to the powers that be, except when they were required to violate the law of God. 'Mr. Gladstone', he declared, 'would have done better to have charged Catholics, not with want, but with excess, of loyalty. Nothing can exceed their submission to authority, or their devotion to the regularly established order.'¹⁴⁴ Modern society, by contrast, held the sacred right of insurrection and pretended that disaffected people have the right to disobey their government. Of the modern idea of liberty the author demanded:

How little do the Bismarcks, the Gladstones, and others of their stamp, understand that the refusal of Catholics to obey the civil power when it commands them to do wrong, but not when it commands them to suffer wrong, is the surest of all reliances for the free working and stability of civil government.¹⁴⁵

Just as other Catholic publications had done, *Brownson's Journal* opposed Gladstone's central idea and had defended the decree of infallibility. Catholics in America had gone to great lengths to refute Gladstone's indictment of the Vatican decrees.

The largest body of opinion, however, came from those in agreement with Gladstone's primary assertions in *Vatican Decrees* and *Vaticanism*. It was the order of the day for most evangelicals and liberals in the American press. With the anti-Catholic tenor of his pamphlets, Gladstone was essentially preaching to the choir when it came to evangelicals. Just as they had done when Gladstone disestablished the Irish Church, several evangelical publications featured articles written in a tone of triumphalism peppered with martial language that revealed an inherent hostility towards Catholicism in

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 282.

¹⁴⁴ 'Expostulation', *Brownson's Quarterly Review* 3 (1875), p. 245.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 246.

general and Pope Pius IX in particular. In his *New York Evangelist* article, Theodore Cuyler insisted Gladstone had ‘struck the Romish despotism right in one of its most vulnerable quarters’.¹⁴⁶ He had done so, not by attacking Rome’s theology as anti-Christ, but through his assault on popery over the consciences of men. Gladstone’s ‘bold, trenchant pamphlet’ had demonstrated that the pope was a ‘moral and spiritual despot’ who would be ‘once more a political despot, if he could regain his sceptre’.¹⁴⁷ Cuyler predicted that the pamphlet would compel Romanists to ‘show their hand’ and either offend the Vatican by agreeing with the statesman or refute him and damage their standing in nations like Great Britain, Germany and the United States.¹⁴⁸ The role of Gladstone as a warrior was echoed in the Presbyterian *New York Observer*. A reviewer of *Vaticanism* crowned him ‘the champion of the world in its war for liberty’. Indeed, he insisted, ‘every page’ of the pamphlet was ‘brilliant with truth, and as this truth penetrates the sophistries and falsehoods of his opponents, it is like the light shining in a dark place’.¹⁴⁹ The reader was urged to get the pamphlet by all means as it was ‘the most beautiful piece of controversial writing that the century has seen’.¹⁵⁰ For a reporter in the *Independent*, Gladstone did battle in the conflict between Rome and modern civilisation that had been raging so fiercely upon the continent for three years and had now begun in England. The *Vatican Decrees* was ‘a tremendous arraignment of modern Ultramontaniam in its principles and policy’ and ‘the clearest statement yet made of the irreconcilable hostility which now

¹⁴⁶ *NYE*, 3 December 1874, p.1.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ ‘Vaticanism An Answer to Reproofs and Replies’, *NYO*, 18 March 1875, p. 82.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

exists between the Church of Rome and all free governments'.¹⁵¹ For many evangelicals Gladstone had fired a lethal shot as their champion in the war against Roman Catholicism.

Other evangelical writers refrained from metaphors of warfare and overblown prose, but were no less favourably disposed towards Gladstone's belief that civil allegiance was under threat from Rome. The Methodist *Christian Advocate* reported that 'no other conclusion can be reached by any careful student of Romanism in relation to the civil authority, than that here reached by Gladstone'. The former premier had written 'one of the clearest, tersest, most logical, and most convincing documents that we have read for years'. The correspondent believed Pius IX was making reprisals in the Anglo-Saxon countries for his loss of temporal power. Moreover, without offering specifics, the author declared there were 'abundant traces of its presence at the American end of the line'.¹⁵² The Methodist *Zion's Herald* also agreed with Gladstone's central point, but only wondered why it had taken him so long to voice his complaint, admitting surprise that 'Mr. Gladstone did not wake up to a due sense of Papal usurpation over men's consciences till after the decrees had been promulgated'.¹⁵³ An author for the *Princeton Review* asserted: 'Mr. Gladstone's pamphlet will be historical. It will make in England an epoch in the record of the union of church and state.' The statesman had in a 'bold and masterly manner exposed those claims and assumptions of the Papacy which seemed to conflict with that loyalty in the case of all who professed allegiance to the Pope.'¹⁵⁴ With the infallibility decree the pope had claimed from Roman Catholics a plenary obedience to

¹⁵¹ 'Gladstone's Manifesto', *IND*, 3 December 1874, p. 14.

¹⁵² *CA*, 3 December 1874, p. 388.

¹⁵³ *ZH*, 1 April 1875, p. 100.

¹⁵⁴ 'The Papal Question in England', *Presbyterian Quarterly and Princeton Review*, 4 (1875), p. 357.

whatever he may pronounce with regard to faith, morals and all that concerns the government and discipline of the church. It would inevitably encroach upon the civil sphere. ‘Collision’, he reasoned, ‘is thus, sooner or later, rendered inevitable.’¹⁵⁵ Moreover, given the current encroachments by the papacy into several nations, it was proper to ask what the true purpose of the present policy was. ‘It is evident’, the writer demanded, ‘that the claim to the Temporal Power has never been surrendered, and it looks as if the Papacy was resolved so to educate and train its adherents, and so to concentrate its power and authority, that at the fitting moment it can resume its lost domain.’¹⁵⁶ He also warned of possible implications for American politics, lamenting that ‘Romish dignitaries already boast that this country will shortly be in their power.’¹⁵⁷ Gladstone’s work had resonated with the anti-Catholic sentiments of American evangelicals, and they agreed that the Vatican decree of infallibility was a menace to civil liberty and individual mental freedom.

Evangelical opinion of a highly favourable and scholarly quality appeared in the *Baptist Quarterly* where Newton Seminary Professor of Church History Heman Lincoln published a sixteen-page article entitled ‘The Vatican Council and Civil Allegiance’. Lincoln reasoned that in ruling for infallibility the Church of Rome had definitely regressed with regard to civil freedom. He insisted that no wise Protestant could overlook the fact that ‘the Romish Church is a gigantic despotism, and a relentless foe to civil and spiritual freedom’.¹⁵⁸ Echoing Gladstone, Lincoln insisted the Vatican Council had ‘invested the Pope with absolute sovereignty over Catholic Christendom, and put every

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 357-58.

¹⁵⁶ *Presbyterian Quarterly and Princeton Review*, 4 (1875), p. 358.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 364.

¹⁵⁸ ‘The Vatican Council and Civil Allegiance’, *BQR*, 1 (1875), p. 200.

conscience in his keeping'.¹⁵⁹ Gladstone's indictment was fully sustained because in its laws and constitution the Catholic Church had separated itself even further from the spirit of the gospel. By issuing the decree on infallibility, it was clear that the authority of the pope to rule in matters of faith had become unquestioned. For Lincoln, the point of contention with Rome lay in the Pope's definition of 'morals' and in the 'discipline and government of the Church' over which his authority was declared to be equally supreme by the Vatican decrees.¹⁶⁰ Lincoln made his case by appealing to the authority of Döllinger, who, like Gladstone, believed the new dogma covered all civil and social life. The council, Lincoln insisted, had over-stepped its boundaries and undermined mental freedom with its claim to have derived from God 'the right and duty of proscribing false science, lest any should be deceived by philosophy and vain fallacy.'¹⁶¹ He gave brief consideration to Newman's insistence that Catholics were only under the decree with respect to thoughts, not actions. But for Lincoln it was evident that if words mean anything, Gladstone was correct:

It is evident that a large part of the inhabitants of Europe, and the United States, are placed under anathema; that the Catholic Church, by its infallible Head, denounces as heresies free thought, free speech, freedom of worship, and a free government; . . . and that Mr. Gladstone's indictment is fully sustained by the actions of the Vatican Council, that no one can become a convert to Romanism without renouncing his moral and mental freedom, and placing his civil loyalty and duty at the mercy of another.¹⁶²

Lincoln had embraced Gladstone's thesis fully with regard to the threat to mental liberty and civil loyalty.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 205.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 209.

Among Gladstone's American co-religionists, there was also agreement regarding the threat to mental freedom and civil loyalty. The Episcopalian *American Church Review* featured an essay entitled 'The Pope and the Bible' by the educator and Episcopal priest John McDowell Leavitt, who was then just months away from assuming the presidency of Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. He had also been a prior editor of the *Church Review* from 1868 to 1871.¹⁶³ Leavitt had become disenchanted with the growing tendency towards ritualism within the Protestant Episcopalian Church and was in sympathy with the more evangelical Reformed Episcopalian Church which had been founded in 1873, eventually joining that body in 1889.¹⁶⁴ Upon his exit, he would cite his abhorrence of 'ecclesiastical ritualism' along with the 'rites, forms, and superstitions of the Church of Rome'.¹⁶⁵ His 1875 essay was a lengthy historical screed on the abuses of the papacy past and present. His reference to the *Vatican Decrees* was a brief but decisive endorsement of Gladstone's central argument on the dangers of Papal infallibility: 'That distinguished statesman', he attested, 'has indeed demonstrated in an argument which stirs all Christendom, that the claim to Papal infallibility as set forth by the Vatican Council, is inconsistent with civil allegiance, and even subversive of civil government'.¹⁶⁶ He noted further that 'Rome' (presumably Newman) had given her reply in which 'conscience prescribes a limitation to the obedience of the subject'. A 'subtle sophism' lurked within the claim, however. Leavitt insisted: 'There is a wide difference between the Romanist

¹⁶³ Don S. Armentrout and Robert Boak Slocum, eds, *An Episcopal Dictionary of the Church: A User-Friendly Reference for Episcopalians* (New York: Church Publishing, 2005), p. 100.

¹⁶⁴ 'Rev. Dr. Leavitt Withdraws', *NYT*, 19 October 1889.

¹⁶⁵ Quoted in 'Rev. Dr. Leavitt Withdraws', *NYT*, 19 October 1889.

¹⁶⁶ John M. Leavitt, 'The Pope and the Bible', *American Church Review*, 1 April 1875, p. 279.

conscience and the Protestant conscience'.¹⁶⁷ Protestants take the Bible as guide, while 'Romanists must submit, since the Vatican decrees, wholly to the Pope as God's sole oracle'.¹⁶⁸ Leavitt had fully endorsed Gladstone's claims.

The author and Episcopalian clergyman Julius H. Ward contributed a more detailed review of the Gladstone pamphlets in the July number of the *American Church Review*. He admitted there was no immediate danger in the United States or England of the Vatican decrees coming into conflict with the civil powers; however, Ward agreed with Gladstone's point that a Roman Catholic is unable to render allegiance to his country without disobeying the pope. It was 'the question of the hour in Europe', he concluded, 'and is being rapidly lifted out of speculative discussion into the category of political fact'.¹⁶⁹ The Vatican decrees represented the conflict of the Church with the State, which portended future conflicts like the one in Germany:

Thus the Vatican Council, by restoring all the extravagant claims which have ever been made for temporal or spiritual power has introduced into modern politics a disturbing element which promises to grow into a general uprising against that Communion wherever it might expect to win adherents, and also to hasten the separation of Church and State wherever that union now exists.¹⁷⁰

Ward asserted that Gladstone had raised an important issue evidenced by almost exhaustless discussion in the outside world. With regard to Gladstone's Catholic critics, the Roman side of the argument had been waged in England by 'perverts of the Anglican Church who sought to make the decrees look harmless'.¹⁷¹ Manning's pamphlet was too clever in that it conveniently passed over those portions 'which have most plainly stated

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ J. H. Ward, 'Importance and Results of Mr. Gladstone's Controversy with Rome', *American Church Review*, 1 April 1875, p. 440.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.* p. 442.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 443.

the now enlarged and concentrated powers of the Pope'.¹⁷² What was demanded, Ward demanded, was that the truth should be conveyed from one who knows the secrets of the Vatican. What was received instead was plentiful abuse of Gladstone, and 'very copious statements about the policy and usefulness of the Roman Church in past ages, and explanations of the present opposition to the Papacy in Europe'.¹⁷³ Ward paid tribute to Newman for his honesty and his genius, describing his *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk* as influential among in the British and American public. However, Ward argued that Newman was not representative of current Romanism and was unsuccessful in meeting Gladstone's charge that the present attitude of the pope toward civil government was in contradiction to the pledges made to the British public in 1826. Moreover, the wide difference between Newman and Manning made Newman's reasoning of little value. Gladstone had met his assailants at every step. The United States, Ward added, had less to fear from the encroachments of ultramontaniam but nevertheless 'even in this country its growth is hostile to a free government'.¹⁷⁴ Thus, as seen in Ward and Leavitt, Gladstone's American co-religionists endorsed his core indictment of the Vatican decrees.

Among mainstream and secular publications there was also evidence of general agreement with Gladstone. The freethought *Boston Investigator* agreed heartily, declaring that the Roman church 'sets up a claim to *all* power, civil as well as religious, and she exercised it too when she was strong enough'.¹⁷⁵ As for Manning, he was either ignorant of the policy of his church or else he had concealed it. The writer concluded that 'Romanism, truly understood and practiced, is a rigid, arbitrary, absolute despotism, civil,

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 444.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 445.

¹⁷⁵ *Boston Investigator*, 25 November 1874, p. 3.

social, and religious, and not fit to exist in this comparatively Liberal age.¹⁷⁶ American freethinkers were predictably in Gladstone's corner in the fight with Roman Catholicism. The Republican *Chicago Tribune* also published strong opinions about the threat to civil liberties posed by the Vatican decrees. In an article entitled 'A Word to American Catholics', the author contended that hitherto the issue had been addressed in reference to Europe, but it also had application nearer to home. Using selected quotes from Manning's discourse before the Roman Catholic academia—wherein he had claimed the pontiff's right to temporal power—the loyalty of American Catholics was openly questioned:

Will they be found on the side of loyalty to the Republic, rendering allegiance to the Pope only in spiritual concerns, or will they transfer both spiritual and civil allegiance, or any part of the latter, to the Vatican, and renounce any of their fidelity to the government which protects them and claims in return their exclusive civil allegiance?¹⁷⁷

Since Manning had made such claims, the author insisted that every true subject of the government had the right to ask these questions. Moreover, United States Roman Catholic leaders 'should make a categorical expression of their intentions', and he asked, 'Where will the Catholics of the United States be found?'¹⁷⁸ The article concluded by citing Bishop Doyle from 1826 and asked American Roman Catholics to decide between him and Manning. The *Tribune* agreed with Gladstone regarding civil loyalty, but took it further than most United States reviewers and directly challenged the loyalty of American Catholics. A correspondent for the *New York Times* reasoned that a necessary conclusion of Gladstone's argument was Catholics 'can only be loyal citizens of England by being

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ *CT*, 24 November 1874, p. 4.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

what the Pope would consider disloyal Catholics.’¹⁷⁹ A writer for the *Nation* also expressed satisfaction with the statesman’s central contention: ‘Mr. Gladstone has also shown conclusively that the pretence which some of his clerical opponents have put forward, that the Pope no longer arrogates to himself the power of suspending the operation of states laws when he does not approve of them, or believes they infringe upon the prerogatives of the church, is really unfounded.’¹⁸⁰ In the *New York Tribune* George Smalley concluded that since the ultramontanes were the much the stronger faction of English Catholics, ‘how can it be denied that Mr. Gladstone’s Expostulation was material and seasonable?’¹⁸¹ Secular American papers had embraced Gladstone’s *Vatican Decrees* with as much enthusiasm as evangelicals.

Among all publications that agreed with Gladstone’s central points, none did so with more intensity than *Harper’s Weekly*. It featured a series of articles with a blatantly anti-Catholic tone by the paper’s liberal editor Eugene Lawrence. He called the decrees a ‘revival of the barbarous superstitions of the Middle Ages’ and believed ‘a new Inquisition must everywhere follow upon the prevalence of the papal faith’.¹⁸² Gladstone’s pamphlet had already gained wide attention and ‘may serve, we trust, even in our own country, to lead Roman Catholics to a new sense of their duties to their government, and a less servile dependence upon the politics of Rome’.¹⁸³ Lawrence detailed the history of persecution by the Roman Church which included the establishment of martial law by Pius IX after

¹⁷⁹ *NYT*, 19 November 1874, p. 1.

¹⁸⁰ ‘The Catholic Clergy and the German Government’, *TN*, 1 April 1875, p. 217.

¹⁸¹ *GWS*, *NY.Trib.* 8 December 1874. p.3.

¹⁸² *HW*, 12 March 1874, p.26.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

reestablishing his government in 1850, an event that was accompanied by shootings and imprisonments. He suspected the renewal of the old autocracy in the Vatican decrees:

It is the Church of Pius V and Innocent III which now rises, horrible as antichrist, amid the stormy sea of modern politics, and hopes to crush liberty and renew the ancient tyranny of the days of St. Bartholomew, the Inquisition, or the Crusades, to cover Italy with desolation, and place once more Pius IX upon his blood-stained throne.¹⁸⁴

In the aftermath of losing his temporal powers, Lawrence asserted, the pope was clamouring for his revenge, suggesting that from the pontiff to the most obscure Jesuit ‘the whole power of the papacy is employed in exciting the evil passions of men, and urging on a European war’.¹⁸⁵ In another article, Lawrence endorsed the sinister implications of Rome to the hilt. He asserted that Rome had grown into an ‘immense political faction’ resolute in its desire to control elections in Europe and America. Its goal was to ‘destroy freedom of the press, general education, human liberty, the privileges of conscience’.¹⁸⁶ In a third essay Lawrence romanticised Gladstone for his rejoinder to his critics in

Vaticanism:

[Gladstone] delicately pierces the rusty joints of their mediaeval armor, turns aside with Homeric courtesy from the Parthian or timid flight of the gentler Newman, and aims unsparing blows at the brazen visor of the dauntless Manning.¹⁸⁷

For the liberal readership of *Harper's Weekly*, Lawrence had depicted Gladstone as the champion of liberty and as a wise herald of the re-awakened forces of papal tyranny that threatened world peace. He had argued more forcefully and more often than any other American in opposition to the Vatican decrees and in support of Gladstone's pamphlets.

¹⁸⁴ *HW*, 26 December 1874, p.1070.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 270.

¹⁸⁷ *HW*, 20 Dec 1875, p. 231.

There was one example of a noticeable reversal of opinion among liberal Republican papers. The *Springfield Republican* initially took a dim view of *Vatican Decree*. ‘Gladstone’, a correspondent reported, ‘is growing wild on the religious question.’ Additionally, the statesman relied too heavily on the presumption that the Catholic masses are bound to carry out the dogma to its logical conclusion. His opinion seemed to be ‘a desperate effort to prove that he stands in no danger of conversion to Catholicism, however liberal he may be toward ritualism’.¹⁸⁸ A subsequent article declared *Vatican Decrees* ‘by far the most powerful assault upon ultramontanism which has been made in this generation’ but, its author insisted, ‘[t]he motive for the attack is utterly fanciful, as we apprehended.’¹⁸⁹ In December 1874, however, the *Republican* suggested Gladstone’s pamphlet was ‘being rapidly vindicated from the charge of being a false alarm by the utterances of the English ultramontane organs and leaders’.¹⁹⁰ After the release of *Vaticanism*, the *Republican* described it as less interesting but more historical and less rhetorical than *Vatican Decrees*. The correspondent declared that ‘the original assault made by Mr Gladstone has long ago justified itself by the results produced’. He had exposed the real aims and practices of the ultramontanes, and put the whole English people on their guard against these.’¹⁹¹ Thus even where there had been criticism of Gladstone in the liberal press, the opinion had been reversed in his favour.

A few major conclusions can be drawn in summing up American responses to Gladstone’s assault on ultramontane Catholicism and the Vatican decrees. First, opinions about his personal Christian character and integrity as a statesman paint a picture of how

¹⁸⁸ *SR*, 9 November 1874, p. 4.

¹⁸⁹ ‘Mr. Gladstone’s Bull against the Pope’, *SR*, 20 November 1874, p. 4.

¹⁹⁰ *SR*, 28 December 1874, p. 4.

¹⁹¹ ‘New Books from England’, *SR*, 16 March 1875, p. 3.

he was perceived in 1874 and '75. Grandiose descriptions of Gladstone were fewer than had been the case in 1868 and '69, but expressions of admiration regarding his Christian character could be found among evangelicals in the influential Presbyterian papers, the *New York Evangelist* and the *New York Observer and Chronicle*. As we have seen, however, ostentatious descriptions of Gladstone were probably fewer coming on the heels of his political defeat and subsequent retirement as party leader. Opinions that were exclusively negative were abundant in the Catholic press and a few appeared in both the *New York Times* and the *Herald*. Editorials with mixed views of his personal traits were the most common, and were found in liberal-oriented papers both secular and evangelical. In a related theme, several papers and journals focused on Gladstone's motives for writing the *Vatican Decrees*. Catholic writers were the most suspicious, generally seeing political machinations at work designed to reverse or halt the civil rights of English Catholics. Among non-Catholics, only the *Springfield Republican* suspected political calculation behind the pamphlet. The most commonly assigned motive was bitterness towards Irish bishops over defeat of the University Bill by Irish Liberals in Parliament. Overall, most publications were silent on the theme of Gladstone's intentions, but a few, including evangelicals and Unitarians, along with the *New York Times* and *Herald*, concluded the University Bill was the reason for publishing the pamphlet. All things considered, what emerged from the Vaticanism controversy was a rather mixed report on Gladstone's personal temperament. Nevertheless, the near-universal endorsement of his pamphlets suggests that he was still widely admired by evangelicals and liberal reformers in the United States.

A second major conclusion may be found in the enthusiasm displayed by secular and evangelical Americans in exploiting the Vaticanism controversy for a domestic conflict. Just as they had done during the Irish Church debate, apprehensions over American Catholics became a frequent theme of editorial content, with the struggle over public education taking center stage. Gladstone's *Vatican Decrees* thus became a convenient launching point for writers to address the over-arching symbol of the period's culture war, public education. The uniquely American theme of separating church and state was invoked by those who were fearful of Catholic plots to undermine the 'American' way of life. In a related theme, non-Catholic American commentators generally approved of Bismarck's German *Kulturkampf*, perceiving liberal and secular developments there and in other parts of Europe as moving closer to the American system of governance. They were also of like mind with Gladstone in assigning greater blame to the pope for the problems in Germany.

Finally, it may be concluded that American evangelicals and liberals were almost entirely in agreement with the core argument of Gladstone's *Vatican Decrees*, which declared that the infallibility ruling required Catholics to renounce their moral and mental freedom and to place their civil loyalty at the mercy of the pope. The enthusiastic reception of the pamphlet lends credence to the view that anti-Catholicism was a central tenet of evangelicalism during the period, as well as a chief concern among liberals seeking clearly defined boundaries between church and state. Among evangelicals, only *The Independent* and the *Christian Union* offered slightly divergent opinions of Gladstone's central assertion, presenting a view of Roman Catholics that shared elements in common with Newman. They agreed with Gladstone in theory, but felt his fears of

Catholic disloyalty were misplaced. Among secular papers, the *New York Times*, although Republican in name, had printed articles both for and against Gladstone as had the opportunistic *New York Herald*. In at least one case, that of Eugene Lawrence of *Harper's Weekly*, an American shared Gladstone's fears of an outbreak of war on the European continent by Catholics in order to restore the pope's temporal powers. Roman Catholics in the United States quite predictably opposed Gladstone's central thesis. Catholic publications issued impressive rebuttals to his claims about civic loyalty, and offered little in the way of critical opinion of the infallibility decree. They had found a way to live comfortably with the verdict of the Vatican Council despite the fact that Isaac Hecker of the *Catholic World* and James Corcoran of the *American Catholic Quarterly* had personally fought against the ultramontane version of infallibility at the council. Their criticism of Gladstone was a decided departure from 1869 when Catholics had been solidly behind his policy of disestablishment. Nevertheless, for nearly all other Americans, Gladstone had championed their battle against the perceived despotism of ultramontane Catholicism.

CHAPTER FOUR

CHARLES BRADLAUGH

I have no fear of Atheism in this House. Truth is the expression of the Divine mind; and however little our feeble vision may be able to discern the means by which God will provide for its preservation, we may leave the matter in his hands.
William Gladstone¹

In a speech before the Commons, Gladstone voiced this broadminded appeal in defence of his government's Affirmation Bill. If passed it would have allowed non-believers entering Parliament to avoid swearing a religious oath. The catalyst had been the on-going saga of Charles Bradlaugh, the outspoken atheist and Radical who had been elected to parliament in 1880 at the onset of Gladstone's second ministry. Of that government John Morley wrote: 'One discordant refrain rang hoarsely throughout the five years of this administration, and its first notes were heard even before Mr. Gladstone had taken his seat.'² The disharmony was created by Bradlaugh's repeated attempts to take his seat in the face of determined opposition from Tories and some Liberals. Gladstone had taken a cautious line in dealing with the problem at first, but he eventually supported the 1883 Affirmation Bill, which, despite its failure to pass the House of Commons, was a major step towards removing religious requirements for public service, which was finally realised in 1888. In what became one of his most memorable speeches in parliament, the devout Christian statesman rose in April 1883 to defend an outspoken atheist's right to be seated without swearing in the name of a deity. Prior to that day, the case of Bradlaugh had reverberated on both sides of the Atlantic. In the conflict we see another significant milestone in the formation of Gladstone's reputation in America. We also gain insight into

¹ Hansard, cclxxviii (1883), 1174-1196.

² Morley, *Gladstone*, vol 3, p. 11.

how Americans perceived the scandal of atheism in the context of holding public office. The extent to which Americans approved of the prime minister's handling of the on-going dispute will be the major focus of this chapter. How would his reputation in the United States as Christian statesman and champion of liberty withstand the judgments he made in dealing with a duly elected atheist who had been prevented from taking his seat in Parliament?

Upon his return to the premiership in 1880, Gladstone had never been more highly esteemed by Americans. In the intervening years since the famous *Vatican Decrees* controversy of 1874-75, in which he had been widely acclaimed, his reputation in America as one of the world's foremost statesman had only grown. He had endeared himself to many Americans with his 1878 article 'Kin Beyond Sea', which appeared in the *North American Review*.³ In it he had extolled the virtues of the United States and British constitutions and prophesied that America would surpass Great Britain as a world power. The *New York Times* hailed it the 'star paper' of the issue, noting that it was a 'singular phenomenon' for the review to have published 'the greatest living statesman of England'.⁴ Gladstone was easily the most admired Englishmen in America.

Americans had also followed with admiration the statesman's famous Midlothian speeches of 1879-80 where he had laid out some fundamental principles of Gladstonian Liberalism. Among other things, he had connected with Americans by asserting the rights of oppressed individuals and nations and had campaigned more in the manner of an American politician or evangelist than as an English statesman.⁵ Moreover, his

³ WEG, 'Kin beyond Sea', *NAR*, 127 (1878), pp. 179-212.

⁴ 'New Publications', *NYT*, 2 September 1878, p. 3.

⁵ DWB, *MoG*, p. 258.

denunciations of Prime Minister Disraeli, by then Earl of Beaconsfield, for his imperialistic foreign policy and inaction over the Turkish atrocities in Bulgaria were met with approval as several testimonies attest. For example, George Smalley, the London correspondent for the *New York Tribune*, had been an eye-witness to Gladstone's Midlothian tour and published vivid accounts of the statesman's powerful oratorical skills. In one account, Smalley, who was not averse to criticising the statesman on other occasions, confessed he was 'still more or less under the spell of the magician who has wrought at his will all this week upon the sensibilities of his hearers'. 'I never heard', Smalley declared, 'I doubt whether anybody ever heard, such a succession of speeches in a single week, so extraordinary as sustained efforts of oratory, and so extraordinary in their effect upon the people in the midst of whom they have been delivered.'⁶ The Presbyterian clergyman Theodore Cuyler, a great admirer and personal acquaintance of Gladstone, was exuberant about his return to the premiership in 1880. Cuyler believed Gladstone had never been so powerful, describing his electioneering campaign in Scotland the previous winter as the greatest oratorical feat of modern times.⁷ Moreover, Cuyler insisted that Gladstone offered great hope 'for the protection of religious liberty in the East, for international peace, and for the interests of Christ's cause and kingdom.'⁸ Gladstone's clarion call for liberty had resonated in the United States and it seemed as though the 'People's William' had also become America's William.

Gladstone's political triumph over Beaconsfield in 1880 was met with a chorus of approval in the United States press, several of which made reference to his Midlothian

⁶ GWS, *NY.Trib*, 14 Dec 1879, p. 1.

⁷ Theodore L. Cuyler, 'William Ewart Gladstone, and His Home', *Friends' Review*, 50 (1880), p. 787.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 788.

speeches. *Harper's Weekly* proclaimed him the 'most amply equipped and most powerful British political leader since Edmund Burke'. Moreover, while Beaconsfield was seeking false glory, the correspondent claimed, Gladstone had 'held England fast to the English ideal of justice and liberty'.⁹ A writer for the *Independent* declared: 'We have long desired the return to power of England's greatest statesman.' In contrast to Disraeli, he noted, 'Gladstone comes to the administration of English affairs with the almost universal sympathy of the American people.'¹⁰ He insisted further that 'few have ever so earned the confidence of the lovers of liberty by courage and prudence well commingled; rarely on anyone have been fixed so many and so high hopes, or for anyone have ascended so many and so earnest prayers.'¹¹ Gladstone entered upon his second ministry with a solid reputation in the United States as a champion of liberty.

If Gladstone was a household name in America, Charles Bradlaugh was less widely known, but by no means obscure in 1880. Bradlaugh's reputation as a secular activist and radical republican had also been well established by then. He had become president of the London Secular Society in 1859; founded *The National Reformer* in 1861 and the National Secular Society in 1866; and had agitated for republicanism in Ireland, France, Germany, Italy and Spain in the 1860s and 70s.¹² Americans of the period had already heard of the atheist icon from his United States lecture tours in 1873, 1874 and 1875.¹³ Upon his initial visit in 1873 he was warmly welcomed ashore in New York in no small part because of his radical republicanism. A headline in the *New York Herald* proclaimed: 'CHARLES

⁹ 'Gladstone's Famous Victory', *HW*, 24 April 1880, p. 258.

¹⁰ 'Three English Problems', *CU*, 5 May 1880, p. 410.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 411.

¹² Walter L. Arnstein, *The Bradlaugh Case: Atheism, Sex, and Politics Among the Late Victorians* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1983.) p.103.

¹³ David Tribe, *President Charles Bradlaugh. M.P.* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1971), pp. 148-52, 160-62.

BRADLAUGH. The Future President of England at the Fifth Avenue Hotel.’¹⁴ On the other hand, the Bradlaugh-Besant trial of 1877 was also etched upon the recent memory of Americans. Along with radical activist Annie Besant, Bradlaugh had stood trial and was convicted for republishing *The Fruits of Philosophy: or the Private Companion of Young Married Couples*, an 1832 booklet first published anonymously in the United States by Dr Charles Knowlton.¹⁵ It was the earliest reliable guide to the taboo topics of birth control and reproductive health and Knowlton endured several high-profile trials for his effort, all of which aided in advancing the pamphlet’s popularity.¹⁶ By 1880 the issue was still relevant in America because censorship of free-thought publications continued under the Comstock laws, which made it illegal to send birth control information through the United States postal service by categorising it as pornographic material. The recent imprisonment of the atheist D. M. Bennett in 1879 had been a case in point.¹⁷ For respectable Victorians on both sides of the Atlantic, atheism and immorality fitted together hand-in-glove and birth control was a topic they identified with advocacy for ‘free love’. Bradlaugh’s promotion of birth control was in all likelihood the cause of more genuine outrage towards him than his unbelief.¹⁸ As the *New York Times* reported, ‘Bradlaugh is notorious, not simply as a scoffer at religion, but as the joint author of a pamphlet setting forth the doctrines of Malthus in their most abhorrent shape’.¹⁹ Amidst respectable Victorian

¹⁴ *NYH*, 18 September 1873; quoted in Tribe, *Charles Bradlaugh*, p. 149.

¹⁵ Tribe, *Charles Bradlaugh*, pp. 172-84.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Roderick Bradford, ‘American Inquisition’, in *D. M. Bennett: The Truth Seeker* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2006), pp. 97-129.

¹⁸ Edward Royle, *Victorian Infidels* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1974), pp. 275-285; and Arnstein, *Bradlaugh Case*, p. 55.

¹⁹ *NYT*, 7 March 1882, p. 7.

sensibilities, Bradlaugh was viewed by many as a social pariah, especially outside the working classes. American opinions during the Bradlaugh oath-swearing controversy were no doubt influenced by his controversial views.

Before examining American opinions of Gladstone during the Bradlaugh affair, it will be helpful to examine a few landmarks of the controversy. Bradlaugh's election in the Commons began rather innocuously when, upon approaching the speaker's table on 3 May 1880, he requested to make an affirmation rather than swearing the normal oath of allegiance to the crown. He cited the Evidence Amendment Acts of 1869 and 1870, which permitted non-believers to affirm rather than swear in law courts in England and Wales, and he believed these Acts qualified him under the Parliamentary Oaths Act of 1866 to make a secular affirmation rather than to swear the oath. The speaker, Sir Henry Brand, was uncertain of their application to Bradlaugh, however, and passed the matter to the House, which voted to refer the claim to a select committee for legal resolution. From there, events unfolded that would mire Bradlaugh in a tangled maze of legal and political affairs that remained unresolved until January 1886. The matter first became a public spectacle after Bradlaugh was expelled from the Commons on 22 June 1880. The previous day his fellow Liberal Northampton MP, Henry Labouchere, had proposed a motion in the Commons to allow Bradlaugh to affirm rather than swear the oath. It was defeated by a vote of 275-230. Bradlaugh, therefore, returned on the 22nd seeking to swear the oath instead. Speaker Brand refused and a vote was carried demanding that Bradlaugh should withdraw. When he refused to do so, he was taken into the custody of the serjeant-at-arms and imprisoned in the Clock Tower of the Palace of Westminster. A powder keg of

religion and politics had been ignited in the British Parliament and Americans began reading about it.²⁰

Most Britons, including many in Parliament (but excluding Gladstone), were less concerned about constitutional arguments over oath-taking than they were alarmed that a man of Bradlaugh's questionable character might sit in the Commons. For much of Gladstone's premiership, Conservatives in parliament exploited the atheist to their political advantage. The prime minister's tacit support of Bradlaugh left him open to the charge of 'patronage of unbelief and Malthusianism, Bradlaugh and Blasphemy'.²¹ In an 1883 speech on the Affirmation Bill, Gladstone answered a Tory question by stating, 'In every election since the case of Mr. Bradlaugh has come up, you have gained votes and we have lost them. The Liberal Party has suffered, and is suffering, on this account.' The main opposition to Bradlaugh came from Lord Randolph Churchill, leader of a quartet of Tory M.P.s who became known during the period as the 'Fourth Party'. In one ostentatious display, Churchill threw one of Bradlaugh's pamphlets on the floor of parliament and stamped on it.²² Other notable opponents in the Commons included Tory leader Sir Stafford Northcote and Charles Newdigate Newdegate, the North Warwickshire Tory MP who for decades had waged vendettas in the House against religious minorities.²³ And Irish Nationalists could find no comparison between Catholic emancipation and an atheist's rights, so they also opposed Bradlaugh. He also faced unbending resistance from outside parliament. His chief foe among all rivals was Cardinal Manning, while the

²⁰ Tribe, *Charles Bradlaugh*, pp. 191-198.

²¹ Morley, *Gladstone*, vol 3, p. 13

²² 'London Letter', *NYH*, 30 May 1880, p. 11; and R. E. Quinault, 'The Fourth Party and the Conservative Opposition to Bradlaugh, 1880 – 1888', *English Historical Review*, 91 (April 1976), p. 315.

²³ Tribe, *Charles Bradlaugh*, p. 15.

Church Defence Society led the resistance for the Church of England including a petition drive against the 1883 Affirmation Bill. The Evangelical Alliance of Britain was also among the ranks of those who opposed the atheist and his struggle to take his seat.²⁴ Not all religious groups opposed Bradlaugh, however. The 1883 Affirmation Bill found support among British religious organisations including the Protestant Dissenting Deputies and the Congregational Union. Additionally, the majority of Unitarians and Jews also supported the bill.²⁵ Despite powerful and well organised Conservative opposition, and a few Liberals, especially among the Irish Nationalist party, British sentiments with respect to Bradlaugh were deeply divided.

If Bradlaugh's enemies were energised by the controversy, so too were his supporters who were drawn primarily from Radicals, secularists and freethinkers. Between 1880 and 1885 the would-be MP became their *cause célèbre*. During that period membership in Bradlaugh's National Secular Society increased by 1,000 and the wider movement was strengthened as well. In 1880 his close friend Annie Besant organised a League for the Defence of Constitutional Rights. Moreover, delegates from forty-five London clubs representing 50,000 members pledged their support to the electors of Northampton at a meeting in February 1882.²⁶ Notable among many public demonstrations of solidarity with the embattled Radical, delegates from over a hundred towns attended a rally in Trafalgar Square on 10 May 1882 and a crowd of 80,000 assembled in Hyde Park four days later.²⁷ Bradlaugh's most ardent supporters in the

²⁴ Arnstein, *Bradlaugh Case*, pp. 171,182,183.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 159, 160.

²⁶ Royle, *Victorian Infidels*, pp. 25-29.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

Commons were his fellow Liberals, Henry Labouchere and the Radical and Liberal MP John Bright.

For his part, Gladstone took a cautious and conservative approach to the case in its early stages, preferring instead to focus on its legal aspects rather than the emotionally charged issues it aroused. He was reticent to risk party honour by introducing a government resolution to solve the impasse, and he warned of the ‘great danger of our deviating from the path of merely judicial investigation . . . in what ought to be a dry, dispassionate, and perfectly impartial inquiry’.²⁸ Men like Gladstone’s one-time close friend Cardinal Manning, by contrast, foresaw England descending into ‘intellectual and moral anarchy’.²⁹ Following an early flurry of parliamentary divisions and two select committees, the controversy had seemingly been solved in July 1880 when Gladstone’s resolution allowing Bradlaugh to affirm passed and the atheist took his seat. That resolution, however, had left open the possibility for a legal challenge, which was soon forthcoming from private citizen Henry Clarke at the instigation of Charles Newdegate.³⁰ In March 1881 the courts ruled against Bradlaugh’s right to affirm, thus forcing him to vacate his seat after a nine-month stint. Thereafter, Gladstone’s strategy for much of the period leading up to the 1883 Affirmation Bill was to leave the matter under the jurisdiction of courts. He had, however, briefly backed an Affirmation Bill in the spring of 1881, which was abandoned in the heat of Irish Land Bill considerations, thus forcing

²⁸ WEG, ‘Parliamentary Oath (ME. Bradlaugh)’, HC Deb, 21 May 1880, vol 252, cc 196, in *Hansard, 1803-2005* <<http://hansard.millbanksystems.com>> [accessed 4 February 2009]

²⁹ Edward (Cardinal) Manning, ‘Parliamentary Oaths’, *Nineteenth Century*, September 1882, pp. 474-480; cited in Arnstein, *Bradlaugh Case*, p. 177.

³⁰ Jenkins, *Gladstone*, pp. 450, 451.

Bradlaugh to pursue other options.³¹ Gladstone had hoped the embarrassment to his party would be settled as quickly as possible by a test of the oath in the courts. As he had said to one of his critics, either ‘Bradlaugh has fulfilled the law, or he has not. If he has, he should sit. If he has not, the courts should correct him.’³² Gladstone had been unwilling to take an aggressive stance on behalf of Bradlaugh.

By May 1883 there had been 11 divisions in parliament concerning the case and Bradlaugh had twice been barred from the House and twice re-elected by Northampton voters. As the entanglement lingered—and Bradlaugh became an even greater liability to the Liberal Party—Gladstone consented to make an Affirmation Bill a ministerial question. Yet even in that instance the Liberal cabinet had initiated the bill in Gladstone’s absence. The Premier did begin to take a personal interest in the bill, however, and his Commons speech in its defence on 26 April 1883 was by many accounts one of the finest he ever delivered. John Morley judged it ‘signal’ in coming from ‘one so unfaltering in a faith of his own, one who started from the opposite pole to that great civil principle of which he now displayed a grasp invincible’.³³ The *New York Times* ranked it among ‘the greatest efforts of his life’.³⁴ As well delivered as the speech may have been, the oratory failed to persuade enough MPs and the bill was rejected by a mere three votes. This brought Gladstone’s legislative involvement in the case to an end. Bradlaugh, however, continued to battle on. He reverted to a legal strategy and formulated a plan to administer the oath to himself (the second time he would do so) with the hope that it would be challenged and approved in court. Gladstone and his cabinet consented to the plan which had been

³¹ Arnstein, *Bradlaugh Case*, p. 150.

³² WEG to J. G. Hubbard, 11 June 1881, G.P. (B.M.) 44544, fol. 179.

³³ Morley, *Gladstone*, vol 3, p. 18.

³⁴ *NYT*, 27 April 1883, p. 1.

broached to them in secret.³⁵ In the end, the courts once again ruled against Bradlaugh, but his admission did finally come in January 1886 when, under a Tory government, he took the oath and, at long last, reclaimed his seat in the Commons. His ultimate triumph came on Christmas Eve in 1888 with passage of the Affirmation Bill.³⁶

To assist our understanding of American opinion about Gladstone during the controversy, it will be helpful to differentiate his views about atheism from his constitutional understanding of religion and politics. On a personal level, he was opposed to Bradlaugh's atheism and repulsed by his promotion of birth control. At the onset of the dispute Gladstone confessed privately to Speaker Brand that he found many of Bradlaugh's opinions 'loathsome and revolting'.³⁷ Later, in his 1883 Affirmation Bill speech he described the loss of faith as 'the most inexpressible calamity which can fall either upon a man or upon a nation'.³⁸ At the same time, the statesman was able to balance these sentiments with what David Bebbington has located as the most obvious feature of Gladstonian liberalism, a sublime faith in freedom.³⁹ For the Liberal statesman, forcing Bradlaugh to take the oath or prohibiting him from taking his seat because of unbelief was inconsistent with his party's historic role in removing restrictions on Nonconformists, Roman Catholics and Jews.⁴⁰ The architect of Gladstonian Liberalism came to see in Bradlaugh another inevitable step towards what he called the 'abatement and removal of disqualifications'.⁴¹ Thus, two of the primary guiding forces of Gladstone's mind, faith

³⁵ Arnstein, *Bradlaugh Case*, pp. 267, 277.

³⁶ Arnstein, *Bradlaugh Case*, p. 317.

³⁷ WEG to Brand, 24 May 1880, Hampton MSS. 821325 E.

³⁸ WEG, 'Parliamentary Oath, Second Reading', cc 1196, 1197, in *Hansard 1805-2005*.

³⁹ DWB, *MoG*, p. 259.

⁴⁰ Parry, *Democracy and Religion*, p. 159.

⁴¹ Gladstone, 'Parliamentary Oath, Second Reading', cc 1186, in *Hansard*.

and freedom, came together in his 26 April 1883 speech in support of the Affirmation Bill. In summing up that speech Morley attested, ‘These high themes of Faith, on the one hand, and Freedom on the other, exactly fitted the range of the thoughts in which Mr. Gladstone habitually lived.’⁴² In the remarkable oration, the premier declared that his party was not to retreat from the cause of freedom simply because of the infamy of the man who represented it:

The Liberal Party will not be deterred, by fear or favour, from working steadily onward in the path which it believes to be the path of equity and justice. There is no greater honour to a man than to suffer for what he thinks to be righteous; and there is no greater honour to a Party than to suffer in the endeavour to give effect to the principles which they believe to be just.⁴³

But that was April 1883. Gladstone had not pressed these Liberal principles publicly on Bradlaugh’s behalf in the early stages of the dispute. When the controversy had commenced in the spring of 1880, American evangelicals, Catholics and the secular press were quick to respond, and there were signs of dissatisfaction with the prime minister’s management of the crisis.

In their reporting and editorial opinions during the Bradlaugh affair, the United States press tended for the most part to follow a general pattern in covering the story. Articles were plentiful in the first few weeks of the dispute until Bradlaugh temporarily took his seat on 2 July 1880. Coverage then picked up just slightly after he was forced to vacate his seat on 31 March 1880; however, what did appear at that time were largely news reports with little commentary. After that, reporting was infrequent until the introduction of 1883 Affirmation Bill, which spawned modest press coverage and opinions. After the

⁴² Morley, *Gladstone*, vol 3, pp. 18-19.

⁴³ Gladstone, ‘Parliamentary Oath, Second Reading’, cc 1186, 1187, in *Hansard*.

bill's defeat, reporting dropped off significantly. The present survey, therefore, focuses primarily on reports of Gladstone's early handling of the dispute in 1880 and his endorsement of the failed 1883 Affirmation Bill.

During the 1880 phase of the controversy, Gladstone's perceived hands-off approach had come under criticism. Prior to his short-lived 1880 resolution allowing Bradlaugh to affirm, several criticisms were levelled at him by Americans for his management of the crisis. His reliance upon select committees rather than making the issue a ministerial question was condemned by several leading liberal secular publications. In June 1880 a correspondent for the *Chicago Tribune* suggested that had Gladstone acted decisively from the beginning, the matter would have been over. As things stood, he suggested, 'The Liberals evidently looked to their leader, Mr. Gladstone, for a policy, but they were doomed to disappointment and compelled to go into flight without either a leader or a policy.'⁴⁴ The reporter insisted that the Liberals were 'left without either a rudder or a compass' and added that despite the fact that Gladstone opposed the motion, he had 'made the serious mistake of stating that the Government's position was simply to give advice and to leave the decision to the House'.⁴⁵ 'Mr. Gladstone', he lamented, 'still persisted in his mistaken policy of leaving the matter to the decision of the House'.⁴⁶ The *New York Times* echoed the *Tribune* and accused Gladstone of irresolute leadership:

Had he put his foot down at the first, Bradlaugh would have "affirmed" and there would have been an end to the business; but suggesting and sanctioning the appointment of committees, the Premier gradually let the business drift into a block, a sort of Parliamentary barricade.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ *CT*, 28 June 1880, p. 4.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *CT*, 28 June 1880, p. 4.

⁴⁷ *NYT*, 5 July 1880, p. 1.

The liberal *Springfield Republican* reported that Gladstone's ministry was off to a severely disappointing start, particularly because of the Bradlaugh affair. The reporter suggested that his critics had 'revived the charge in which there seemed to be too much truth six years ago, that while Mr Gladstone could win a great majority, he lacked the tact to use it in governing England to the advantage of his party.'⁴⁸ George Smalley of the *New York Tribune* weighed in with similar disapproval. 'Mr. Gladstone' he insisted, 'from an excess of conscientiousness, committed a mistake. Beginning by declining to make Mr. Bradlaugh's admission a party question, he left the Liberals free to vote according to their opinion or prejudice.'⁴⁹ A writer for the *Nation* magazine objected to the use of select committees and insisted that the controversy could have been avoided if the government had 'proposed a resolution in the whole House authorizing him to affirm; or, still better, had introduced and pushed rapidly through the House of Commons a bill abolishing the oath altogether, and substituting for it an affirmation binding upon all members'.⁵⁰ A *New York Times* writer brought into sharp relief an opinion of the statesman much altered since the famous Midlothian campaign:

It is, indeed, amazing and incomprehensible to see the man whose heart bled at the Bulgarian outrages . . . the noble and tireless orator of the memorable Midlothian campaign . . . languidly resigning his functions as the leader of the House . . .⁵¹

In dealing with Bradlaugh, Gladstone had stumbled out of the blocks in his second ministry in the opinion of several leading liberal secular publications.

A similar sentiment was voiced a couple years thereafter by Moncure Conway, the influential author and American expatriate. Best known as a social reformer and prolific

⁴⁸ 'The Liberal Check in England', *SR*, 3 June 1880, p. 4.

⁴⁹ GWS, 'London and Paris News', *NY.Trib*, 27 June 1880, p. 1.

⁵⁰ *TN*, 15 July 1880, pp. 41-42.

⁵¹ *NYT*, 23 February 1882, p. 4.

writer, he had also served as minister of South Place Chapel in London where he had led the congregation out of Unitarian fellowship and much closer to freethought. Conway counted several luminaries as friends including Emerson, Whitman, Carlyle, Dickens, Darwin and Charles Bradlaugh.⁵² In a *North American Review* article simply entitled ‘Gladstone’, Conway offered observations in celebration of the statesman’s jubilee year in parliament. In reflecting upon the earliest stages of the Bradlaugh dispute, Conway faulted the premier for not acting decisively in the House vote against Bradlaugh’s right to affirm in June 1880. After that vote, several Liberal ministers arose to suggest that Gladstone should bring in a measure, but, Conway complained, ‘Mr. Gladstone sat still on the treasury bench, shaking his head’. ‘Thus, the wrong was continued,’ Conway instructed, ‘entirely by the inaction of the one man who could redress it, and who had previously called it wrong.’⁵³ Another influential voice, in a leading journal of liberal opinion, had questioned Gladstone’s management of the controversy.

In an age when the voices of atheism and secularism were gaining strength and a source of trepidation for the faithful, Gladstone certainly risked damage to his reputation by lending any support to the infidel Bradlaugh. We have seen that Gladstone did not consider his infidelity to be a disqualification for public office. However, a small minority of opinion in the America diverged from that view and believed an atheist was automatically disqualified. There was some opposition voiced among Methodists, although the influential *Methodist Review* remained altogether silent on the Bradlaugh affair. However, a correspondent for the Methodist *Christian Advocate* wrote that atheism

⁵² Charles A. Howe, ‘Moncure Conway’, in *Dictionary of Unitarian and Universalist Biography* <<http://www25.uua.org/uuhs/duub/articles/moncureconway.html>>[accessed 29 January 2008].

⁵³ Moncure Conway, ‘Gladstone’, *NAR*, 136 (1883) p. 223.

was indeed a disqualification for a seat in Parliament and that it was a ‘reproach to any constituency to elect such a man as Bradlaugh’.⁵⁴ The *Western Christian Advocate* agreed, blaming the residents of Northampton and demanding that ‘an atheist ought never to have been elected’.⁵⁵ American Methodists were in all likelihood influenced by British Methodist who held a similar view of Bradlaugh and were less closely allied with Gladstone’s party.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, the criticisms by American Methodists were directed not at Gladstone but at the electors of Northampton. No evidence exists that Gladstone’s reputation had been greatly tarnished within the denomination.

Direct and severe criticism of Gladstone, however, came from Roman Catholics who had also denounced him for his *Vatican Decrees* pamphlet in 1874. The *American Catholic Quarterly* revealed its disapproval in an article entitled ‘The New Sovereignty’. In it the journal tied Gladstone to what the author considered a new secular approach to governance. Generally considered, by ‘new sovereignty’ the author suggested a relationship between religion and politics, rooted in the Reformation, that had ‘dethroned divine authority’ by placing the secular state above religion (presumably the Catholic Church) and also by statesmen exalting their politics above their God. The Catholic author insisted his 1883 Affirmation Bill was a prime example:

Mr. Gladstone, who reads the lessons in his parish church, brings in a relief bill for Mr. Bradlaugh, not because he likes filthy atheism, but because he likes to take the lead in all liberalism. Mr. Gladstone is a prime minister of the new sovereignty.⁵⁷

Moreover, along with the likes of Garibaldi, Gambetta and Bismarck, Gladstone was accused of erastianism—a model he clearly rejected—by placing the state above the

⁵⁴ CA, 24 June 1880, p. 403.

⁵⁵ *Western Christian Advocate*, 7 July 1880, p. 212.

⁵⁶ Arnstein, *Bradlaugh Case*, pp. 160, 161.

⁵⁷ ‘The New Sovereignty’, *ACQR*, 8 (1883), p. 549.

church ‘to the utter contempt even of the traditional sentiment of Catholic obedience . . . Having got rid of the divine authority of the teaching Church, they are compelled to exalt themselves into amateur pontiffs’.⁵⁸ Gladstone was perceived as an enemy of the faith by the Roman Catholic review.

The *Catholic World* also published a scathing article entitled ‘Drawing the Line’. It was written before the 1883 bill’s defeat but appeared in print in America following the vote. The author invoked the principle of disabilities to refute the advocates of affirmation, noting that, for example, murderers, maniacs and even felons were disqualified from parliament. The constituents of Northampton had ‘eccentrically elected a blatant atheist’ and thus no relief bill was warranted in their case. ‘Nothing could have been simpler’, the author concluded, ‘than to politely inform Northampton that it had misapprehended its voting powers, and that if it would kindly return some member who could sit no objection would be made to his sitting’.⁵⁹ With stinging criticism of Gladstone, the writer declared ruin, not just for the ministry but for the nation too:

It is difficult to imagine a more humiliating position than that in which Mr. Gladstone has placed the country. The degradation of the country, like the degradation of the ministry, seems complete under the dictation of Mr. Bradlaugh and his few illiterate followers at Northampton.⁶⁰

Allowing affirmation by an atheist was even tantamount to denying God: ‘The question here is does God exist? If he does you blaspheme him in denying him, and you blaspheme him in legislating that he may be denied.’⁶¹ For Catholics, there appeared to be no

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ ‘Drawing the Line’, *CW*, July 1883, p. 516.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

allowance for an atheist in public office, and Gladstone was contributing to the decline of British civilization.

By 1883, despite Gladstone's embrace of his government's Affirmation Bill, a few criticisms continued to appear in the American secular press. The *New York Times* remained as disapproving as ever, suggesting that the 'management of the Bradlaugh difficulty by Mr. Gladstone and his colleagues has been nothing less than pusillanimous'.⁶² The Northampton Radical, along with his constituents, had suffered a 'gross injustice' and Gladstone had failed to 'prevent the bigots of the House from ruthlessly trampling upon his rights'.⁶³ The correspondent demanded that 'Her Majesty's Ministry has made a late confession of its errors in the Bradlaugh case by causing a bill allowing members to make affirmation to be introduced in the House of Commons.'⁶⁴ After what Bradlaugh had endured, the *New York Times* could muster only faint praise for the Affirmation Bill. In the wake of the bill's defeat, the *Springfield Republican* also continued to criticize Gladstone. Its correspondent complained that the matter had been 'incompetently managed from the first, and is now in a condition so scandalous that it would have turned out almost any other cabinet government that ever was in England to have suffered it'.⁶⁵ He insisted it was the 'grossest tyranny' to keep the people of Northampton unrepresented, but the fault lay not only with the conservative minority, but with Gladstone:

If Mr Gladstone has exhausted all his resources in behalf of bold justice and cannot bring his own party of moral ideas to its support, he has lost his grip to that degree that he cannot properly be said to lead them. He is indeed ahead of them, but they will not go his way.⁶⁶

⁶² *NYT*, 19 February 1883, p. 4.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *SR*, 10 July 1883, p. 4.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

Gladstone's handling of the Bradlaugh question had been roundly attacked by the leading liberal papers from the outset, and in a few cases the criticism persisted even after his endorsement of the 1883 Affirmation Bill.

Among evangelical papers critical commentary about Gladstone's leadership at all phases was almost non-existent. An exception was the Boston-based *Congregationalist*. A correspondent observed in May 1881, 'that Mr. Gladstone practically abdicated his leadership' by not taking a more proactive stance on the issue.⁶⁷ For the most part, however, evangelicals were unwilling to assign blame for the imbroglio on Gladstone's lack of leadership and remained silent.

In contrast to the criticism of Gladstone's leadership in secular papers, there were a few voices of approval for Gladstone, both in the early stages of the dispute and in 1883. His cautious approach in 1880 was endorsed by James Gordon Bennett Jr's *New York Herald*. Its correspondent believed the statesman 'had been wise to let the agitation drift a little while'.⁶⁸ In the wake of the April 1881 expulsion of Bradlaugh, the freethought *Boston Investigator*, naturally in sympathy with Bradlaugh, listed Gladstone, Bright and Labouchere as the 'best men now in the House of Commons' to deal with the impasse.⁶⁹ And on 2 May 1881, the day the government faced a Conservative filibuster on the first Affirmation Bill, the *Washington Post* reported that Gladstone had 'conducted himself in the Bradlaugh matter like the wise and careful man he proverbially is'.⁷⁰ The writer suggested that although others had criticized Gladstone at first for not precipitating a new issue upon the country, he had 'warily avoided the trap which the Conservatives set for

⁶⁷ *CON*, 4 May 1881, p. 8.

⁶⁸ 'The Case of Bradlaugh', *NYH*, 27 June 1880, p. 8.

⁶⁹ *Boston Investigator*, 4 May 1881, p. 4.

⁷⁰ *Washington Post*, 2 May 1881, p. 2.

him'.⁷¹ The paper also contended that Gladstone had met the challenge with consummate tact:

He has done full justice to Mr. Bradlaugh without making a martyr of him, saved the country from the unfortunate consequences that might have resulted from giving undue prominence to a question of religious faith that had no business in the House of Commons, and now proposes to prevent the recurrence of any similar contingency by a reasonable and business-like amendment to the present form of oath.⁷²

However few in number, Gladstone had received favourable sentiments among the secular press in the UNITED STATES for his early management of the controversy.

Favourable reports surrounding the 1883 Affirmation Bill also appeared in the secular press. Gladstone's speech introducing the bill had been widely praised. A letter to the editor in the *Boston Investigator* judged the 1883 Affirmation Bill speech as 'most masterly and comprehensive'.⁷³ In the *New York Tribune*, George Smalley described Gladstone's Affirmation Bill speech in glowing terms.⁷⁴ He wrote: 'His speech in its defense was one of his masterly efforts, and easily the greatest speech of the present session.'⁷⁵ When the 1883 Affirmation Bill was defeated the Republican *Chicago Tribune*, which had published disapproval of Gladstone in 1880, blamed the failure on the 'dead weight' of Bradlaugh, but had high praise for Gladstone's handling of the controversy. The report stated that the prime minister had 'never been more consistent' than in the case of the Affirmation Bill. Moreover, the report even suggested his conduct in the case was historic: 'He has made sacrifices, which is rare in the history of party leaders. His reverse now will only add to his fame. History will vindicate him, and say that he was never more

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Boston Investigator*, 23 May 1883, col A.

⁷⁴ GWS, 'Foreign News', *NY.Trib*, 6 May 1883, p. 1.

⁷⁵ 'The Outlook', *CU*, 17 May 1883, p. 385.

heroic than towards the close of his career.’⁷⁶ If liberals in the secular press had largely been unsympathetic in their appraisal of Gladstone early on, the sentiment was not unanimous.

Gladstone received more fulsome praise for his ability to deal with the Bradlaugh problem in all phases from evangelicals, albeit in this instance it was confined to the two leading liberal papers. Following the successful 1880 resolution allowing Bradlaugh to affirm, the *Christian Union* praised his ‘marvelous exhibition of moral power’ in getting the House of Commons to admit its error.⁷⁷ At the same time the *Independent* suggested, ‘The Bradlaugh case has been settled, as we think, in the most sensible way’ and Gladstone had come forward ‘bravely to the support of the right principle and secured for Mr. Bradlaugh the seat to which he has been duly elected’.⁷⁸ Among all publications surveyed, secular and religious, Lyman Abbott’s *Christian Union* carried the most pro-Gladstone commentary. An example is seen in early May 1881. While others were criticising the premier’s inaction, the paper reported, ‘Mr. Gladstone wisely declined to make the issue a party question’, but it also admitted he would soon have to introduce an affirmation bill which, the paper over-confidently predicted, was likely to pass.⁷⁹ As they had been in past controversies, voices from American evangelicals were once again among the statesman’s most ardent supporters.

In April 1883 *The Independent* came to Gladstone’s defence against what it called the ‘old-bettyish’ Evangelical Alliance in Britain because the institution had called a prayer meeting to protest to the Almighty against the Affirmation Bill. ‘Sturdy Gladstone’, the

⁷⁶ *CT*, 7 May 1883, p. 4.

⁷⁷ *CU*, 7 July 1880, p. 1.

⁷⁸ *IND*, 8 July 1880, p. 17.

⁷⁹ *CU*, 4 May 1881, p. 417.

paper insisted, ‘has as much fear of God as the whole company of these weak sisters, who fear for the honor of the almighty if his name is left out of an oath’.⁸⁰ Following the defeat of the Affirmation Bill, *The Independent* insisted that ‘Mr. Gladstone had enough courage to say that while he believed the bill would injure the party, it was right and ought to be passed. It would be a disgrace to England to permit such a noble man to go out of power.’⁸¹ American Protestants appeared to be more supportive of Gladstone’s policy toward Bradlaugh than the secular press and most certainly thought more highly of the premier than American Catholic publications. When Gladstone’s 1883 Affirmation Bill failed to pass, the nearest the *Christian Union* could come to criticizing him was to say, ‘Mr. Gladstone has always been too much of a statesman to be very efficient as a politician’.⁸² But his speech was given high praise: ‘His speech in its defense was one of his masterly efforts, and easily the greatest speech of the present session. He showed conclusively the absurdity of the present law’.⁸³ The liberal evangelical press was engaged in the story and supportive of Gladstone throughout the dispute.

If there was a diverse range of opinion about Gladstone’s management of the affair, it is also possible to locate an important unifying thread within American opinion. It was based upon a common disdain for the promotion of atheism and birth control tempered by an appreciation for the principle of political and religious liberty. For nearly all Americans, if Bradlaugh’s atheism and support of birth control were offensive, they were of like mind with Gladstone that the would-be representative of Northampton should not be disqualified from taking his seat in parliament. Several of the leading secular publications shared

⁸⁰ *IND*, 5 April 1883, p. 18.

⁸¹ *IND*, 17 May 1883, p. 18.

⁸² *CU*, 17 May 1883, p. 385.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

Gladstone's view that, although abhorrent, an atheist was entitled to admission in the Commons. With Bradlaugh in the Clock Tower, George Smalley wrote:

It is perfectly true that atheism is unpopular in England and that avowed atheists constitute an inconsiderable minority of the people of the kingdom. But there is something more unpopular and more intolerable to the English people than atheism itself, and that is the notion of political proscription on account of religious beliefs.⁸⁴

A writer for *The New York Times* framed the issue as the right cause but the wrong person, noting that if someone of better reputation had challenged the oath he would have 'tapped an unsuspecting stream of sympathy'.⁸⁵ Bradlaugh, however, was 'a mouthing adventurer, the writer of an obscene and filthy book, a demagogue of the worst type'.⁸⁶ Yet it was the House of Commons that had needlessly placed him in the position as the champion of a sound principle that was destined to triumph. The article continued:

The real cause of opposition is Mr. Bradlaugh's religious and political unbelief, and the question is whether the electors of Northampton are entitled to be represented in the House of Commons by the man of their deliberate choice without any question being made of his belief in the theology of the Church of England or the principles of the Monarchy. That he of all men should be allowed to pose as a champion of the freedom of representation is unfortunate. He is an atheist of the vulgar type, who substitutes blasphemy for argument, and a republican, whose chief weapon is vituperation of the government under which he lives, and abuse of the royal family.⁸⁷

Nevertheless, despite his distasteful qualities, the correspondent insisted that unbelief was no disqualification and his constituents were entitled to be represented by Bradlaugh if that was their will.⁸⁸ The satirical *Puck* magazine expressed an opinion of Bradlaugh with a vivid metaphor: 'A dirty, mangy, disreputable cur of the gutter is not a pleasant object to

⁸⁴ GWS, 'A Tussle with Bigotry', *NY.Trib*, 4 July 1880, p.1.

⁸⁵ *NYT*, 27 June 1880, p. 6.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ 'The Bradlaugh Case', *NYT*, 27 June 1880, p. 6.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

gaze upon; but he has his *rights* to humane treatment, whether he is pretty or not.’⁸⁹ ‘Mr. Bradlaugh is not a man after our own heart’, attested a writer for *Puck* in another issue, because he had ‘advocated “Free Love” and other abominations’.⁹⁰ Still, the article maintained, whatever opinions Bradlaugh held ‘he has his rights as an Englishman, and, above all, as the chosen representative in the British Parliament of the electors of Northampton’.⁹¹ The *Washington Post* agreed, noting that the House had no right to bar him: ‘Bradlaugh may be a fiend, but he is a member-elect for Northampton’. Moreover it stated, ‘Bradlaugh’s followers have right on their side’.⁹² At the *Nation* a similar sentiment was expressed:

He has all the fanaticism and all the coarse disregard of other people's feelings often found in the reformer and nearly always in the iconoclast. . . . These are reasons, perhaps, for not liking the man, but they are not reasons for denying him justice.⁹³

And according to *Harper’s Weekly*, Bradlaugh was a disagreeable person who held repulsive opinions, but it was clear he had every right to take his seat since he has been ‘lawfully elected to Parliament, and is ready properly to take the oath’.⁹⁴ Although secular papers had openly criticised the way Gladstone had managed the Bradlaugh affair, they were essentially in harmony with his guiding principles of faith and freedom.

Among religious papers a similar point of view could be found. The *Christian Union* had made a similar historical link to expanded constitutional rights early in the controversy:

⁸⁹ *Puck*, 7 July 1880, p. 319.

⁹⁰ *Puck*, 30 June 1880, p. 299.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Washington Post*, 20 February 1882, p. 1.

⁹³ *TN*, 15 July 1880, pp. 41, 42.

⁹⁴ *HW*, 18 March 1882, p.162.

The successive changes in the form of oath made to admit to Parliament Romanists, Jews and Quakers are prophetic of the final admission of any representative who is loyal to his country, whatever may be his religion or his irreligion. Disfranchising atheism will not convert atheists.⁹⁵

The liberal-leaning *Independent* expressed a similar view, suggesting that parliament ‘had given to an unimportant and vulgar man a significance to which he is not at all entitled and which but for the unwisdom and folly of the Parliament he would not have possessed.’⁹⁶

The *Unitarian Review* published an article by the London Unitarian minister John Page Hopps, who believed it a scandal that an atheist should take an oath and say, ‘so help me God’. Nevertheless, he thought it equally a scandal that the House of Commons should exclude, again and again, a duly elected member, merely because he honestly confesses unbelief. ‘The way out of it is plain’, Hopps declared, and it is certain that sooner or later that way will be chosen.⁹⁷ Liberal Christians also embraced Bradlaugh’s civil rights while expressing disdain for his personal views.

Several conclusions may be drawn from the examination of American opinions during the Bradlaugh controversy. Among those in the United States who differed with Gladstone about an atheist’s right to sit in the Commons were Methodist and Roman Catholics. In two Methodist papers criticisms were directed at the citizens of Northampton for electing the atheist, but no ill will or blame towards Gladstone was expressed. However, the two leading Roman Catholic reviews went much further. Not only did they call for Bradlaugh’s prohibition from public office, but also they censured Gladstone for undermining both Christian faith and English civilisation. Gladstone’s perceived embrace of secularism continued to dog his reputation among Catholics. Additionally, Catholic

⁹⁵ *CU*, 2 July 1880, p. 505.

⁹⁶ *IND*, 1 March 1883, p. 18.

⁹⁷ John Page Hopps, *UR*, 18 (1882), p. 379.

opinion had incorrectly accused him of promoting a form of erastianism, and had also wrongly interpreted English common law to forbid atheism on grounds of blasphemy. Clearly the Bradlaugh dispute did not improve his reputation among American Catholics in the wake of the controversy over Vaticanism.

Among liberal and secular publications, the most significant threat to Gladstone's reputation in America arose from his decision not to make the Affirmation Bill a ministerial question until 1883. His handling of the imbroglio was attacked roundly by leading papers, especially the *New York Times*, from the outset and persisted to a lesser degree even after his endorsement of the failed 1883 Affirmation Bill. Most blamed Gladstone's inaction for the protracted dispute rather than Bradlaugh or the Tories in parliament. Yet, in two instances, that of the *New York Herald* and *Washington Post*, he was commended both in the early and later phases of the dispute. And in the case of the *Chicago Tribune* and the *New York Tribune*, he was criticised for inaction in 1880-81, but he received a measure of commendation for the 1883 Affirmation Bill. All considered, with his support for the legislation, criticisms of Gladstone had for the most part subsided despite the bill's failure to pass, Catholics notwithstanding. When all was said and done, Gladstone's reputation among liberal reformers as a decisive leader had suffered a painful—but surely not fatal—blow as a result of the Bradlaugh case.

Among evangelical publications, Gladstone's leadership during the Bradlaugh affair held up fairly well. As we have seen, however, this opinion was confined to the liberal *Christian Union* and *Independent*. By contrast, the more conservative *Congregationalist* reported that Gladstone had abdicated his leadership, but gave no real indication that the publication no longer respected his statesmanship on the whole.

Evangelicals had remained unusually silent during the debate, perhaps suggesting that, given their admiration for him at its outset, his reputation among them had not suffered any lasting damage from the matter.

Perhaps the most important conclusion we can draw from the present survey is that a unity of thought and purpose existed between most Americans and Gladstone. In the main, secular and religious publications expressed a common disgust for Bradlaugh's atheism that was similar to Gladstone's, but the prevailing American opinion was also in harmony with the statesman that an atheist should not be disqualified as a duly elected politician. Discernible here is a shared social and religious conservatism that was sufficiently tempered by democratic principles to afford civil rights to a person considered to be odious and beyond the pale of respectable society. Those principles, as we have seen in previous chapters, were hammered out during and after the Civil War as liberal Americans began to expand their conception of democracy. United States opinion was decidedly anti-Bradlaugh but was more committed to the principle of political liberty. Thus, most Americans held a view fairly consistent with Gladstone. However distasteful Americans found Bradlaugh, they believed he had the right to represent his Northampton constituents based on democratic principles. As had been the case during the statesman's involvement in Irish Church disestablishment and Vaticanism, Americans held views consistent with Gladstonian Liberalism. In the end, the Bradlaugh controversy had engraved Gladstone deeper into the American consciousness. For many it had not been his brightest moment of decisive leadership, while for others his wisdom and statesmanship remained unblemished.

CHAPTER FIVE

T. H. HUXLEY

Many of the favorite subjects of scientific or systematic thought in the present day are of a nature powerfully tending to reinforce or illustrate the arguments available for the proof of religion. William Gladstone¹

Few thinkers of the late nineteenth century stood more opposed to Gladstone's assertion than T.H. Huxley. And when the venerable pair crossed swords in the 1880s and 90s in the British review *Nineteenth Century*, the controversies joined the ranks of the period's memorable disputes between traditional Christianity and modern scientific thought. Their first dispute of 1885 and '86 over 'Genesis and Geology' revisited the earlier nineteenth-century debates over the scientific accuracy of the Genesis creation narrative. The catalyst had been Gladstone's 'Dawn of Creation and of Worship' in the November 1885 issue of the *Nineteenth Century*. The second controversy of 1890 and '91 was a dispute over the encounter between Jesus and the Gadarene demoniac of the New Testament gospels. The major themes of that debate included Mosaic dietary law, property rights and the ethnic and national identity of Gadara. Yet perhaps because of its rather peculiar content, that of demon possession and drowned pigs, it grew in popular memory as a mildly amusing and rather pointless dispute that was beneath the dignity of its esteemed combatants. Together the two exchanges continue to hold a prominent place in the lore of battles real and imagined between science and religion. The Gladstone-Huxley controversies were characteristic of the religious and cultural disruptions endemic to the latter half of the nineteenth century. They enhance our understanding of how the

¹ WEG, *The Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture* (Philadelphia: Henry Altemus Company, 1890), p. 241.

statesman was perceived as a popular intellectual and a Christian apologist by Americans and offer insight into the varieties of thought that emerged in the latter decades of the period relative to scientific advance and theological innovation. By the mid-1880s Gladstone was increasingly known to Americans as a public intellectual as well as a statesman. The extent to which they regarded him as a credible and effective spokesman for issues related to science and advanced biblical exegesis will be the primary focus of this chapter.

The first Gladstone-Huxley debate elicited only modest interest in the columns of the American press, especially when compared to Irish Church disestablishment and the Vatican decrees controversy. A number of prime publications in the study were all but silent: among secular publications *Harper's Weekly*, the *Nation*, the *North American Review*, the *New York Times* and the *New York Herald*; and among religious the *Christian Observer*, the *New Princeton Review*, the *Church Review*, the *Baptist Quarterly Review*, the *Christian Advocate*, *Zion's Herald* and the *Methodist Review*. The freethought *Boston Investigator* was perhaps most conspicuous in its silence since Huxley was frequently cited in the paper throughout the 1870s and the 1880s. Nevertheless, we shall see presently that there was demonstrable interest shown by several prominent publications, and the essays of both men were reprinted in full by *Popular Science* and the *Eclectic* magazines. The absence of widespread reporting may signify that the subject matter was too arcane for popular appeal. Another factor that doubtless influenced coverage resulted from Gladstone's campaign for Irish Home Rule, which ran concurrently with the first Huxley debate and had been the catalyst for his sudden return as prime minister in January 1886. In the present study, a keyword search of 'Gladstone' for the year 1886 in the Gale Digital

Collections database ‘*Nineteenth Century American Newspapers*’ was revealing. A search of approximately 500 newspapers yielded over 5,200 results, with the overwhelming majority related to Irish political issues and fewer than a dozen related to the Huxley controversy.² American columns devoted to British news were quite naturally preoccupied with the return of Gladstone to the premiership and to developments relating to his Irish Home Rule bill. Given the magnitude of his policy, and its implications for transatlantic relations, a brief review of its American reception is vital for our understanding of Gladstone’s reputation in the United States at the time of his first Huxley debate.

Gladstone’s conversion to Irish Home Rule proved to be the capstone for a transformational period in nineteenth-century Anglo-American relations. Especially from the late 1860s onwards, transatlantic liberal friendships were forged as men such as Charles Dilke, John Morley, James Bryce and Lord Rosebery visited and wrote about the United States.³ One result was that British Liberals looked increasingly to American federalism, among other models, as inspiration for solving the Irish question.⁴ Gladstone himself had in 1883 requested for consideration studies of Canadian and American federalism; and although in 1886 he ultimately rejected all forms of American federalism for Ireland, he moved closer to such views in subsequent years.⁵ Anglo-American accord notwithstanding, the Irish question continued to be a source of diplomatic tension between the two nations in the early 1880s. Extreme Anglophobia among Irish Americans led to an escalation in Fenian violence including assassination threats against the Prince of Wales,

² Search was made using ‘In Entire Article’ option. ‘19th-Century United States Newspapers’, accessed 3 October 2012. < <http://libraries.ou.edu/access.aspx?id=1128> >

³ Campbell, *Unlikely Allies*, pp. 200-225. See also Leslie Butler, *Critical Americans*, 2007)

³ Hugh Tulloch, *James Bryce’s American Commonwealth: The Anglo-American Background* (Woodbridge, CT: 1988), p. 221. See also John Kendle, *Ireland and the Federal Solution: the Debate over the United Kingdom Constitution, 1870-1921* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University, 1989)

⁵ Murney Gerlach, *British Liberalism and the United States*, pp. 104, 108, 127.

Gladstone and the Home Secretary William Harcourt.⁶ Moreover, relations were damaged further when President Arthur's Republican administration had been unresponsive to several official British protests in the wake of the violence.⁷ However, by the winter of 1885-86, following Gladstone's public embrace of Home Rule and his election as prime minister, most Americans, including the Irish, were favourably disposed towards his policy. Despite stern opposition from some of his own Liberal party members, Gladstone's popularity in the United States was higher than ever as a result of his commitment to Home Rule.⁸

Examples of American support for Gladstone's Irish policy abounded in 1885 and 1886. Financial contributions for the Home Rule Parliamentary Fund began to pour in from the United States and Gladstone received a flood of flattering petitions from a variety of American organisations.⁹ As has become a recurring theme in this study thus far, American evangelicals were once again passionate in their support for Gladstone. A correspondent for the *Christian Union* reported that the scenes attending the introduction of Home Rule in the House of Commons in April 1886 'will probably be regarded hereafter as a kind of apotheosis of Mr. Gladstone'.¹⁰ Writing for the Methodist *Christian Advocate*, Isaac Lansing, the former president of Clark College in Atlanta (1874-76), was effusive, proclaiming Gladstone 'the greatest political figure of the world' and guaranteed him 'immortal renown'.¹¹ Lansing also alluded to the existence in America of widespread 'blind enthusiasm for the Home Rule bill', especially among politicians seeking Irish

⁶ Robert Kelley, *Transatlantic Persuasion*, p. 37; and Campbell, *Unlikely Allies*, p. 213.

⁷ Gerlach, *British Liberalism and the United States*, pp. 90-91.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ 'A Historic Speech', *CU*, 15 April 1886, p. 5.

¹¹ I. J. Lansing, 'Gladstone in the Arena.I.', *CA*, 17 June 1886, p. 378.

votes. He also felt compelled to inform his readers that he admired Gladstone ‘as a man, an orator, a scholar, a writer, a statesman of the very highest order of mind and principle’.¹² Appreciating for Gladstone was clearly evident among his traditional supporters.

Support for Home Rule was also evident among former Gladstone detractors. A writer for the often critical *New York Times* suggested that despite the statesman’s lack of skill in managing organisational details, it was important for him to succeed in Ireland. The correspondent believed that ‘no other Englishman now living could make the appeal with the same chance of success’.¹³ Roman Catholics, with whom he had fallen out of favour during the Vatican decrees and Bradlaugh controversies, understandably stood firmly in his corner even after the failure of the 1886 Home Rule Bill. ‘Gladstone had towered above all his foes’, a writer for the *American Catholic Quarterly* observed. ‘Never in any previous conflict’, he declared, ‘throughout all his long and varied career, did he bear himself so knightly and nobly.’¹⁴ Gladstone’s commitment to Home Rule had found near universal approval in the United States and enhanced his reputation as a statesman.

Commendations in 1886 and ’87 were also forthcoming from several other notable sources. A biographical article by Adam Badeau entitled ‘Gladstone’ appeared in the June 1886 number of the *North American Review*. A secretary to General Grant during the Civil War, Badeau was also a foreign diplomat during Grant’s presidency and had published an acclaimed Civil War history.¹⁵ In his essay, Badeau proclaimed Gladstone

¹² *Ibid*, p. 378.

¹³ ‘Mr. Gladstone’s Programme’, *NYT*, 17 December 1885, p. 4.

¹⁴ ‘The Elections in Great Britain and Irish Home Rule’, *ACQR*, 43 (1886), p. 559.

¹⁵ William S. McFeely, *Grant: A Biography* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001), pp. 493-98.

the ‘friend of Ireland through many arduous struggles’ and hailed him the ‘great antagonist of aristocracy in England’.¹⁶ He admitted that Gladstone, like all humans, had his faults, but he was ‘the leader in the army of progress before the world; the champion of the people in a land where they still need one; the ally of a down-trodden sister country to whom he holds out a hand to assist her to rise’.¹⁷ The essay traced Gladstone’s political evolution from Tory to Liberal, along with his remarkable body of legislative reform. ‘During his first two administrations’, Badeau proclaimed, ‘Gladstone accomplished more than any other English statesman since Cromwell has even attempted in the way of overthrowing abuses and reforming institutions.’¹⁸ Additionally, by 1887 Gladstone’s star had risen so high in America that the United States Constitutional Centennial Commission invited him to preside as its sole foreign dignitary at the Philadelphia commemoration, a request he reluctantly declined.¹⁹ In that same year a delegation of distinguished Americans headed by newspaper publisher Joseph Pulitzer and United States Congressman Perry Belmont also travelled to London to present Gladstone with an elaborate three-foot high silver testimonial trophy for his services in the cause of civil and religious liberty. The commemoration made special mention of his gallant effort to establish Irish Home Rule.²⁰ In addition to enhancing his own fame, Gladstone’s Irish policy had been an important step towards improved Anglo-American relations.

Gladstone’s embrace of Home Rule, however, was not the only reason he was celebrated by Americans in the mid-1880s. Many also had a high regard for the work of

¹⁶ Adam Badeau, ‘Gladstone’, *NAR*, 355 (1886), p. 587.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 597.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 590.

¹⁹ ‘Mr. Gladstone and the American Constitution’, *The Times*, 7 September 1887, p. 10.

²⁰ ‘The American Presentation to Mr. Gladstone’, *The Times*, 11 July 1887, 11.

his second ministry. In 1885 the *Springfield Republican* described his second premiership as comprising ‘several silent revolutions that have come to stay’.²¹ The greatest among them, the author pointed out, had been the Reform Bill of 1884, which had extended the vote to county householders. He further considered that the reforms in Irish land laws and arbitration in foreign policy belonged in the roll call of ‘silent revolutions’.²² Writing in *Zion’s Herald*, Abel Steven, the historian and Methodist minister, sang the praises of the statesman’s foreign policy with regard to India and Russia. ‘Gladstone is a Christian statesman’ Steven declared; ‘he shows that he feels the moral responsibility of his position.’²³ His pacific policy may have had its critics at home and abroad, Steven noted, ‘but it is sure to win the conscientious approval of thoughtful Christian men everywhere and to command the sanction of impartial history’.²⁴ A writer for the *Andover Review* placed the responsibility for the government’s collapse at the feet of Gladstone’s own Liberal party, which had ‘not kept fealty to its great leader’.²⁵ ‘England’s wisest and ripest statesman, he declared, ‘[is] the most versatile and high-minded in the long line of her public servants, the one of them all who has made the largest and most beneficent contribution to her legislation’.²⁶ A correspondent for Lyman Abbott’s *Christian Union* reflected upon the second ministry with glowing admiration: ‘The great English Minister can safely leave the record of his second administration to history. Closely examined, it is a wonderful story of political achievement in the most advanced and healthful directions of constitutional progress.’ Moreover, he insisted that Gladstone’s second ministry had

²¹ ‘Gladstone’s Assurance of Fame’, *SR*, 22 June 1885, p. 4.

²² *Ibid.* p.4.

²³ Abel Stevens, ‘Letter From Europe’, *ZH*, 10 June 1885, p. 1.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

²⁵ ‘England’s Injustice to Mr. Gladstone’, *AR*, 19, (1885), p. 72.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

‘added a new chapter, and a glorious one, to the history of modern statesmanship’.²⁷ By the winter of 1885-86, Gladstone was clearly perceived by Americans to be a world-class statesman. For our remaining purposes, however, the central question of how they perceived his effectiveness as a Christian apologist and public intellectual remains to be answered.

In our study of the Gladstone-Huxley debates, it will be useful going forward to examine the relevant background issues concerning both men, along with the central developments surrounding the debates. Gladstone’s controversies with Huxley were part of the statesman’s larger engagement with agnosticism in the defence of belief. By at least 1874 the statesman was convinced that the battle for the welfare of mankind would not be fought out in the world of politics but in the arena of thought. ‘A deadly attack is made’, Gladstone declared in a letter to his wife, ‘with great tenacity of purpose and over a wide field upon the greatest treasure of mankind, the belief in God, and the gospel of Christ.’²⁸ The assailant, he insisted, was disbelief in the form of agnosticism that was fed by the over-reaching use of scientific tools. Gladstone placed Huxley among those guilty of ‘first unduly narrowing the definition of Science, and then as unduly extending it to all the opinions which those persons think fit to hold’.²⁹ Prior to their first exchange, Huxley and Gladstone had crossed paths as members of the Metaphysical Society. Founded in 1869 by the architect and publisher James Knowles, it brought together a wide ranging membership comprising theists, Churchmen, rationalists, scientists, critics and philosophers. Although Gladstone never read a paper before the body, he was elected and served as its chairman in

²⁷ ‘Mr. Gladstone’s Second Ministry’, *CU*, 18 June 1885, p. 3.

²⁸ W. E. Gladstone to Catherine Gladstone, 6 April 1874, in A. Tilney Bassett, ed, *Gladstone to His Wife* (London, 1936), pp. 201-202, cited in DWB, *MoG* p. 217.

²⁹ Lathbury, *Correspondence on Church and Religion*, vol 2, p. 98.

1875.³⁰ Gladstone's apologetic inclinations were no doubt stimulated by his exposure to the sceptics he encountered within the society such as Huxley and the jurist James Fitzjames Stephen.

Gladstone's defence of faith was founded on in his belief in the authority of the Bible and the testimony of the church throughout history. By the 1860s Gladstone had acquired some sympathies with the liberal theology of the Broad Church and going forward his apologetic task was not that of defending the Bible as that of a fundamentalist seeking perfection in ink and paper. He had digested much of the liberal scholarly work such as *Essays and Reviews* (1860) and Bishop Colenso's studies on the Pentateuch. And while he found much to disagree with, he was enthusiastic about biblical criticism.³¹ His great inspiration, a man he ranked among his philosophical heroes or 'four doctors', was Bishop Joseph Butler. Especially in his classic work, *The Analogy of Religion* (1736), Butler's probabilistic apologetics and inductive logic had set the standard for reasonable defence of orthodoxy against deism in the eighteenth century. Gladstone was convinced that Butler's methodology was still necessary in the late nineteenth-century battle for belief.³² 'I am a Butlerian', he wrote to Samuel Laing in 1888, 'by which I mean, not so much a champion of any particular argument, as the follower of Butlerian method.'³³ The Bishop's method of argumentation was of vital importance to Gladstone. Butler cautioned against exaggeration and required one to make concessions when necessary, a style in

³⁰ A. W. Brown, *Metaphysical Society: Victorian Minds in Crisis, 1869-1880* (New York: Octagon Books, 1973), pp.34, 120; for a description of the members in their various categories see pp. 108-166.

³¹ DWB, *MoG*, pp. 131, 139.

³² *Ibid*, pp. 247-252.

³³ WEG to Samuel Laing, in Lathbury, *Correspondence on Church and Religion*, vol 2, p. 114.

marked contrast to many of the current religious and agnostic controversialists.³⁴ By the time of the Gadarene debate Gladstone was known as an established apologist in his own right. In an 1891 review of his *Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture*, the *New York Sun* called the statesman a ‘master of apologetics’. The author was confident that the reader would lay it down with the conviction that the orthodox conception of the scripture ‘had seldom found a more ingenious and effective advocate’.³⁵ By the 1890s, Gladstone was an established apologist for the faith.

The statesman was not merely a student of theology and methodology, however. On many important scientific developments affecting Christian belief, including Darwinism, Gladstone was an engaged student. He had, for example, read no fewer than fifty-three titles related to human evolution between 1869 and 1877.³⁶ A series of memoranda written by Gladstone in December 1881 demonstrate his serious engagement with the issues of faith and science. They were the product of the statesman’s recent reading of William Graham’s *The Creeds of Science: Religious, Moral and Social* (1881). There Gladstone recorded his view that science on its own merits was invaluable. ‘But where scientism trespasses on the ground belonging to Theology’, he maintained, ‘it becomes no better than an impudent imposter.’³⁷ Yet science was not to be seen as an intrinsic enemy of belief. ‘We should dispel wholly from our minds’, he would write in 1890, ‘those spectral notions of antagonism between science and religion.’³⁸ Thus, Gladstone did not retreat into fundamentalism or anti-intellectualism in his defence of

³⁴ *MR*, July 1891, p. 587.

³⁵ *New York Sun*, 11 Jan 1891, p. 14.

³⁶ *DWB*, *MoG*, p. 235.

³⁷ Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 236.

³⁸ *WEG*, *Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture*, p. 217.

faith. As will be discussed presently in relation to the second debate with Huxley, he was also sympathetic to some of the trends current in biblical criticism. The statesman was convinced of the essential unity of all truth.

Among the adversaries Gladstone would face in his defence of faith, none was more formidable than T.H. Huxley. He is best remembered for his creation in 1869 of the neologism ‘agnostic’ and had flourished in his later years as an amateur theologian and philosopher.³⁹ He was among an elite class of Victorian intellectuals who exploited Darwinism to create a new form of disbelief that upset the traditional alliance between natural theology and science.⁴⁰ Huxley’s agnostic epistemology is referred to as ‘evolutionary naturalism’ and ‘scientific naturalism’, the latter being his coinage in 1892. A mostly self-taught man of middle-class birth, Huxley was determined to oppose the Oxbridge-dominated culture and carve out a genuine professional niche for scientists. Much of his grudge toward the Anglican establishment was doubtless influenced by his early professional struggles. As Frank Turner has contended, tensions between religion and science in the period are traceable first to differences in epistemological worldviews, but in larger part to a professional dimension.⁴¹ His humble beginnings as a surgeon’s apprentice among the Dickensian squalor of London’s dockside slums profoundly affected his views on British social stratification.⁴² And while his subsequent four-year voyage on the HMS *Rattlesnake* had established his scientific credentials, upon his return in 1850 it

³⁹ See Adrian Desmond, *Huxley: From Devil’s Disciple to Evolution’s High Priest* (Reading, MA: Perseus Books, 1994)

⁴⁰ Bernard Lightman, ‘Huxley and Scientific Agnosticism: The Strange History of a Failed Rhetorical Strategy’, *British Journal for the History of Science*, 35 (2002), pp. 271- 289.

⁴¹ See Frank M. Turner, *Between Science and Religion: The Reaction to Scientific Naturalism in Late Victorian England* (New Haven, CT: 1974)

⁴² Desmond, *Huxley*, p. xiv.

took him five years to find a suitable professional situation. Only by swallowing his pride and nurturing patronage among gentlemen of science was he able to secure a position at the Royal School of Mines.⁴³ The rest, of course, is history. Huxley would scrape his way to the top of his newly created profession with a chip on his shoulder.

Placing the first Gladstone-Huxley controversy in its proper context requires some acquaintance with developments in the thorny relationship between science and religion in the latter half of the nineteenth century. If it is too much to say that religion and science were at war during the period (as a formidable body of scholarship attests) it was nevertheless true that in the latter third of the century a sometimes hostile debate raged over how they would be reconciled, if at all.⁴⁴ Study of the period is made more complex by the fact that within religion and science there were shifting alignments and dual memberships were commonplace throughout the period.⁴⁵ Efforts were being made by Christian men of science and theology to harmonise the biblical creation account with developments in modern science in order to preserve the integrity of both. The emergence of ‘harmonisers’ in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as John Hedley Brooke has so ably documented, came in response to those naturalists of the period whose research raised probing questions about the relationship between science and religious belief. In this regard, Brooke has traced the vital contributions of Linnaeus, Buffon, Hutton, Laplace,

⁴³ Bernard Lightman, *Evolutionary Naturalism in Victorian Britain: The ‘Darwinians’ and their Critics* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2009), Essay 1, p. 9.

⁴⁴ See John Brooke and Geoffrey Cantor, *Reconstructing Nature: The Engagement of Science and Religion* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1998); Lindberg and Ronald L. Numbers, ‘Beyond War and Peace: A Reappraisal of the Encounter between Christianity and Science’, *Church History*, 55 (1986), pp. 338-354; David N. Livingstone, *Darwin’s Forgotten Defenders: The Encounter Between Evangelical Theology and Evolutionary Thought* (Vancouver, British Columbia: Regent College Publishing, 1984); James R. Moore, *The Post-Darwinian Controversies: A Study of the Protestant Struggle to Come to Terms with Darwin in Great Britain and America, 1870 – 1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979)

⁴⁵ David C. Lindberg and Ronald L. Numbers, ‘Beyond War and Peace: A Reappraisal of the Encounter between Christianity and Science’, *Church History*, 55 (1986), pp. 338-354 p. 354.

Lamarck, Cuvier, Lyell and Darwin.⁴⁶ Viewed collectively, their historical models of cosmology, geology and organic development challenged conventional notions about the fixity of species, a literal six-day creation, a universal Noachian deluge and Bishop Ussher's six-thousand-year-old earth. Notable among early nineteenth-century harmonisers was the Scotsman Thomas Chalmers who popularised the gap theory, a hypothesis resting upon a protracted period of time situated between verses 1 and 2 of Genesis 1. Such a construct enabled one to account for the growing body of paleontological evidence without sacrificing the notion of a literal six-day creation. His fellow Scottish Free Churchman, the amateur naturalist Hugh Miller, took a more radical approach by devising the day-age theory. Here the creation narrative was conceived to represent a vast geological epoch of time that accorded with established scientific geological periods.⁴⁷ In America, the theories of Miller and Chalmers were imbibed and expounded most notably by evangelical geologists Benjamin Silliman of Yale University and Edward Hitchcock, the eventual President of Amherst College in Massachusetts.⁴⁸ Through such means it was possible in most cases to pursue modern science and maintain harmonious relations with traditional theology, biblical literalists notwithstanding.

By appealing to natural laws, Christian apologists believed they could blunt the sword of those who sought to reinforce infidelity on the basis of science—a threat of paramount concern for Gladstone in his battle for belief. In *The Reign of Law* (1867), another of Huxley's public Christian adversaries, the Duke of Argyll, contended that

⁴⁶ John Hedley Brooke, *Science and Religion: Some Historical Perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 226-263.

⁴⁷ Livingstone, *Darwin's Forgotten Defenders*, pp. 12, 13.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 11-22.

natural law was the expression of God's will and 'the delight, the reward, the goal of Science'.⁴⁹ With such a view Scottish Presbyterian James Orr (1844-1913) even interpreted Darwinian natural selection as a principal mechanism of divine teleology.⁵⁰ In Gladstone's case, it is noteworthy that prior to his acknowledgement of evolution as fact in the mid-1890s, his earlier inclination that it 'may be true' was based on its unique ability to broaden the design argument.⁵¹ Moreover, in America an evangelical alliance of Christian Darwinists formed including Harvard botanist Asa Gray, Yale geologist James D. Dana and Oberlin Professor of New Testament and editor of the *Bibliotheca Sacra* George Frederick Wright.⁵² As we shall see presently, both Dana and Wright came to Gladstone's defence in the first dispute with Huxley, albeit not in the context of evolution. When assessing the period, therefore, 'Genesis versus geology' should not be seen as code for religion versus science, but rather as an instance of the constant adjustments made in interpreting the Bible and nature in order to keep them in harmony.⁵³ For much of the period, such an accord was preserved through natural theology.

Among the more popular harmonising schemes of the period was the view that the creation of the heavens and the earth in chapter one of Genesis accorded with the 1796 nebular hypothesis of French naturalist Pierre-Simon de Laplace. Gladstone, as we will see presently, used it in both essays to exhibit proof of the essential harmony between

⁴⁹ Ronald L. Numbers, 'Science Without God: Natural Laws and Christian Beliefs', in Lindberg and Numbers, eds, *When Science and Christianity Meet* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003) p. 280.

⁵⁰ Livingstone, *Darwin's Forgotten Defenders*, pp. 140-144.

⁵¹ DWB, *MoG*, pp. 236-238.

⁵² Livingstone, *Darwin's Forgotten Defenders*, p.70.

⁵³ Mott T. Green, 'Genesis and Geology Revisited' in Lindberg and Numbers, eds, *When Science and Christianity Meet* p. 150.

science and the Bible.⁵⁴ For reconcilers it was an essential tool for explaining the puzzling chronological fact that in Genesis light was created prior to the sun. Armed with Laplace, harmonisers could illustrate that light without sun was plausible because it was generated by a chemical reaction that resulted from the concentration of gaseous matter into nebulae. Laplace's theory of the formation of the solar system was unique for its time in that it rested on an entirely naturalistic cosmology with no reference to a creator. In time, however, harmonisers brought Laplace comfortably within the fold of Christian teleology. Among its chief baptisers was Professor Arnold Guyot of Princeton University. He surmised from it a 'great cosmogonic week' wherein each of the 'days' of Genesis represented a lengthy epoch.⁵⁵ Laplace gained general acceptance in the United States from the work of Guyot and Dana in the 1850s which, as Ronald Numbers has effectively demonstrated, tilled the soil of American thought in preparation for Darwin.⁵⁶ James McCosh, the evangelical president of Princeton University until 1888, also endorsed the nebular theory as an apologetic device.⁵⁷ Although it was becoming dated among scientific elites, Gladstone's use of nebular theory would certainly not have been viewed as out of the mainstream of educated American evangelical thought in 1885.

An 1884 article in the *New Englander and Yale Review* informs us that the harmonising scheme based on the nebular hypothesis became widely known in the United States in the latter half of the century, primarily through Dana's popular *Manual of*

⁵⁴ DWB, *MoG*, pp. 239-240.

⁵⁵ Numbers, 'Science Without God', p. 277.

⁵⁶ See Ronald L. Numbers, *Creation by Natural Law: Laplace's Nebular Hypothesis in American Thought* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1977)

⁵⁷ Numbers, *Creation by Natural Law*, pp. 88-104.

Geology, first published in 1863.⁵⁸ In Anglo-American currents of thought, harmonisers possessed mainstream dominance in both science and theology well into the nineteenth century. Yet the first Gladstone-Huxley controversy was at bottom a return to the disputes over Genesis and geology that had occupied the early decades of the nineteenth century. In 1887, George Frederick Wright reported in the *Independent* that there had been a lull in such discussions related to reconciling Genesis and geology.⁵⁹ Additionally, by 1885 even debates over Darwin were in reprieve compared with the previous decade as most American scientists by then were evolutionists of one type or another.⁶⁰ The liberal *Andover Review* expressed regret for ‘the revival of this old discussion, and the appearance of so influential a person as Mr. Gladstone in the character of a reconciler of the book of Genesis with science’.⁶¹ With his 1885-86 essays, Gladstone had joined a well established, albeit fading, group of harmonising scientists and exegetes.

A dispute with Huxley had certainly not been Gladstone’s motive for publishing ‘Dawn of Creation and of Worship’ in the November issue of the *Nineteenth Century*. The catalyst had been *Prolegomena to the History of Religions* (1884) by the renowned French theologian Albert Reville. The work had recently been translated into English by the German philologist and orientalist Max Müller. In it Reville had not only referred to the Genesis cosmogony as myth, but, of even greater distaste for Gladstone, he had attacked the theory of primitive revelation and named the statesman as one of its chief proponents.⁶²

⁵⁸ ‘Notices of New Books’, *New Englander and Yale Review*, 43 (1884), pp. 591-594.

⁵⁹ *IND*, 15 September 1887, p. 5.

⁶⁰ Livingstone, *Darwin’s Forgotten Defenders*, p. 77 and Moore, *Post-Darwinian Controversies*, p. 10.

⁶¹ *AR*, March 1886, p. 296.

⁶² Albert Reville, *Prolegomena of the History of Religions*, trans A.S. Squire (London: Williams and Norgate, 1884), pp. 41-44.

As a writer for the *Catholic World* imagined, ‘had Genesis alone been attacked it is possible that the attraction would not have been sufficient; but when the domain of Homer was invaded also the well-worn axe leaped forth as fresh as ever, and Mr. Gladstone plied it vigorously in both directions’.⁶³ For Gladstone, primitive revelation was a pet doctrine and foundational to his Homeric scholarship, but at variance with the new evolutionary anthropology being advocated by scholars such as Reville and E.B. Tylor.⁶⁴ The concept of primitive revelation postulated that primordial humanity possessed an original disclosure of the Almighty passed down from Adam and Eve, which then degenerated over many ages into superstition and myth.⁶⁵ For Gladstone the model was seen most visibly in the Greeks of the Homeric age who bore residual aspects of revelation in religion while the mythological elements were considered contaminated by falsehoods.⁶⁶ In ‘Dawn of Creation’ Gladstone presented a detailed defence of degeneration *contra* Reville, but, as we will see, Huxley glossed over it and turned the debate towards palaeontology.

While Gladstone was busy setting Reville straight and, more importantly, consumed with Irish political matters, Huxley had been in convalescence. In May 1885 ‘Darwin’s bulldog’ was forced by illness into semi-retirement. He resigned his professorship at the Royal School of Mines and six months later the presidency of the Royal Society. He remained on the governing body of a few other institutions but seldom attended meetings.⁶⁷ In addition to poor physical health he was suffering a debilitating bout of depression brought on by the recent death of his daughter Mady. In a letter to

⁶³ CW, December 1886, p. 317.

⁶⁴ James C. Livingston, *Religious Thought in the Victorian Age: Challenges and Reconceptions* (New York: Continuum, 2007), pp. 234-44.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 263-64.

⁶⁶ DWB, *MoG*, pp. 142-167, 201-213.

⁶⁷ Paul White, *Thomas Huxley: Making the “Man of Science”* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p.138.

Frederick Farrar of 6 December 1885 he conveyed the means by which his desire for intellectual battle was restored. It had been the result of reading Gladstone's 'Dawn of Creation' in the *Nineteenth Century*:

. . . the perusal of it sent me blaspheming about the house with the first healthy expression of wrath known for a couple of years—to my wife's great alarm—and I should have "busted up" if I had not given vent to my indignation.⁶⁸

To Huxley's disgust, the statesman had dared to address issues related to science. The affront of an amateur writing in the name of natural science was multiplied by his attempt to harmonise the four-fold order of creation found in Genesis 1 with the findings of modern palaeontology. Huxley, of course, had other axes to grind with Gladstone. He was a vocal critic of the statesman's Irish policy and also blamed him for the recent death of General Gordon in Khartoum.⁶⁹ Roused from his melancholy, Huxley immediately penned a scathing rebuke entitled 'The Interpreters of Genesis and the Interpreters of Nature', which appeared in the December number of the *Nineteenth Century*. As William Irvine wrote so colourfully, 'Gladstone had administered the electric shock which finally precipitated the clouds of melancholy, setting off a splendid storm of polemical thunder and lightning.'⁷⁰ Two aging champions of the Victorian era were about to cross swords.

Gladstone's critique of Reville's *Prolegomena* had not only triggered a vigorous riposte from Huxley, but it also led to a wider symposium in the *Nineteenth Century* that unfolded over several months as a series on the Genesis cosmogony and Olympian mythology. In addition to the contributions of Gladstone and Huxley (two articles each)

⁶⁸ The Huxley File <<http://aleph0.clarku.edu/huxley/letters/85.html>> accessed 19 March 2011.

⁶⁹ Desmond, *Huxley*, p. 539.

⁷⁰ William Irvine, *Apes, Angels, and Victorians: The Story of Darwin, Huxley, and Evolution* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1955), p. 311.

there were submissions by Reville, who delivered a rejoinder to Gladstone, as well as Max Müller and the freethinker E. Lynn Linton. In 1886 all seven articles were published as a whole by The Truth Seeker Company of New York under the title *The Order of Creation: The Conflict between Genesis and Geology*, from which Gladstone's and Huxley's essays are quoted hereafter.⁷¹ For the American press interest in the forum lay almost exclusively in the exchanges between Gladstone and Huxley, which naturally found greater resonance because of the weight of their celebrity. The content quite possibly had a role to play as well. The *New York Tribune* may have expressed the unwritten opinion of other publications when its correspondent declared: 'the question whether Olympian deities as described in the Iliad and the Odyssey possess attributes indicating an historical relation to Genesis is not one of interest or vital importance'.⁷² The *Andover Review* stated that the controversy about the biblical account of creation was only incidental to the discussion over Olympian mythology, but nevertheless 'upon it the interest of the debate hangs, and to it the larger portion of the published articles is devoted'.⁷³ Gladstone's 'Dawn of Creation' had initiated a larger discussion encompassing several scholarly topics, but, as will be seen presently, in the United States the more appealing clash of titans was not to be found in ancient Greece but in modern-day Britain.

In 'Dawn of Creation' Gladstone's harmonising scheme revolved around cosmology and palaeontology. 'It is enough for my present purpose', the apologist asserted, 'to point to the cosmogony, and the fourfold succession of the living organisms as

⁷¹ W.E. Gladstone and others, *The Order of Creation: The Conflict Between Genesis and Geology* (New York: The Truth Seeker Company, 1886)

⁷² *NY.Trib.*, 19 Jan 1886, p. 4.

⁷³ *AR*, March 1886, p. 296.

entirely harmonizing'.⁷⁴ The lone plank in Gladstone's palaeontological argument, and the source of Huxley's wrath, was his dubious assertion that the four-fold succession of living organisms alluded to in Genesis 1—water population, air population, land population, mankind—had been 'so affirmed in our time by natural science, that it may be taken as a demonstrated conclusion and an established fact'.⁷⁵ He had no doubt obtained a false sense of confidence in his model because he had sent proofs of the article to Sir Richard Owen, the venerable English biologist and palaeontologist who in a reply made no challenge to Gladstone's order.⁷⁶ The second major exhibit in Gladstone's argument was an explication of the nebular hypothesis. The statesman had confidently gone on the offensive against Reville, but would soon be knocked back on his heels in defence against the unanticipated onslaught of Huxley.

Huxley's reply to Gladstone was entitled 'The Interpreters of Genesis and the Interpreters of Nature'. In it he traced the fossil record through several geological periods to dismiss Gladstone's four-fold model. His assault placed strong emphasis on the 'creeping things' of chapter 1:25, 26. If this creative work of the 'fifth day' referred to reptiles, he insisted, Genesis had incorrectly placed them after the creation of birds. If not, the narrative failed to account for the age of reptiles. In deconstructing Gladstone's four-fold succession, Huxley insisted its assumptions were spurious. 'Natural science has nothing to say', he insisted, 'in favour of the proposition that they succeeded one another in the order given by Mr. Gladstone.'⁷⁷ A fundamental problem was that certain species of

⁷⁴ W.E. Gladstone, 'Dawn of Creation and of Worship', *The Order of Creation: The Conflict Between Genesis and Geology* (New York: The Truth Seeker Company, 1886), p. 22.

⁷⁵ WEG, 'Dawn of Creation', p. 25.

⁷⁶ DWB, *MoG*, p. 239.

⁷⁷ Huxley, 'Interpreters of Nature', p. 48.

air population such as the bat and winged insects must have had antecedents on land. Moreover, the development of water, air and land proceeded contemporaneously, not in successive stages as described in Genesis. ‘It is not true’, Huxley demanded, ‘that the species composing any one of the three populations originated during any one of the three successive periods of time, and not at any other of these.’⁷⁸ Huxley pounced on Gladstone’s reference to the dated science of Cuvier, Herschel and Whewell as supplying expert testimony for his reconciliation of the fossil record with Genesis. The only name relevant to palaeontology, Huxley insisted, was Cuvier, but ‘he cannot now be called a recent authority’.⁷⁹ Huxley was confident that his reply had eviscerated Gladstone. ‘Do read my polishing off of the G.O.M.’ he wrote to Herbert Spencer, ‘I am proud of it as a work of art, and evidence that the volcano is not yet exhausted.’⁸⁰ Gladstone had suffered a devastating blow in the first round as Huxley had easily exposed the underlying weaknesses in his essay.

Gladstone followed up with a rejoinder in the January issue of the *Nineteenth Century* entitled ‘Proem to Genesis: A Plea for a Fair Trial’, but not before additional study in the more up-to-date Phillips-Etheridge *Manual of Geology* among other sources.⁸¹ He was especially eager to clarify his use of Cuvier, Herschel and Whewell to support the nebular hypothesis, which, he insisted, was ‘the sole object of Reville’s attack, and the main object of my defence, and which is the largest portion of the whole subject’.⁸² Gladstone also admitted that his use of the expressions water-air-land population were

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

⁸⁰ T.H. Huxley, Letter to Herbert Spencer, 4 December 1885, *The Huxley File* <<http://aleph0.clarku.edu/huxley/letters/85.html>>

⁸¹ DWB, *MoG*, pp. 239-241.

⁸² WEG, ‘Proem to Genesis: A Plea for a Fair Trial’, in *Order of Creation*, p. 75.

terms that carried no scientific meaning. Sufficiently chastised, he willingly discarded them for fishes, birds, mammals and man.⁸³ Yet if the statesman had returned with a slightly more nuanced reply, he did not back away from what he believed was the essential truth of his four-fold succession, but instead simply changed the words and added a fifth stage to include plant life: ‘The five origins, or first appearances of plants, fishes, birds, mammals, and man, are given to us in Genesis in the order of succession in which they are also given by the latest geological authorities.’⁸⁴ With regard to his methodology, Gladstone insisted he was not asserting an exact accordance between science and the Mosaic writer. To make his case he drew once again on the probabilistic apologetics of Bishop Butler.⁸⁵ The matter of the proem was ‘essentially one for the disciples of Bishop Butler’, he wrote.⁸⁶ Taken as a whole, the contents of Genesis could demonstrate ‘such proofs of truth divinely imparted’ so as to ‘command assent and govern practice’.⁸⁷ Huxley, he complained, ‘holds the writer [of Genesis] responsible for scientific precision’. ‘He thinks it a lecture. I think it is a sermon.’⁸⁸ In the important matter of the ‘creeping things’, Gladstone admitted that reptiles existed at an early date but relegated them to ‘a sort of appendage to mammals’.⁸⁹ In a spurious bit of reasoning, he suggested Genesis treated them in a ‘loose manner’ because they were a ‘family fallen from greatness’ lying ‘outside the use and the dominion of man’.⁹⁰ With his second essay Gladstone had bolstered his argument but had still left himself open to attack by Huxley.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 91, 92.

Huxley's rejoinder came in March 1886 with 'Mr. Gladstone and Genesis'. He attacked Gladstone's description of reptiles as a 'family fallen from grace' and directed the discussion back to whether or not they were included in Genesis among 'everything that creepeth upon the ground'. He then referenced Leviticus 11:29-31 as evidence that the same Hebrew word for 'creep' was used there in regard to reptiles. Additionally, Gladstone's revised five-fold succession was no more 'affirmed in our time by natural science' than was the four-fold order. 'Natural science appears to me', Huxley rebutted, 'to decline to have anything to do with either; they are as wrong in detail as they are mistaken in principle.'⁹¹ Huxley also addressed the nebular hypothesis. His hesitancy in accepting the harmonising scheme was both exegetical and scientific. The language of Genesis 1:2—'The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep'—was confused by differences among scholars as to the exact meaning of the words, while 'the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters' found no equivalent in Laplace.⁹² Moreover, viewed scientifically, the nebular hypothesis 'assumes the existence of matter having definite properties as its foundation'. Science, Huxley insisted, cannot demonstrate whether that matter is a few thousand years old or if it 'existed as a series of eternal metamorphoses of which our present universe is only the last stage'.⁹³ The scientist had once again effectively rebutted the statesman point-by-point.

American secular papers were largely devoted to Irish matters during the dispute but the religious press was engaged. Judgments critical of Gladstone appeared in the pages

⁹¹ Huxley, 'Mr. Gladstone and Genesis' in *Order of Creation*, p. 142.

⁹² *Ibid.*, pp. 152-155.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

of the liberal religious press. Their primary complaint centred on Gladstone's realist, as opposed to literalist, reading of the Genesis cosmogony. One such review was featured in the recently founded *Andover Review*, the voice of Congregational progressive orthodoxy. The author expressed his admiration for Gladstone as a statesman but criticised 'Dawn of Creation', describing it as 'the second-rate work of a first-rate man'.⁹⁴ Gladstone's attempt to find sufficient evidence, he stated, was doomed from the start and resulted in aiding those who did not accept the Bible as revelation. In addition, the revised language in 'The Proem' had left him 'worse off than before for fishes in scientific terminology are only part of the inhabitants of water mentioned in Genesis'.⁹⁵ Gladstone had damaged the cause he intended to advance. Furthermore, Gladstone's complaint that Huxley 'holds the writer responsible for scientific precision' was unfounded. His pleading in 'The Proem' for a 'statement general' and a 'moral impression' had given up the argument for harmony between Genesis and science.⁹⁶ Espousing the hermeneutics of the New Theology, the reviewer believed the author of Genesis had simply recorded the knowledge of nature that existed contemporaneously. Nevertheless, the Genesis account contained important religious truths because it 'ascribes existence of the universe to a personal God and shows that nature is created by the word of God and should not be worshipped'.⁹⁷ Like Gladstone, the author believed the account contains a sublime teleology in the great purpose realized for mankind because 'it teaches that God created the world and that for a purpose'.⁹⁸ True to its mission of keeping theology in step with modern science, the

⁹⁴ *AR*, March 1887, p. 297.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 298.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 300.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

Andover Review had navigated the middle course between Huxley's metaphysical naturalism and Gladstone's orthodox reconciliation.

A second organ of progressive orthodoxy, the *Christian Union*, also reviewed the essays and came to a similar conclusion. Under the editorship of Congregational liberal theologian Lyman Abbott, the article took issue with Gladstone's realist interpretation of the Genesis cosmogony. 'The first chapter of Genesis is not scientific', its author declared, 'and therefore is not scientifically accurate.'⁹⁹ Modern comparative religious studies also appeared to inform the opinion of the author, who described the Genesis creation narrative as closely resembling those of other ancient civilisations.¹⁰⁰ Appealing next to Christian tradition, the writer advised that the Genesis cosmogony was often regarded as a poem by theologians from Augustine of Hippo to the present. Moses, after all, was not a professor of geology. Lest the reader suppose that the *Union* was in full agreement with Huxley, however, the author insisted the creation account did contain a divine revelation. It was not found in palaeontology or cosmology, however, but in the scripture's ability to enkindle a 'life of reverence and love toward the creator'.¹⁰¹ If read like Wordsworth and not Lyell, the author contended, 'he will find no difficulty in discovering in the great Hebrew poem of praise to the Creator a revelation of God'. 'The Bible does not claim to be profitable for science; it does claim to be profitable for doctrine, that is, for religious instruction.'¹⁰² The *Christian Union* rejected the scientific naturalism of Huxley, but neither was it concordist in its view of Genesis and science. Gladstone was out of step with progressive orthodoxy in his role as a reconciler.

⁹⁹ *CU*, 31 December 1885, p. 4.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

The organs of progressive orthodoxy considered ‘Dawn of Creation’ outdated, but it was not the case that its suppositions arrived in America entirely as an outdated bolt from the blue. Although there had been a lull in such disputes, the nebular hypothesis had made a modest comeback as recently as 1884 through Arnold Guyot’s long awaited release of *Creation; or the Biblical Cosmogony in the Light of Modern Science* (1884). Shortly thereafter James D. Dana published a rejoinder to a critic of Guyot in *Bibliotheca Sacra*. Dana put forward a thoroughgoing endorsement of Guyot’s method of reconciling Genesis with the nebular hypothesis:

If Professor Guyot accepts the nebular theory in his system it is because the early part of the chapter not only is unintelligible without it, but actually teaches it. Thus science explains and illumines the inspired narrative, and exalts our conceptions of the grand events announced. Thus, also, the sacred record manifests its divine origin in its concordance with the latest readings of nature.¹⁰³

Guyot and Dana had spelled out a clear rationale for reconciling Genesis and science helping to prepare Americans for Gladstone’s first essay.

Among the orthodox reconcilers who shared Gladstone’s view of the essential harmony of science and religion were a couple of detractors for whom Gladstone’s mode of disputation proved ineffective. ‘The reply is as crushing as it is civil’, wrote the *New York Tribune* following Huxley’s first reply. ‘And thus through ten pages, he lays bare Mr. Gladstone’s total want of all knowledge of the literature of the subject which he rashly entered upon.’¹⁰⁴ Following the publishing of Gladstone’s ‘Proem’, the *Tribune* faulted the statesman for exposing himself to destructive criticism, both for his use of the four-fold succession and for his revised taxonomy: ‘So crushing an indictment by one of the masters of modern science has forced Mr. Gladstone to change his nomenclature for terms having a

¹⁰³ James D. Dana, *Bibliotheca Sacra*, April 1885, p. 220.

¹⁰⁴ *NY.Trib*, 20 December 1885, p. 12.

definite scientific meaning, and to extend his chain of creative acts in Genesis so as to include six periods'.¹⁰⁵ Nevertheless, the *Tribune* author articulated the popular Christian belief in reconciliation, agreeing with Gladstone's assertion that there is a 'substantial harmony between geology and the Mosaic account.'¹⁰⁶ Gladstone had Guyot and Dana on his side as reconcilers of the nebular hypothesis, the reviewer added. With such great minds in his corner, Huxley could not simply dismiss Gladstone as 'an old fogey'.¹⁰⁷ The *New York Tribune* had expressed sympathy with Gladstone's harmonising of the Mosaic writer with science, but considered his methods to be flawed.

The *Catholic World* came to a similar conclusion as the *New York Tribune*, but from the perspective of Roman Catholic doctrine. The journal, founded by Isaac Hecker, but under the *de facto* editorship of A. F. Hewit, who would assume control following Hecker's death in 1888, reflected the trend towards openness to the sciences. The 1870s and 80s had witnessed a more liberal dialogue between science and Roman Catholicism. Previously, under the pontificate of Pius IX, an intellectually stultifying mindset towards scientific advance had prevailed among the church hierarchy. Under Leo XIII (1878-1903), however, a new more engaging approach to contemporary thought had been encouraged.¹⁰⁸ In its 1886 response to the Gladstone-Huxley affair, the *Catholic World* restated the foundational Catholic conviction that 'the truth of the sacred writings cannot conflict with the true reasonings and experiments of human sciences'.¹⁰⁹ On Genesis and the Proem, the *World* was openly sympathetic to the day-age theory. And while the article

¹⁰⁵ *NY.Trib.*, 19 January 1886, p. 4.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ See Barry Brundell, 'Catholic Church Politics and Evolution Theory, 1894-1902', *The British Journal for the History of Science*, 34 (2001), pp. 81-95.

¹⁰⁹ 'The Cosmogony and its Critics', *CW*, 1 December 1886, p. 321.

was largely a critique of Huxley's assault on scripture, it also faulted Gladstone for the novelty of the four-fold succession. It was difficult enough to make things coincide, genus for genus, species for species, but, the author quipped, Gladstone attempted three divisions: 'the Scriptural, the scientific, and the Gladstonian'.¹¹⁰ Thus it was easy for Huxley to demonstrate the lack of harmony with received classifications, forcing Gladstone to change to established terms in his second article wherein the statesman had paralleled the Mosaic narrative with that given by Professor Phillips' manual.¹¹¹ If Hecker and the *Catholic World* were critical of the course Gladstone had steered in his first essay, they were in essential agreement with his belief that Genesis and science could be reconciled. Despite criticisms of his four-fold succession, Gladstone had found common ground with Catholics and conservative Protestants on the important doctrine of biblical realism concerning matters of science.

Gladstone had provoked criticism among his fellow orthodox reconcilers, but he also had his enthusiastic advocates. In this category he once again found his most solid supporters among evangelicals. Although none within this group wrote to agree with his use of the four-fold succession, they did not single it, or other flaws, out for special rebuke. Perhaps the greatest boon to Gladstone's position came from James D. Dana who wrote a brief statement of approval in a letter that was published in the August 1886 edition of the *Nineteenth Century*. In it Dana acknowledged that he agreed 'in all essential points with Mr. Gladstone, and believe that the first chapters of Genesis and Science are in accord'.¹¹² In an article following Gladstone's 'Proem to Genesis', a writer for the *New York*

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 327.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 327.

¹¹² James D. Dana, *Nineteenth Century*, 20: 114, 1886 Aug, p. 304.

Evangelist observed that Gladstone ‘has never written anything more vigorous or conclusive in his long career’.¹¹³ Gladstone, he stated, had thoroughly refuted Huxley and demonstrated the remarkable agreement between the first chapter of Genesis and the discoveries of science. Moreover, he added, Gladstone’s conclusions were supported by the most eminent American geologists. The author was in all likelihood referring to the Dana letter. Another prominent evangelical who supported Gladstone in print was the theologian George Frederick Wright. In an article published by the *Independent* entitled ‘Discussions on Genesis and Geology’ he gave a ringing endorsement to Gladstone’s harmonising strategy. Especially with his rejoinder to Huxley, Wright felt that Gladstone had ‘brought his skillful and powerful dialectic to bear upon the subject’. ‘As a specimen of controversial literature’, he insisted, ‘in its best aspects the last paper of Gladstone has few equals.’¹¹⁴ Moreover, he believed the inspiration of the Bible had rarely been defended with so much force, scholarship and eloquence combined. Wright was prepared to uphold Gladstone’s rejoinder as ‘a classic upon the subject treated’¹¹⁵ He also supported the harmony between Genesis and the nebular hypothesis and contended that Gladstone’s rejoinder ‘makes Professor Huxley appear painfully narrow and puerile in his criticisms’.¹¹⁶ The evidence from periodical literature suggests that evangelicals believed Gladstone triumphed over Huxley and that the statesman was a leading spokesman for reconciling science and Genesis.

Gladstone had found a measure of approval at the time ‘Proem to Genesis’ was published, but by the late 1890s some opinions had changed. In at least two instances

¹¹³ *NYE*, 11 Feb 1886, p. 2.

¹¹⁴ *IND*, 15 Sep 1887, p. 5.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

papers published opinions contrary to those offered in 1886. An 1897 review of Gladstone's *Later Gleanings* in the *New York Tribune* reported that the issues of science and theology were declining in importance because 'the opinion gains ground among theologians that, after all, the interests of religion do not require them to be reconciled'. If in 1886 the *Tribune* refused to dismiss Gladstone as an 'old-fogey', it now considered him to be 'conservative and old-fashioned in his theology'.¹¹⁷ By 1907, the *Independent*, which had published the George F. Wright article, now made mention of Gladstone in an article entitled 'Teaching Genesis'. 'Few scholars would now undertake to defend,' it stated, 'the opinions represented a generation ago by Gladstone, Guyot, Dana and Dawson'. Interest had passed from the question of the relation of Genesis to science to that of Genesis and the Babylonian and Assyrian tradition.¹¹⁸

Between their two disputes, both Gladstone and Huxley continued to publish as apologists for belief and disbelief respectively. In 1888 Gladstone became engaged in a high-profile debate with the American agnostic Robert Ingersoll, a primary topic of the next chapter in this study. For his part, Huxley wrote a spate of articles attacking Christian belief and practice. His most important was 'Agnosticism' (1889), which was part of a symposium on unbelief in the *Nineteenth Century*.¹¹⁹ James Knowles had enlisted Huxley to write it as a rejoinder to Dr Henry Wace, Principal of King's College, London, who had recently delivered a lecture decrying agnostic thought. Knowles then expanded the forum to include several others including Mary Ward, author of the popular and controversial novel *Robert Elsmere* (1888), which is also a topic of the next chapter. Huxley's

¹¹⁷ *NY.Trib*, 19 October 1897, p. 8.

¹¹⁸ *IND*, 24 January 1907, p. 225.

¹¹⁹ T. H. Huxley, 'Agnosticism', *Nineteenth Century*, 144 (1889), pp. 169-194.

‘Agnosticism’ essay inadvertently became the chief catalyst for the second Gladstone-Huxley dispute, for in it the scientist had performed a sceptical dissection of the New Testament account of Jesus and the Gadarene swine miracle. Meanwhile, Gladstone had been busy penning a series of seven essays for the popular Christian journal *Good Works* and could not resist going on the attack against his former foe over the Gadarene narrative.¹²⁰ The articles were subsequently published in book form as *The Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture* and are quoted hereafter from that monograph. In his final submission for *Good Works*, Gladstone took direct aim at Huxley’s ‘Agnosticism’ essay. Thus, in the second dispute it would be Gladstone who initiated the clash of arms with Huxley, whom he referred to as the ‘Achilles of the opposing army’.¹²¹

For an agnostic scientist like Huxley, the Gadarene narrative could not withstand the scrutiny of modern science. ‘Belief in demons and demoniacal possession’, he observed in ‘Agnosticism’, ‘is a mere survival of a once universal superstition.’¹²² Huxley insisted that since the phenomenon of ‘possession’ fell within the domain of pathology, an inescapable dilemma existed: either Jesus believed in demon possession or the synoptic gospels had mistakenly attributed the belief to him. In either event, he reasoned, the authority of the Christian faith was undermined.¹²³ He also raised the legal issue of property damage relative to the destruction of the herd of swine. The gospel writers, Huxley suggested, had ‘no inkling of the legal and moral difficulties of the case’. The injury inflicted on the swine was ‘a wanton destruction of property’.¹²⁴ In his critique of

¹²⁰ DWB, *MoG*, pp. 242, 243.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 293.

¹²² Huxley, ‘Agnosticism’, p. 172.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

Huxley in *Good Works*, Gladstone decided not to address the issue of demon possession because, he stated, ‘a physiological judgment is not for me to discuss’.¹²⁵ His answer to the charge of property damage, however, was to insist that since the Gadarene owners of the swine were Jews they were in violation of the Mosaic Law. Therefore, by casting the demons into the herd of swine Jesus had effected a ‘vindication of the law’.¹²⁶ The parameters of the forthcoming second Gladstone-Huxley *Nineteenth Century* symposium had been framed. Two of England’s most venerable public figures were about to engage in a debate about porcine catastrophe.

Huxley inevitably seized upon another opportunity to assault his former rival, and in this instance required no coaxing from Knowles. In a letter Huxley wrote: ‘My dear Knowles, Will you have room in December No. for just a few pages on this topic in reference to the G.O.M.'s remarkable hypothesis?—Hasn't the 'Impregnable Rock' come out yet?’¹²⁷ Along with the letter Huxley attached a doodle he had drawn of Gladstone riding upon a pig. The December 1890 number of the *Nineteenth Century* included Huxley’s ‘The Keepers of the Herd of Swine’. The preceding letter to Knowles suggests the rather disingenuous nature of Huxley’s opening line in which he had ‘fondly hoped that Mr. Gladstone and I had come to an end of disputation’.¹²⁸ Gladstone answered in the February 1891 issue with ‘Professor Huxley and the Swine Miracle’, and then Huxley rejoined in March with ‘Illustrations of Mr. Gladstone’s Controversial Method’. The discussion centred in general on the historical question of whether the city of Gadara was

¹²⁵ Gladstone, *Impregnable Rock*, p. 298.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 303.

¹²⁷ Huxley to James Knowles, The Huxley File, accessed 28 June 2011.

¹²⁸ Huxley, ‘The Keepers of the Herd of Swine’, *Nineteenth Century*, December 1890, p. 967.

Jewish or Hellenic. Huxley drew upon the work of Josephus and the contemporary German scholar Emil Schürer's *A history of the Jewish people in the time of Jesus Christ* (1886-1890) to argue that Gadara was among the ten cities of the Decapolis and therefore Hellenistic in constitution. Gladstone, however, believed Schürer to be unreliable and maintained that Huxley had misread parts of Josephus. He then countered by appealing to the third-century Alexandrian church father Origen along with Henry Milman's *History of the Jews* (1830) and Alfred Edersheim's *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (1883) to build his case that Gadara was under Jewish law even if comprising a mixed ethnic populated. 'But to suppose the swineherds to have been punished by Christ for pursuing a calling which to them was an innocent one', Gladstone contended, 'is to run counter to every law of reasonable historical interpretation.'¹²⁹

Huxley responded in 'Illustrations' with an assertion that the law of Moses nowhere prohibited raising pigs, merely the eating of them and touching their dead carcasses. Moreover, he introduced with some delight his observation that Jesus did not act as an agent of Jewish law by sending the demons into the swine, but was the victim of a diabolical suggestion made by the demons to avoid the more severe punishment of the abyss. Huxley then proceeded to detail the 'seven heretical propositions' made by Gladstone in which the statesman had misinterpreted him and the record of the history of Gadara. Finally, he reiterated his initial point from the 'Agnosticism' essay concerning demonology and the gospels. Behind the question of ancient heathen demonology, he said, 'there lies the question of the credibility of the Gospels, and of their claim to act as our

¹²⁹ Gladstone, 'Professor Huxley and the Swine Miracle', *Nineteenth Century*, February 1891, p. 358.

instructors’.¹³⁰ As always, Huxley had insisted upon and had been granted the last word by Knowles.

While the second controversy provoked fewer published responses in America than the first, those that did appear were of mixed opinion. Praise came mostly from the religious press, which no doubt felt the sting of Huxley’s direct assault upon biblical integrity and the miraculous works of Jesus. Notable criticism of Gladstone appeared in the *Chicago Daily Tribune*. ‘The most conspicuous feature of this discussion, however, is its folly’, the *Tribune* reported, ‘because the two would never agree and one would never convince the other.’¹³¹ Upon the release of *The Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture*, Lyman Abbott, who in an 1889 essay took exception to Huxley’s ‘Agnosticism’ piece, now published a review critical of Gladstone’s book in the *Christian Union*. Gladstone, he wrote, had failed to address crucial issues germane to modern criticism such as the difference between revelation and inspiration. Although the book contained the thoughts of a great thinker, the statesman lacked ‘the time to give the problem great study’, the *Union* concluded.¹³² A similar sentiment was expressed in the literary and arts review *The Critic*, which insisted that ‘In every chapter are the patent evidences of Mr. Gladstone’s lack of equipment for the work he has undertaken.’¹³³ The amateur status of Gladstone was also seen as problematic. The *Impregnable Rock* could be helpful for those fearful of

¹³⁰ Huxley, ‘Illustrations of Mr. Gladstone’s Controversial Method’, *Nineteenth Century*, March 1891, p. 466.

¹³¹ *CT*, 24 July 1892, p. 24.

¹³² *CU*, 11 December 1890, p. 799.

¹³³ *The Critic*, 14 Feb 1891, p. 81.

higher criticism, it conceded, but ‘the day of universal scholars is over’.¹³⁴ Gladstone had once again fallen short for those schooled in progressive orthodoxy.

What little favourable commentary did appear came from other religious publications. In an article on higher criticism, a writer for the Quaker organ *Friends’ Review* reported that the *Impregnable Rock* was an ‘exemplary’ work. Gladstone had utilised the tools of critical methodology such as the study of language, antiquities, history and science while maintaining a proper regard for the Bible’s divine origins.¹³⁵ By contrast, Huxley was operating under a ‘lower’ kind of critical methodology because he sought to bring his scientific estimate to bear on the story of the Gadarene swine. For higher criticism wherein the Bible was rightly regarded, the author suggested, ‘we may turn to such a work as that of W. E. Gladstone’, on *The Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture*.¹³⁶ In a review of reviews column, the *Methodist Review* published only this brief summation of Gladstone’s ‘Professor Huxley and the Swine Miracle’: ‘Mr. Gladstone demolishes Professor Huxley’s contention that in the “swine miracle” our Lord did injustice to the owners of the swine, because keeping them “was a lawful occupation.”’¹³⁷ A review of reviews in the *Independent* made mention of the same essay and judged the statesman to be an accomplished scholar: ‘he is better versed in Biblical history and research than Mr. Huxley, and, though far inferior as a controversialist, has certainly come off the victor in this contest’.¹³⁸ However sparingly it appeared, some of the organs of the

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ *Friends’ Review*, 26 (1891), p. 408.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ *MR*, 3 (1891), p. 493.

¹³⁸ *IND*, 26 February 1891, p. 18.

religious press in America perceived Gladstone to be an effective apologist and biblical exegete as a result of his second dispute with Huxley.

In summarising Gladstone's reputation in America at the time of his two *Nineteenth Century* debates with Huxley, several conclusions may be drawn. It has been demonstrated that in 1885-86 Americans had an extremely high regard for Gladstone's statesmanship. For the most part, they lauded his accomplishments during the second government, both with regard to international relations and to the democratic reforms. However, the issue of Irish Home Rule overshadowed most other matters during these months and Gladstone's commitment to it had found widespread approval in the United States both in the secular and religious press. As a result, his reputation as a champion of liberty in America reached new heights and Anglo-American relations were also improved as Fenian violence subsided. It had also brought American evangelicals and Catholics into agreement about the statesman after the two groups had stood on opposite poles of opinion during the Vatican decrees and Bradlaugh affairs.

If the first Gladstone-Huxley dispute had been overshadowed by Irish affairs, it did attract the interest of nationally recognised figures such as liberal Congregationalist Lyman Abbott, evangelical geologist James D. Dana and Oberlin professor George Frederick Wright. To his critics, Gladstone had relied upon outdated scholarship and failed to consider that the relationship between science and theology had been markedly transformed and professionalised by 1885. Leading organs of progressive orthodoxy such as the *Christian Union* and *Andover Review* considered his attempts at harmonising to be unnecessary and even a set-back to the cause of true faith. They shared neither his scientific explanations nor his belief that Genesis contained scientific revelation. Liberal

Protestants shared Gladstone's belief in the dangers of infidelity, but they considered his apologetics to be a thing of the past. A general consensus existed among all groups that in 'Dawn of Creation' he had fallen short in his grasp of scientific matters by use of the four-fold succession. Roman Catholics and moderate Protestants of Gladstone's ilk agreed that in 'Proem to Genesis' he had recovered well and delivered a decisive blow to Huxley. As in previous controversies such as the Vatican Decrees and the Bradlaugh Affair, Gladstone seemingly had the support of most evangelicals. The public endorsements of Dana and Wright had undoubtedly raised his status as a plausible and effective spokesman on issues related to science and theology. The statesman's lack of formal training in science and theology appears not to have been an issue for them.

The second controversy over the Gadarene swine miracle penetrated the popular press even less than had the first. Despite the fact that it included discussion of important issue such as higher criticism and historical geography, it would live in popular memory as an amusing debate over the keeping of pigs. As William Irvine quipped, 'people grew tired of pigs and the controversy died of its own grotesqueness'.¹³⁹ All the same, several important observations about the state of American perceptions of Gladstone may be drawn from the controversy. He clearly emerged from it as a plausible lay theologian in the opinion of evangelicals and orthodox moderates. Despite the trend towards specialisation and professionalism, the statesman was received as a viable and effective Christian apologist. His cautious use of higher criticism appears to have resonated with those portions of the conservative religious community that did choose to write about it.

¹³⁹ Irvine, *Apes, Angels, and Victorians*, p. 328.

Yet, as with the Genesis controversy, his views on higher criticism were out of step with progressive orthodoxy, as Lyman Abbott of the *Christian Union* attested. Abbott, too, hinted at the statesman's amateurism by noting his lack of time in study of the relevant sources. In both controversies Gladstone had found favour with Catholics who generally shared his views on issues of science and religion.

A final observation worthy of mention involves Gladstone's historical role in the period's so-called wars of science and religion. Commentary in subsequent years suggests that his importance may have been over-stated in popular imagination as time passed, and his views on science and religion distorted. Gladstone's first Huxley debate was etched into the memory of future generations through at least three examples in 1897. The first appeared in the April number of *Bibliotheca Sacra*. There Henry Morton, president of Stevens Technical Institute, had composed a history of nineteenth-century reconcilers and had included Gladstone as an equal standard-bearer alongside scientists Guyot, Dana and the Canadian Sir J.W. Dawson.¹⁴⁰ Secondly, and more significantly, Cornell President Andrew Dickson White mentioned Gladstone in his influential *History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom* (1896). White engraved the statesman into popular memory by placing him among 'the last great reconcilers of Genesis and science and the most noted author of efforts to keep geology well within the letter of Scripture'.¹⁴¹ He maintained that Gladstone had designed the skeleton of the structure and decorated it with his skilful rhetoric.¹⁴² However, White insisted, Huxley had shattered its scientific parts. Thus, 'The last great fortress, of the opponents of unfettered scientific investigation was in

¹⁴⁰ Henry Morton, *Bibliotheca Sacra*, April 1897, <Biblical Studies.org.uk>, p. 272.

¹⁴¹ Andrew Dickson White, *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom*, 2 vols (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1896) p. 243.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 244.

ruins', White declared.¹⁴³ The reader of White's narrative is left with the rather disingenuous sense that Gladstone was an enemy of science and progress. Finally, in an 1897 address to Swarthmore College, commencement speaker Frank G. Blair mentioned Gladstone along with the Marquis of Salisbury and Arthur Balfour as representative men of the age in 'declaiming against the dogmatism of science, and demonstrating the rationality of the truths of religion'. On the basis of their pronouncement it could well be believed that religion had 'recovered from her supposed defeat and assumed her ancient seat of glory'.¹⁴⁴ American perceptions of the statesman's role in the historical controversies of the period had become legendary.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 246.

¹⁴⁴ *Friends' Intelligencer*, 3 July 1897, p. 467.

CHAPTER SIX

ROBERT INGERSOLL AND *ROBERT ELSMERE*

[I am] a listener from across the broad Atlantic to the clash of arms in combat between Colonel Ingersoll and Dr. Field on the most momentous of all subjects. William Gladstone¹

Thus wrote the venerable British statesman to his American readers in 1888. The clash he had been listening to, and the combat he now joined, was the ‘Field-Ingersoll controversy’, a symposium on faith and agnosticism in the *North American Review*. In the previous six months the popular journal of literary and cultural commentary had featured exchanges between Dr Henry Field, editor of the Presbyterian *New York Evangelist*, and Col. Robert Ingersoll, the famous agnostic lecturer, author and Republican politician. A subscriber to the *North American*, Gladstone had been reading the debate with keen interest while on holiday in Florence.² His own contribution soon followed, triggering a derisive riposte from Ingersoll and widespread interest in the American press. The ‘Gladstone-Ingersoll controversy’ had begun. During that same month Gladstone published a second piece centred on Christian apologetics, this time aimed at Christian heterodoxy. Appearing in the *Nineteenth Century*, “‘Robert Elsmere’ and the Battle of Belief’ was a review of the controversial novel *Robert Elsmere* by Mrs Humphry (Mary) Ward.³ It told the story of an Anglican clergyman’s loss of orthodox faith and subsequent embrace of the religion of humanity. By 1888 Americans were well acquainted with the

¹ WEG, ‘Colonel Ingersoll on Christianity: Some Remarks on His Reply to Dr. Field’, *NAR*, 146 (1888), p. 481.

² DWB, *MoG*, p. 245.

³ WEG, “‘Robert Elsmere’ and the Battle of Belief”, *Nineteenth Century*, 23 (1888), pp. 766-788.

statesman's public forays into matters theological. A writer for the *Independent* noted fittingly that 'Mr. Gladstone is by taste even more a theologian than a politician'.⁴ Yet to what extent would he be regarded by Americans as an effective Christian apologist in the two disputes of May 1888?

With his review of *Robert Elsmere* Gladstone was confronting what he considered to be the excesses of higher critical methodology. Especially popular among Unitarians, the theology of the Elsmere character was associated with the rationalistic German theology of the Tübingen School. David Strauss's *Life of Jesus* (1835), translated into English by George Eliot in 1845, stood as a pioneering work of the period with its denial of biblical miracles and the divinity of Jesus. Later works of higher criticism, including the Broad Church monograph *Essays and Reviews* (1860) and Ernest Renan's *Life of Jesus* (1863), continued to push the boundaries of unorthodox theology on both sides of the Atlantic. In the United States Harvard Divinity School professors were often its chief proponents.⁵ Mary Ward was the granddaughter of influential Rugby headmaster Thomas Arnold and niece of the poet and essayist Matthew Arnold, both of whom were sympathetic to higher criticism, the latter being more so.

Robert Elsmere was the second of nearly two dozen novels written over the course of Ward's life and reflected the influence of the Arnold family, including her father Thomas 'Tom' Arnold, the literary scholar. Matthew Arnold's *Religion and Dogma*

⁴ *IND*, 3 May 1888, p. 12.

⁵ Gerald Parsons, 'Biblical Criticism in Victorian Britain', in Parsons, ed, *Religion in Victorian Britain*, vol 2, pp. 239-247; and James Turner, *Without God, Without Creed: The Origins of Unbelief in America* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), pp. 141-150.

(1873) played an especially prominent role in its theological themes. Reflecting upon the novel in 1918, Ward wrote: ‘My uncle was a Modernist long before the time. In “Literature and Dogma” he threw out in detail much of the argument suggested in “Robert Elsmere”.’⁶ The novel was also evocative of the ‘honest doubt’ controversy of the previous generation where Ward found inspiration in such crisis-of-faith novels as John Henry Newman’s *Loss and Gain* (1848), Froude’s *Nemesis of Faith* (1849) and Kingsley’s *Alton Locke* (1850).⁷ As a result of *Robert Elsmere*, Ward gained a reputation as the next George Eliot.

In the novel, the protagonist Robert Elsmere had renounced his faith in orthodox Christianity after reading several classic works of higher criticism that he became aware of through his association with the rationalist Squire Wendover. Following his crisis of faith, and the grievous hurt inflicted upon his devout wife, Elsmere found counsel from the agnostic Henry Grey, his old Oxford mentor. Ward had intentionally modelled Grey on the Oxford moral philosopher T. H. Green, the chief British proponent of Hegelian idealism and one of two dedicatees of the novel. Elsmere was conscience-stricken over the hypocrisy of remaining an Anglican priest and renounced his church and orders. With Grey’s guidance he eventually found renewed spiritual vitality by dedicating himself to work among London’s poor as a follower of a purely human Christ. There he founded the New Brotherhood of Christ.⁸ The novel had demonstrated, to the shock of many, that a life committed to works of Christian charity need not be based upon orthodox faith.

⁶ Mrs Humphry Ward, *A Writer’s Recollections* (London: W. Collins Sons & Co. LTD., 1918). p. 235.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 229.

⁸ Gisela Argyle, ‘Robert Elsmere’, *Literary Encyclopedia*
<<http://www.litencyc.com/php/sworks.php?rec=true&UID=2330>> accessed 30 October 2012.

Published in February 1888, the reception of *Robert Elsmere* in the British press was relatively quiet for the first six weeks. The novel gained popularity first by word of mouth, largely as a result of steady library purchases. A wave of negative publicity in major reviews and religious magazines, especially Gladstone's article in May, seems to have accelerated sales.⁹ A closer look at the statesman's entry into the controversy will be instructive going forward. At Mary Ward's request, *Nineteenth Century* owner James Knowles had sent Gladstone a copy of *Robert Elsmere* in the hope of enticing him into writing a review. Ward asked that the statesman should 'befriend' the book and thus increase public awareness. The statesman quickly became engrossed in the novel, vigorously marking its margins as was his reading habit.¹⁰ In a letter to Lord Acton, he described the book as laborious since it was twice the length of a normal novel. At the same time he confessed that one 'could no more stop in it than in reading Thucydides'.¹¹ His great concern, however, was over the theism espoused by Ward, which, shorn of supernaturalism, was 'an inadequate substitute for Christianity'.¹² Gladstone's anxiety over the book prompted him in April to initiate a meeting with Ward at Oxford, an event she welcomed. After two lengthy sessions together she described him in a letter to her husband as 'charming personally, though at times he looked stern & angry & white to a degree'. She also expressed wonderment at her own courage to continue the discussion

⁹ John Sutherland, *Mrs Humphry Ward: Eminent Victorian Pre-eminent Edwardian* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), pp. 125, 126.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

¹¹ William S. Peterson, 'Gladstone's Review of Robert Elsmere: Some Unpublished Correspondence', *Review of English Studies* 21 (1970), p. 444.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 444.

because Gladstone's 'drawn brows were so formidable'.¹³ Their meeting was followed up with the exchange of several cordial letters during April and May 1888. The Anglo-American world would soon read the statesman's verdict on *Robert Elsmere* in the *Nineteenth Century*.

Gladstone's *Nineteenth Century* review was a politely worded critique. He acknowledged the novel's importance as a work of literature for its character development; and he affirmed that it was 'eminently an offspring of the time, and will probably make a deep or at least a very sensible impression; not, however, among mere novel-readers, but among those who share, in whatever sense, the deeper thoughts of the period'.¹⁴ Gladstone saw in Elsmere's work with the Christian Brotherhood a 'devout attempt, made in good faith, to simplify the difficult mission of religion in the world by discarding the supposed lumber of the Christian theology'.¹⁵ 'It is impossible indeed', Gladstone admitted, 'to conceive a more religious life than the later life of Robert Elsmere, in his sense of the word religion.'¹⁶ Nevertheless, it was a new form of religion altogether in his estimation, in that it dispensed with church, priesthood and sacraments. 'It is still required by Mrs. Ward to fly, and to fly as high as ever; but it is to fly without wings.'¹⁷ Gladstone did not hesitate to include critical analysis of its modernist theology and the absence of a proper defence of orthodox Christianity. Ward, he insisted, had 'ransacked' the works of negative

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 452.

¹⁴ Gladstone, 'Robert Elsmere', p. 767.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 777.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

‘speculatists’, but there was no sign that she had ‘made herself acquainted with the Christian apologists, old or recent’.¹⁸ He assaulted what he saw as its primary weakness:

Every page of its principal narrative is adapted and addressed by Mrs. Ward to the final aim which is bone of her bone and flesh of her flesh. The aim is to expel the preternatural element from Christianity, to destroy its dogmatic structure, yet to keep intact the moral and spiritual results.¹⁹

The chief failure of Elsmere’s Christian Brotherhood, according to Gladstone, was that it had emptied Christianity of ‘the soul and springboard of its life’, which he described as ‘the presentation to us not of abstract dogmas for acceptance but of a living and a Divine Person, to whom they are to be united by a vital incorporation’.²⁰ He also vigorously defended the necessity of miracles in Christian belief and traced what he considered to be the ‘evidences derivable from Christian history’.²¹ Detailing the contributions of Christianity to the progress of society was among his principal weapons in defence of orthodoxy.²² Among other things, it had, for example, transformed the world through abolition of slavery and human sacrifice, restoring the position of women in society and proscribing divorce.²³ Gladstone had defended orthodox belief and provided the catalyst for a wider debate of *Robert Elsmere*.

In Britain his essay immediately sparked off a dispute about the larger meaning of *Robert Elsmere*, with articles appearing in the *Contemporary*, the *Quarterly* and the *Nineteenth Century*. It also contributed to a wave of sermons alerting the devout to the

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 778.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 773.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 778.

²² DWB, *MoG* p. 222.

²³ Gladstone, ‘Robert Elsmere’, p. 783.

pernicious theology behind its humanitarian themes.²⁴ Ward herself eventually answered Gladstone in print, but without mentioning his name. In the March 1889 number of the *Nineteenth Century* her response appeared in the form of an essay on biblical criticism entitled ‘The New Reformation’.²⁵ In the United States, sales of *Robert Elsmere* reached even greater heights. John Sutherland, a biographer of Ward, has observed that following Gladstone’s review, and, in the absence of international copyright law, pirated copies were churned out in America by the tens of thousands. By November 1888 an estimated 100,000 copies had been sold in the United States, three times as many as in England.²⁶ Headlines in the *New York Herald* and *Chicago Tribune* proclaimed it the ‘Novel of the Year’.²⁷ Several writers compared Ward to George Eliot, including one in the *New York Herald* who described the novel as ‘occupying more of the attention of the English-reading world than any other work of fiction since “Middlemarch”’.²⁸ Writing in the *North American Review* as part of a symposium on *Robert Elsmere*, the famous abolitionist and suffragist Julia Ward Howe declared: ‘I know of no story, since “Uncle Tom’s Cabin,” whose appearance had excited so much comment and intellectual interest of so high a character.’²⁹ Also drawing comparisons to Harriet Beecher Stowe’s famous novel was the celebrated American author Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr, who in a letter to Ward wrote that

²⁴ Sutherland, *Mrs Humphry Ward*, p. 128.

²⁵ Mary A. Ward, ‘The New Reformation’, *Nineteenth Century*, 25 (1889), pp. 454-480.

²⁶ Sutherland, *Mrs Humphry Ward*, pp. 128-29.

²⁷ ‘Novel of the Year’, *CT*, 7 October 1888, p. 27; ‘Mary Augusta Ward, Author of the Novel of the Year “Robert Elsmere”’, *NYH*, 19 November 1888, p. 8.

²⁸ *NYH*, p. 8.

²⁹ Julia Ward Howe, ‘IV.’, *NAR*, 148 (1889), pp. 109-116.

it was ‘beyond question, the most effective and popular novel we have had since Uncle Tom’s Cabin’.³⁰ *Robert Elsmere* had become a transatlantic phenomenon.

Reviewers of *Robert Elsmere* in the United States were understandably focused on the novel itself rather than on extended comments about Gladstone’s essay. Still, the statesman’s importance was commonly acknowledged, albeit largely in passing references. Thus, for American perspectives of like mind with Gladstone we must look primarily to reviewers of the novel who expressed similar concerns. Aside from Unitarians, American Christians were deeply troubled by its heterodoxy, even if they found redeeming qualities in the literary value of the novel and in its philanthropic themes. A critical reviewer in the *American Catholic Quarterly Review* shared Gladstone’s opinion that its controversial portions were presented as a ‘one-sided argument made in favor of Rationalism and against orthodox Christianity’.³¹ In an article for the *Chautauquan*, the liberal evangelical Lyman Abbott believed it could be praised for its character development, but it was an attempt ‘to reconcile belief in Christianity and rejection of the Christ’.³² He insisted it was little more than a rehash of Renan’s *Life of Jesus* and Arnold’s *Religion and Dogma*.³³ Moreover, in a sermon at his Plymouth Church in Brooklyn, and reprinted in the *Christian Union*, Abbott unequivocally condemned the novel as non-Christian because ‘it does not preserve the essentials of Christianity and discards its accidents’.³⁴ A writer for the liberal *Andover Review* was a bit more enthusiastic about the work than Gladstone, viewing it as a powerful presentation of Christian morality. Nevertheless, the theism of *Elsmere* was not

³⁰ Ward, *Recollections*, p. 248.

³¹ “‘Robert Elsmere’ as a Controversial Novel”, *ACQR*, 54 (1889), p. 268.

³² Lyman Abbott, ‘Robert Elsmere’, *Chautauquan*, 5 (1889), p. 291.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 291.

³⁴ Lyman Abbott, *CU*, 25 October 1888, p. 450.

Christianity, having discarded the ‘need of a Redeemer’.³⁵ A sermon printed in the *Springfield Republican* warned that the theology of the book was ‘an attempt to do away with the machinery of religion and yet retain the spirit of it’. Such a thing was ‘impossible’ without orthodox belief, according to its author, the Congregationalist minister B. W. Pennock of Ware, Massachusetts.³⁶ Regardless of one’s point of view, *Robert Elsmere* had dropped like a bombshell in the United States. American Christians of such divergent viewpoints as Catholics and liberal evangelicals were in basic agreement with Gladstone concerning the inadequacy of the theism portrayed in *Robert Elsmere*.

Evidence of disagreement with Gladstone was not entirely absent from the debate, however. The *New York Herald* printed an excerpt of a sermon by New York Universalist pastor E. C. Bolles. As an unorthodox Christian, he took issue with Gladstone’s contention that Elsmere’s theology was ‘emptied of all that Christians believe to be the soul and source of its life’. ‘I can only hope’ Bolles insisted, ‘that Mr. Gladstone’s political are better than his Christian ideals.’³⁷ A contrary opinion was offered for entirely different reasons by the famous agnostic Robert Ingersoll. Published in the *New York World* and reprinted in the free-thought *Boston Investigator*, his article described Elsmere’s religion as overly ‘conservative’ because of his need to preserve faith, however unorthodox. Although he did not mention Gladstone, Ingersoll certainly articulated the sort of agnostic worldview that the statesman fiercely opposed. The theism of *Robert Elsmere*, Ingersoll complained, was simply ‘an effort to save and keep in repair the

³⁵ ‘Robert Elsmere’, *AR*, 10 (1888), p. 306.

³⁶ B. W. Pennock, ‘Jesus Christ the Corner-Stone’, *SR*, 21 April 1889, p. 6.

³⁷ ‘Robert Elsmere’, *NYH*, 12 November 1888, p. 9.

dungeons of the Inquisition for the sake of the beauty of the vines that have overrun them'.³⁸ Agnostics and unorthodox Christians such as Unitarians and Universalists were understandably out of step with Gladstone on traditional Christian belief.

The most direct and substantive confrontation of Gladstone, however, came from Julia Ward Howe, who was a Unitarian and a frequent speaker in churches. She sarcastically referred to his involvement in the debate over a 'women's novel' as 'an instructive spectacle'.³⁹ Howe took exception to the statesman's orthodox view of fallen human nature and its need for divine redemption, which she believed were out of step with current thought and which she referred to as 'inhumane notions of man'.⁴⁰ 'Mr. Gladstone's criticism of Robert Elsmere', Howe insisted, 'seems to ignore this deliverance, and to insist upon the maintenance of doctrines of divine wrath and miraculous redemption as conditions of true religious belief.'⁴¹ She also took issue with Gladstone's orthodox claims that belief was founded upon miracle and supported by appealing to the authority by which the miracle is asserted. She saw instead a steady progression beyond a primitive church based upon miracles to a church of beauty and charity. To illustrate her point she described religious evolution through the stages of fetishism, polytheism and monotheism.⁴² She wrote:

Mr. Gladstone will hardly deny that this is a rising series, and that, while all of those degrees have their period and conditions of use, it would be irreligious to

³⁸ 'Col. Ingersoll's Opinion of "Robert Elsmere"', *Boston Investigator*, 5 December 1888, p. 1.

³⁹ Howe, 'IV.', *NAR*, p. 110.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 113.

detain upon the lower level those whose minds are capable of attaining the higher one.⁴³

Howe had articulated the theological modernism promoted by most Unitarians and Universalists of the period against Gladstone's orthodox apologetic.

Perhaps the most salient conclusion we can draw regarding American perceptions of Gladstone's *Nineteenth Century* essay is the extent to which they believed his review had influenced the debate over, and increased sales of, *Robert Elsmere*. The literary magazine *The Critic* proclaimed: 'With "Robert Elsmere", or perhaps, to be more exact, with Mr. Gladstone's review of it in the *Nineteenth Century*, Mrs. Ward sprang to notoriety.'⁴⁴ A writer for the *Zion's Herald* stated definitively that the book 'owes its circulation to Mr. Gladstone'.⁴⁵ A critical reviewer for the *Chicago Tribune* insisted it had made a prodigious sensation because clergymen had over-reacted, believing the novel to be dangerous 'because Mr. Gladstone honored the book with a review'.⁴⁶ A 1904 issue of *Harper's Weekly* recorded: 'A review by Mr. Gladstone increased its popularity in many quarters.'⁴⁷ An author for the *Unitarian Review* declared it had become 'the book of the hour in social and ecclesiastical circles' after Gladstone had found its theology dangerous.⁴⁸ Understandably, Mary Ward later took issue with the extent of Gladstone's influence upon her book sales. In her 1918 *Recollections* she recalled that the book had already reached its third edition at the time of Gladstone's piece and there 'was never any doubt about the book's fate'.⁴⁹ However, the estimation continued to find its way into

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ 'The Author of Robert Elsmere', *Critic*, 6 October 1888, p. 167.

⁴⁵ 'Robert Elsmere', *ZH*, 7 November 1888, p. 1.

⁴⁶ 'The "Robert Elsmere" Book', *CT*, 16 December 1888, p. 28.

⁴⁷ 'Books and Bookmen', *HW*, 4 April 1904, p. 572.

⁴⁸ James T. Bixby, "'Robert Elsmere" and its Critics', *UR*, 30 (1888), pp. 420-21.

⁴⁹ Ward, *Recollections* p. 235.

print well into the next generation. A 1920 article in the *Outlook* (formerly *Christian Union*) declared it was ‘Mr. Gladstone’s famous article’ that had started the debate.⁵⁰ Although it is impossible to quantify, given the numerous references to Gladstone in American reviews of *Robert Elsmere*, and considering its brisk sales in the United States thereafter, it is likely his article played a significant role in its popularity. American reporters certainly believed it was so.

As we direct our focus towards Gladstone’s debate with Ingersoll, it should be noted that the controversy received significant copy in the American press in spite of the relative silence of the major New York daily papers. The opinions expressed in the United States will be extremely useful for further evaluation of how the statesman was perceived as a Christian apologist. Given his celebrity, American views of what Gladstone’s presence meant to the controversy will be an important initial consideration. Answering the central question of whether or not they believed Gladstone had triumphed over Ingersoll in the debate will be our primary task. Additionally, in an age of increasing emphasis on specialisation, valuable insight may be gained into the extent to which Americans believed a lay theologian, even one as skilled as Gladstone, could effectively combat the agnostic challenge. An added benefit of this study may be found in laying bare the liberal use made of martial language by writers and copy editors. The often-used metaphor of warfare between modern scientific thinking and revealed religion was incorporated by all sides of press coverage in the Gladstone-Ingersoll controversy. Indeed, as we will see, it was used by the participants themselves.

⁵⁰ ‘The Author of “Robert Elsmere”’, *Outlook*, 7 April 1920, p. 583.

In August 1887 the *North American Review* launched a symposium on faith and agnosticism. The inaugural article was entitled ‘An Open Letter to Robert G. Ingersoll’ by Dr Henry Field, editor of the Presbyterian *New York Evangelist*. Field’s essay was a politely worded but vigorous defence of the existence of God along with the doctrines of the atonement, regeneration, eternal judgment and the divinity of Christ—all of which Ingersoll had frequently attacked in his speeches and writings. Ingersoll’s ‘Reply to the Rev. Henry M. Field’ appeared in the November 1887 number. It was an iconoclastic rejoinder to Field and was laced with Ingersoll’s typical combination of sceptical sarcasm and lofty secular morality. Field then fired back with a response that was followed by yet another rejoinder by Ingersoll and the exchanges were soon labelled the ‘Field-Ingersoll Controversy’. Gladstone’s entry appeared in the May 1888 number of the *North American*. There he unleashed ‘Colonel Ingersoll on Christianity: Some Remarks on his Reply to Dr. Field’. It was a bold defence of orthodox faith that included a lengthy reprimand of the agnostic’s irreverent prose. Ingersoll’s return volley was innocuously entitled ‘Col. Ingersoll to Mr. Gladstone’ and appeared in the subsequent edition.⁵¹ The popular series would be sustained for over a year and was dominated by Ingersoll, who contributed four articles. A larger-than-life transatlantic battle between faith and agnosticism had broken out.

Before looking at the details of the debate and its reception in the American press, it will be instructive for the sake of context to examine the developments of agnosticism in late Victorian America. Agnosticism in America was part of a larger Anglo-American freethought movement that flourished in the latter half of the nineteenth century. By no

⁵¹ Robert G. Ingersoll, ‘Col. Ingersoll to Mr. Gladstone’, *NAR*, 146 (1888), pp. 601-640.

means unified, freethinkers held a common rejection of revealed religion and a general disregard for clerical authority. They ranged from unorthodox Christians through agnostics to outspoken atheists. In the United States they were active in the Midwest as well as on the east coast.⁵² The post-Darwinian period of 1875 to 1914 was the high-water mark for the influence of freethought in America. The period witnessed a torrent of new free-thought publications like the *Boston Investigator* and D. M. Bennett's *The Truth Seeker*. Freethought organizations such as the National Liberal League and the Rationalist Association of North America were also on the rise. The 1875 dedication of the Thomas Paine Memorial Hall in Boston stands as a powerful symbol of the movement's ascent to a measure of respectability, as does the 1876 founding of the nonsectarian Johns Hopkins University where T. H. Huxley was a featured speaker for its inaugural exercises.⁵³ Freethinkers were generally united around the issues of free speech, women's rights, opposition to capital punishment, as well as prison and asylum reform, but their *cause célèbre* was public education. The movement encompassed a broad range of disciplines and was strengthened in America by the expansion of public schools and libraries in the post-war decades.⁵⁴

If there was a Victorian crisis of faith in the English-speaking world during the latter half of the century, it was not because thinking people were abandoning Christianity in droves. As Timothy Larsen's work informs us, any master narrative about the triumph

⁵² See Fred Whitehead and Verle Muhrer, *Free-Thought on the American Frontier* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1992); and Sydney Warren, *American Freethought, 1860-1914* (New York: Gordian Press, 1966), 19-44.

⁵³ "Huxley on Universities," *NYT*, 13 Sep 1876, p. 2; and for importance of Johns Hopkins University as a challenge to Old Protestantism see Mark Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1992), p. 365; and Susan Jacoby, *Freethinkers: A History of American Secularism* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2004), pp. 151-156.

⁵⁴ Jacoby, *Freethinker*, pp. 151-156.

of doubt over faith must be balanced against testimonies of conversions and reconversions to faith by a number of prominent secularists.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, infidelity and secularism were increasing in cultural influence during the latter decades of the century, a period of perceived crisis for men like Gladstone who feared the threat that disbelief posed to Christian civilization.⁵⁶ Like their evangelical counterparts, freethinkers of the period were intensely moralistic. Many agnostics, including Ingersoll, rejected the Bible's veracity on ethical grounds that were quite similar to those of the deists in the previous century. That is, much that the Bible taught was itself considered immoral. Agnostics frequently heaped scorn upon traditional orthodox doctrines such as eternal torment in hell and the substitutionary atonement, and were especially derisive of the wrathful deity of the Old Testament.⁵⁷ Victorian agnostics had abandoned faith, but they often clung tightly to morality. An 1865 journal entry by Leslie Stephen captures the sentiment: 'I now believe in nothing, to put it shortly; but I do not the less believe in morality.'⁵⁸ As James Turner has observed, for Victorian agnostics, 'moralism was the peak that still stood, prominent in its isolation, after other beliefs had eroded'.⁵⁹ Robert Ingersoll embodied this worldview and was its most militant American spokesperson.

Ingersoll's lectures and writings were laced with diatribes against the immorality of Jehovah and his followers. In his *North American* rejoinder to Gladstone, for example, he accused the Old Testament God of no less than endorsing murder, cruelty to animals,

⁵⁵ See Timothy Larsen, *Crisis of Doubt: Honest Faith in Nineteenth-Century England* (Oxford UP, 2009).

⁵⁶ See Edward Royle, ed., *The Infidel Tradition from Paine to Bradlaugh* (London: Macmillan Press, 1976); and Royle, *Victorian Infidels* (Manchester UP, 1974).

⁵⁷ Turner 'The Immorality of Belief' in *Without God, Without Creed*, pp. 203-225.

⁵⁸ Leslie Stephen, Journal, 26 January 1865, quoted in Frederic William Maitland, *The Life of Leslie Stephen* (London, 1906), p. 144, cited in Turner, *Without God Without Creed*, p. 203.

⁵⁹ Turner, *Without God*, p. 203.

bloodlust, slavery, genocide, polygamy and the subjugation of women.⁶⁰ ‘That what [*sic*] you call unbelief’, Ingersoll insisted, ‘is only a higher and holier faith.’⁶¹ Ingersoll’s rejection of Christianity, he claimed, resulted from his rigorous Calvinist childhood under his clergyman father, the primary catalyst being the doctrine of eternal punishment.⁶² He rose to the rank of colonel in the Union Army during the Civil War and later gained national prominence at the 1876 Republican National Convention where he placed the name of James G. Blaine in nomination for the presidency.⁶³ A spell-binding orator, his lectures often attracted thousands and ranged over issues well beyond agnosticism. Known as ‘The Great Agnostic’ to his supporters and ‘Robert Injuresoul’ to his critics, Ingersoll was clearly the spokesman of the period’s rising tide of secularism.⁶⁴ Prior to his rejoinder to Gladstone, the *New York Sun* ran a story suggesting that the enormous advanced demand for the publication was due largely to anticipation of reading Ingersoll’s lively prose.⁶⁵ The pairing of America’s greatest infidel with Britain’s foremost Christian statesman made for profitable copy in the American press.

In his *North American* article Gladstone devoted significant space to what he considered the colonel’s ‘tumultuous method’, rebuking the outspoken infidel for failing to approach the subject matter with ‘deep reverential calm’.⁶⁶ Ingersoll’s disrespect had violated the laws of social morality, Gladstone insisted, because ‘the name of Jehovah [is]

⁶⁰ Ingersoll, ‘Col. Ingersoll to Mr. Gladstone’, pp. 609-15.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 603, 604.

⁶² Robert Ingersoll, quoted in Eva Ingersoll Wakefield, *The Life and Letters of Robert G. Ingersoll* (London: Watts & Co., 1952), p. 6.

⁶³ Roger E. Greeley, ed., *Ingersoll: Immortal Infidel* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1977), p. xi.

⁶⁴ Jacoby, *Freethinkers*, pp. 158-64.

⁶⁵ ‘Col. Ingersoll’s Popularity’, *New York Sun*, 2 June 1888, p. 4.

⁶⁶ WEG, ‘Colonel Ingersoll on Christianity’, p. 484.

encircled in the heart of every believer with the profoundest reverence and love'.⁶⁷ For the devout statesman, Ingersoll's cheekily worded rejoinders to Dr Field were no doubt seen as a breach of Bishop Butler's rules for fair and cautious methodology in debate. By contrast, Ingersoll's intemperate style was to 'ride an unbroken horse, and to throw the reins upon his neck'.⁶⁸ We will see presently that his insistence that the debate should be conducted with reverence was exploited by Ingersoll in his rejoinder and by other reviewers as well. Like Field, Gladstone defended traditional Christian belief and the literal truth of Bible stories such as those of Jephthah and Jonah, which the colonel had scornfully dismissed in his exchanges with Field, but the statesman belaboured the issue in terms of methodology. Among other things, he challenged the colonel's claim that Darwin had discredited belief. Gladstone asserted, 'there is no colorable ground for assuming evolution and revelation to be at variance with one another'.⁶⁹ Unlike strict biblical literalists, he believed evolution presented little problem for a theistic worldview if one could discern true religion and sound science. His piece sparked immediate reaction in the American press and a scathing return blast from Ingersoll.

Ingersoll's rejoinder began with an obligatory nod of respect to the statesman for 'the inestimable services that you have rendered, not only to England, but to mankind'.⁷⁰ With sufficient niceties dispensed, the balance of the essay was every bit the iconoclastic screed his readers had come to expect. He turned Gladstone's own weapons against him with biting sarcasm: 'If you will read again the twenty-eighth chapter of Deuteronomy', Ingersoll demanded, 'you will find how Jehovah, the compassionate, whose name is

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 484.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 508.

⁶⁹ WEG, 'Remarks', p. 491.

⁷⁰ Robert G. Ingersoll, 'Col. Ingersoll to Mr. Gladstone', *NAR*, 146 (1888), p. 601.

enshrined in so many hearts, threatened to use his power.’⁷¹ This was a reference to the many curses Jehovah promised to inflict upon the disobedient. And again, regarding the eighteenth chapter of I Kings, where Elijah mocked and then murdered the prophets of Baal, Ingersoll ridiculed Gladstone further and railed against the Old Testament deity:

Do you consider that the proper way to attack the God of another? Did not Elijah know that the name of Baal was encircled in the heart of every believer with the profoundest reverence and love? Did he violate the laws of social morality and decency?⁷²

Ingersoll went on to predict the eventual death of dogma as the human mind advanced with science, which was the ‘enemy of fear and credulity’, providing ‘education and liberty to the human race’, refining ‘every noble thought’ through art, music and drama, and, above all, teaching ‘that all our obligations are to sentient beings’.⁷³ The agnostic concluded by aiming one last incendiary retort at Gladstone’s Butlerian sensibilities:

And after all, it may be that to ride an unbroken horse with the reins thrown upon his neck as you charge me with doing gives a greater variety to the senses, a keener delight, and a better prospect of winning the race than to sit solemnly astride of a dead one, in deep reverential calm, with the bridle firmly in your hand.⁷⁴

Gladstone was not to be granted a rejoinder by Knowles, perhaps in order to bring in another prominent figure into the debate. The duty fell instead to Cardinal Manning. The symposium was sustained for more than a year and attracted several prominent authors. Yet it was the single joust between Gladstone and Ingersoll that had captured most of the attention in the American press.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 610.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 609.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 639, 640.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 640.

The Gladstone-Ingersoll dispute had attracted fairly robust reporting in American papers, despite the relative silence of the New York daily papers, but there was noticeable silence from the *American Catholic Quarterly* and the *Catholic World*, both of which had regularly taken issue with modern critics of the church. Quite possibly Gladstone's handling of the Bradlaugh affair along with bitter memories of his Vatican Decrees pamphlets had restrained Catholic endorsement for his essay. Nevertheless, the heavyweight matchup between Gladstone and Ingersoll became the catalyst for a surge in editorials and printed excerpts.

The joust quickly became known as the 'Gladstone-Ingersoll Controversy'. *Zion's Herald* rated Gladstone's entry into the debate 'epochal' because 'the greatest of English statesmen and orators' had taken up his pen in the cause of Christian truth, and the *Chicago Tribune* believed the dispute was 'invested with fresh interest' because Gladstone 'combats the positions of Mr. Ingersoll with the zeal and vigor of youth'.⁷⁵ The *New York Tribune* reported that Ingersoll's riposte to Gladstone was hugely popular and had pushed sales of the June issue of the *North American Review* towards the 100,000 mark, well in excess of its competitors.⁷⁶ It was among the journal's most successful symposiums, a feature introduced by its owner-editor Alan Thorndike Rice. Editors had adopted a similar business model in Britain. James Knowles of the *Nineteenth Century*, for example, stage-managed symposiums and even hung pictures of current disputants in his office. Such controversies could prove highly profitable as witnessed by T.H. Huxley's 'Agnosticism'

⁷⁵ 'Gladstone and Ingersoll', *ZH*, 2 May 1888, p. 140; 'Gladstone's Reply to Ingersoll', *CT*, 29 April 1888, p. 28.

⁷⁶ *NY.Trib*, 9 June 1888, p. 6.

piece that ran through four editions.⁷⁷ As Rice's June sales figures reveal, by enlisting Gladstone into the *North American Review* symposium Rice had found an ideal foil for Ingersoll. He was eager to exploit the duel, as were other American publications in its aftermath.

Among American reviewers of Gladstone's 'Remarks' there was a general consensus that his fame had transformed the *North American Review's* symposium. His fellow participants were certainly impressed. 'Little did we imagine', wrote Dr Field, 'when writing the "Open Letter to Robert G. Ingersoll" that the progress of the controversy would draw into it the greatest living Englishman.'⁷⁸ A Chicago clergyman proclaimed it an important event in the religious world, which had now become 'still more notable that the Grand Old Man has been drawn into the great debate'.⁷⁹ One measurable result of Gladstone's presence was increased sales for the *North American*. As of 17 May 1888 the *New York Evangelist* reported that the numbers containing the Field-Ingersoll discussion had passed through ten and twelve editions, something the author believed to be a 'nearly unexampled in the circulation of such dignified and costly reviews'.⁸⁰ By the end of May, however, the single number containing Gladstone's article had already swollen to its fifty-seventh edition, roughly 30,000 copies by the estimate of the *Evangelist*.⁸¹ The *North American* continued to pour out edition after edition of the symposium until there were no fewer than fifty or sixty thousand extra copies sold.⁸² Americans supplied him with

⁷⁷ Desmond, *Huxley*, p. 571.

⁷⁸ Henry Field, *NYE*, 3 May 1888, p. 4.

⁷⁹ 'Gladstone and Ingersoll', *Chicago Daily Inter Ocean*, 29 April 1888, p. 4.

⁸⁰ *NYE*, 17 May 1888, p. 4. The *NAR* was sold for 50 cents compared with daily newspapers that generally sold for 2 cents.

⁸¹ *NYE*, 31 May 1888, p. 4. Extra editions did not equal the number printed in the first run for regular subscribers. Extra editions commonly consisted of 500 copies but sometimes were no more than 250.

⁸² *NYE*, 29 November 1888, p. 4.

flattering epithets to demonstrate their admiration. The *Methodist Review* called him a ‘giant’ who held Ingersoll pygmy-like in his hands.⁸³ In the *Philadelphia Inquirer* he was a ‘giant among men’, and the writer dubbed him with that most Victorian of traits, manliness: ‘Mr. Gladstone appears in the discussion frankly and nobly, every inch a man.’ And, perhaps most flattering of all, he was ‘a modern St. Paul in his union of perspicuity and logic’.⁸⁴ A correspondent for the *Raleigh News and Observer* offered some of the most colourful martial language: ‘The aged champion deals with the rampageous Bob from the serene heights of faith, [and] impales the flippant infidel on the point of the spear of truth and holds him up to the scorn of all properly disciplined minds.’⁸⁵ Gladstone had brought the weight of his celebrity to the debate and had piqued interest in the forum.

Americans were convinced that Gladstone had stamped the debate with his own celebrity, but to what extent did they believe he had vanquished his agnostic foe? An unqualified and resounding yes came primarily from evangelicals. There was predictable praise in Henry Field’s *New York Evangelist*. In commending the article to his readers, Field himself was exuberant, calling it ‘a specimen of masterly reasoning’, and noting that ‘Few things which Mr. Gladstone has written have impressed us more with his versatility and power.’ The article, he said, had ‘far exceeded expectations’ considering that Gladstone was deeply absorbed in public affairs and was still able to ‘discuss questions quite outside of the sphere of a statesman’.⁸⁶ An author for *Zion’s Herald* called Gladstone’s ‘Remarks’ ‘magnificent’ because he had punctured the sophistries of Ingersoll with his pen and demonstrated that the attacks of the agnostic had not penetrated the

⁸³ ‘The Magazines and Reviews’, *MR*, 4 (1888), p. 622.

⁸⁴ ‘Gladstone on Ingersoll’, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 4 May 1888, p. 4.

⁸⁵ ‘Mr. Gladstone on Bob Ingersoll’, *Raleigh News and Observer*, 1 May 1888, col A.

⁸⁶ Henry Field, *NYE*, p. 4.

citadel of Christian truth.⁸⁷ Among other things, Gladstone had effectively answered Ingersoll's claims that evolution and revelation were at variance with one another. Similarly, the *Methodist Review* had high praise for the 'Remarks'. It was a 'brilliant article by the Hon. W.E. Gladstone, in which he literally tears to pieces the tissue of fallacies which made up Colonel Ingersoll's "Reply to Dr. Field"'.⁸⁸ A writer for Lyman Abbott's *Christian Union* lauded Gladstone's assault on Ingersoll. Among other things, he had mercilessly exposed his 'misquotations of Scripture ... his philosophical inconsistencies ... [and] the essential immorality of Mr. Ingersoll's method'.⁸⁹ Gladstone had effectively corrected Ingersoll's assertion that the Bible had condoned child sacrifice through the stories of Abraham and Jephthah. Moreover, his paper had displayed the following characteristics: 'delicate irony, combined with perfect courtesy, his spiritual interpretation of Scripture, and his insight into and unveiling of the profounder truths of spiritual experience'.⁹⁰ Abbott and the *Christian Union* were convinced that Gladstone had successfully defended the faith, which among advocates of progressive orthodoxy appears as an exception. The evangelical press had embraced Gladstone's defence of faith with few reservations.

Reservations were in evidence, however, among a few of Gladstone's American evangelical supporters. Writing in *Zion's Herald*, former United States Congressman Charles Littlefield believed Ingersoll was out-argued by Gladstone, but asked whether it was sensible to honour the agnostic with a response: 'Is it wise? Has Mr. Gladstone done much more than to dignify and give publicity to Ingersoll's brilliant sentences and

⁸⁷ 'Gladstone and Ingersoll', *ZH*, 2 May 1888, p. 140.

⁸⁸ *MR*, 4 (1888), p. 622.

⁸⁹ 'Mr. Gladstone on Mr. Ingersoll', *CU*, 3 May 1888, p. 547.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 547.

plausible and captivating statements?’⁹¹ Littlefield believed Gladstone helped only to sell magazines and bring Ingersoll’s views to prominence: ‘If a dividend was to be declared in this debate, would not the profits be divided in about this order – infidelity first, *North American Review* second, and Christianity third?’⁹² Although a writer for the *Methodist Review* believed Gladstone had prevailed in the debate, he expressed similar concern: ‘one cannot help regretting that the incorrigible skeptic may gain some prestige among the thoughtless because the English statesman accepts him as a foreman worthy of his steel’.⁹³ Another religious publication, the influential *Independent*, had similar misgivings. It failed to see what advantage could come out of giving voice to Ingersoll, other than to the publisher. Thus, at least some Christians who shared Gladstone’s distaste for disbelief viewed his entry into the dispute as a double-edged sword. Questions had been raised about the prudence of the controversy.

If there was unqualified and questionable support for Gladstone, he also had his detractors. Ingersoll was an American hero at the nationally-circulated, freethought *Boston Investigator*, which was highly energized by the controversy. No paper in the study covered the debate as devotedly as the *Investigator*. Editorials and letters to the editor about the controversy abounded for days, nearly all of which were critical of Gladstone’s ‘Remarks’ and effusive in praise for Ingersoll. There were also freethought lectures held on the controversy. Of note was a 20 May 1888 address delivered in Boston by the popular Ingersoll acolyte W.M. Chandler – dubbed ‘the Young Ingersoll’ – for the express

⁹¹ Charles A. Littlefield, ‘Is it Wise?’ *ZH*, 1 August 1888, p. 242.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 242.

⁹³ *MR*, 4 (1888), p. 622.

purpose of answering Gladstone.⁹⁴ The event took place before the Ingersoll Secular Society and was staged conspicuously in Investigator Hall at the Paine Memorial. The *Boston Investigator* printed the text in full.⁹⁵ Chandler cast his hero Ingersoll as the ‘Hercules of Free Thought’ for dispatching Dr Field and now Gladstone, who, Chandler insisted, had been enlisted solely for his greatness as a man, not for his greatness as a theologian – a back-handed yet noteworthy compliment. Chandler’s lecture was one of the most detailed, if partisan, critiques of the ‘Remarks’ from any quarter. He roundly attacked Gladstone’s defence of Jephthah for the sacrifice of his daughter to Jehovah. Taunting the statesman with his own words, Chandler urged his listeners to ‘look upon that sickening picture, and then try to compose your mind in a state of “deep reverential calm”’.⁹⁶ Like Ingersoll, Chandler found Gladstone’s reconciliation of Darwin and Genesis thoroughly unconvincing. He concluded his remarks with an apt military metaphor based on the American Revolution, boasting that England’s ‘most illustrious statesman must hand his lance to America’s most illustrious orator and debater, as did Cornwallis his sword to Washington at Yorktown’.⁹⁷ Chandler believed Gladstone had been thoroughly vanquished.

In November 1888 the influential freethinker and editor of the *Boston Investigator*, Lemuel K. Washburn, also addressed the Ingersoll Secular Society on the *North American* symposium.⁹⁸ Washburn alleged that ‘the entire “thinking world” had given the victory to

⁹⁴ W.M. Chandler, ‘He Stands Alone’ *Boston Investigator*, 9 May 1888, p. 6.

⁹⁵ W.M. Chandler, ‘Gladstone vs. Ingersoll: A Lecture’, *Boston Investigator*, 13 June 1888, col. A.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ L.K. Washburn, ‘Christianity No Encouragement to Intelligence or Morality: A Lecture’, *Boston Investigator*, 12 December 1888, p. 1.

Ingersoll'.⁹⁹ It had been cruel to raise the hopes of the faithful with promises that the great Englishman would snap infidelity asunder in his mighty hands. With derision, Washburn declared: 'Mr. Gladstone was read, pitied, and forgotten. A "deep, reverential calm" followed. But it was the calm before the storm.'¹⁰⁰ Freethinkers had predictably given the match to Ingersoll. For them, Gladstone's apologetics had failed to penetrate the citadel of unbelief.

The *Christian Union* notwithstanding, Christians who embraced a liberal and heterodox Unitarian theology were far more critical of Gladstone than their conservative co-religionists. At the same time, they were by no means supporters of Ingersoll and they generally sympathized with Gladstone. Under the title 'Aggressive Infidelity Using its Advantage' the one-time conservative Calvinist, but by 1888 liberal, *Andover Review* used the controversy to highlight how dogmatic theology had misrepresented Christianity and given unbelief like that espoused by Ingersoll its principal advantage. The author commended Gladstone for recognizing that Ingersoll's reply to Field had addressed a very limited section of Christianity, that of Calvinist orthodoxy. Indeed the statesman had declined to be held bound by Christian tenets that came from 'some hole and corner of its vast organization; and not the heavenly treasure', a reference to strict Calvinism, which Gladstone could not 'undertake to defend all along the line'.¹⁰¹ The article largely sympathized with Gladstone, but it also suggested that his 'Remarks' had failed to persuade the less educated: 'Mr. Gladstone addresses the bench; the bench sees that the jury is wrong, but the jury does not see that the bench is right. Meantime, what shall be

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ WEG, 'Remarks', pp. 482, 507.

done about the jury?’¹⁰² Gladstone’s article, therefore, was an effective advocacy for educated and discriminating minds, but it was not the apologetic approach required to combat the aggressive and popular infidelity of Ingersoll.¹⁰³

The prominent Unitarian and former Harvard professor Frederic H. Hedge wrote an article ‘Atheism’ for the *Unitarian Review* that touched upon the controversy. Hedge was concerned primarily with the inadequacy of naturalistic proofs in the fight against unbelief, but in the final two paragraphs he offered his perspective on the debate between Gladstone and Ingersoll. The less than edifying spectacle featured disbelief in its crudest form as represented by Ingersoll, while at the same time Christianity had been poorly represented by the venerable statesman:

Mr. Gladstone, the most commanding figure at present in English politics, and a great scholar in secular learning, is no theologian, and, with his obsolete idea of the literal inspiration and historic truth of the Old Testament, is no match for Col. Ingersoll: he offers an easy mark for the assaults of his formidable antagonist.¹⁰⁴

Hedge wondered aloud why Allen Thorndike Rice did not bring some approved theologian into the arena. The unspoken answer, of course, was magazine sales. Despite Gladstone’s prominent reputation, Hedge concluded that his defence of belief had not succeeded.

Rice was determined to keep the popular symposium alive and in July 1888 he enlisted five prominent authors from various fields of knowledge to contribute under the title, ‘The Combat for the Faith: The Field-Ingersoll-Gladstone Controversy’. None of the five endorsed Gladstone’s method, let alone declared him a winner in the debate. The novelist and liberal social reformer Elizabeth Stuart Phelps acknowledged that Gladstone

¹⁰² ‘Aggressive Infidelity Using its Advantage’, *AR*, 54 (1888), p. 639.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 642.

¹⁰⁴ Frederic H. Hedge, ‘Atheism’, *UR*, 2 (1888), p. 122.

was a ‘distinguished statesman whose scholarship, dignity, and repose have given value to the conflict if they have not won the day’.¹⁰⁵ Nevertheless, neither Field nor Gladstone had succeeded, in her opinion, because there was no premise to the debate and thus all participants were firing at random. Phelps suggested as a starting point for debate the anachronistic nature of ecclesiastical creeds. She contended that they were outdated, ‘a fact as simple and inevitable as changes in orthography, etymology, philosophy, science. All other forms of truth are subject to the law of variation in progress. Religious belief is no exception.’¹⁰⁶ Phelps’ other criticism reflected the trend toward specialization in the period: ‘Where are the specialists of the occasion? Where are the experts in exegesis? In theology? In the most practical and renowned successes of the ministry of the living faith?’¹⁰⁷ None of the three major participants possessed sufficient qualifications, she insisted. Lay theologians like Gladstone had lost credibility among the new intelligentsia.

Of the remaining participants in the forum, the only direct commentary on Gladstone came from Frederick R. Courdert, the eminent New York jurist. He sympathized with Gladstone but judged the ‘Remarks’ a failure. For Courdert, a devout Roman Catholic, it was scarcely possible that Field and Gladstone could have ‘written so many pages without some good result’.¹⁰⁸ Gladstone’s affinity for Butlerian methodology was again at issue. He had ‘entered the arena shorn of his best advantages and exposed to receive blows which the very nature of the controversy forbade him to return with effect’.¹⁰⁹ Courdert attributed this to the fact that the combatants were not bound by the same rules or weapons.

¹⁰⁵ Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, ‘The Real Issues’, *NAR*, 380 (1888), p. 2.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ Frederick R. Courdert, ‘The Combatants’, *NAR*, 147 (1888), p. 28.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

Gladstone was handicapped by his reverence and earnestness for the cause of revealed religion, whereas Ingersoll was free to descend into irreverence and sophistry. Courdert reprimanded Gladstone because ‘he complains in tones of aggrieved surprise that Col. Ingersoll does not conform to *his* rules of controversial discussion’.¹¹⁰ This was yet another reference to Gladstone’s reproof of Ingersoll for his lack of reverence. Courdert took the statesman to task for his strenuous objections to Ingersoll’s tone: ‘Is it disrespectful to ask why that eminent champion of the Christian religion entered upon a contest wherein he must have known that the same objectionable features would be repeated and probably reproduced in an aggravated form?’¹¹¹ The statesman had thrown aside his armour and blunted his sword when he had proposed in the ‘Remarks’ to ‘decide for ourselves, by the use of the faculty of reason given us, the great questions of natural and revealed religion’.¹¹² For Courdert, the fatal flaw in Gladstone’s article was his concession, however much qualified, to justify his conclusions according to reason and common sense – a direct assault on his use of Butlerian methodology.

Courdert argued further that by engaging Ingersoll on his terms, Gladstone had been misled into fruitless arguments about the literal truth of stories about Jephthah and Jonah. He also insisted that Gladstone would have better served his cause by expounding on what Christianity has done and is doing for the human race. The system of Christian belief was interwoven with all the progress of the last eighteen hundred years and, regrettably, ‘none more wisely and eloquently than Mr. Gladstone could have warned society of the dangers and evils which a reckless eagerness for untried systems and an

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 31.

impatient sufferance of whatever *is*, may produce.¹¹³ This was an interesting observation considering that Gladstone had used just that approach in his *Robert Elsmere* review. This, however, had not been his tack in the ‘Remarks’. Instead, Courdert insisted, Gladstone had left Ingersoll ‘the master of an undisputed field’.¹¹⁴ For Courdert, Gladstone had not provided the needed weaponry in the battle against the daunting challenges posed by the newly liberated infidelity.

In the final analysis, Gladstone’s participation in the two controversies was noteworthy for several reasons. In the *Robert Elsmere* debate American orthodox Christians, both conservatives and progressive, expressed points of agreement with Gladstone. Like him, they perceived that Ward had inadequately represented the arguments of orthodox apologetics; and they were also critical of the theism represented in the character of Elsmere. Like Gladstone, they held that belief in miracles and the human need for divine redemption were indispensable. Among heterodox Unitarians and Universalists, however, the opposite was the case. They warmly embraced the novel and concurred with the views of its protagonist. Julia Ward Howe provided the most detailed critique of Gladstone and of orthodox belief. Echoing the theology of German higher criticism, she found his orthodox views to be the residual influence of primitive religious belief. Freethought agnostic perspective was provided by Robert Ingersoll. Representative of American infidelity, he found the book overly conservative in its efforts to retain some semblance of religious devotion to Jesus. There was, however, near universal agreement that Gladstone’s *Nineteenth Century* article played a significant role in the popularity of *Robert Elsmere* and that he had been the catalyst for wider debate about its meaning.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

By entering the American ‘clash of arms’ in the conflict between Field and Ingersoll, the revered statesman had stimulated greater interest in the debate and his name became part-and-parcel of the popular *North American Review* symposium. He provoked an array of opinions about how Christianity should meet the challenge of agnosticism. American perceptions of Gladstone’s success as a Christian apologist in the Ingersoll dispute were mixed, but his participation provided opportunities for all interested parties to take advantage of his presence in the forum: Allen Thorndike Rice sold many more magazines; champions of orthodoxy and infidelity found a high-profile celebrity whom they could laud or loathe in order to rally their troops to battle; and liberal-minded Christians were given a larger forum to challenge both conservative orthodoxy and radical scepticism.

There was perhaps much more at stake for Gladstone than the \$1,200 he reportedly received for the essay.¹¹⁵ This was after all a battle for the very welfare of mankind. He was convinced that he could beat back agnosticism, armed in part with the methods of Bishop Butler. Freethinkers were predictably unanimous in their conviction that Gladstone had suffered humiliating defeat at the hands of Ingersoll. Liberal evangelicals were perhaps the group he most needed to win over, but having already imbibed deep draughts of the New Theology they judged his attack on infidelity to have fallen short of the mark. And as had been the case in the *Elsmere* controversy, heterodox Unitarians viewed the statesman’s theology to be out of keeping with modern currents of thought. Furthermore, there was at least some sentiment that he lacked the specialized knowledge needed for the debate. Even though some support for Gladstone could be found in mainstream

¹¹⁵ ‘The Reply’, *Boston Investigator*, 9 May 1886, p. 6.

newspapers, conservative evangelicals stood nearly alone, at least as far as published opinion would suggest, in their belief that Gladstone had beaten Ingersoll. There was also some uneasiness, even among them, as to the wisdom of confronting the great infidel. Nevertheless, in both disputes Gladstone had represented traditional Protestant Christianity well for those of like mind, which doubtless represented a majority of church-going Americans in 1888. His views had aligned more closely with those of liberal evangelicals in the *Elsmere* matter, but that is not to say he had lost their admiration during the Ingersoll debate. In both instances Gladstone was widely perceived to have brought greater attention to the debate. However, in the context of élite education and culture his apologetics were considered passé both in style and substance.

CHAPTER SEVEN

BISHOP BUTLER AND REMEMBRANCE

There not only will the people of England, but tens of thousands of Americans, pause over the hallowed spot where rests all that is mortal of William E. Gladstone. Henry M. Field¹

In the final decade of his life Gladstone remained a relevant voice on matters of religious and political significance on both sides of the Atlantic. As we have seen, in religion he had published *The Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture* (1890), debated Huxley and Ingersoll and, as we shall discuss presently, in 1896 had fulfilled his life-long ambition by publishing the *Works of Joseph Butler* in two volumes accompanied by *Studies Subsidiary to the Works of Bishop Butler*, a work devoted to analysis of the Anglican theologian's major themes and methods. In public affairs he had spoken decisively on issues such as divorce law, trade policy, bimetallism and copyright law.² Moreover, with his second attempt at Home Rule in 1894, the centerpiece of his fourth premiership, the statesman had remained immensely popular in America despite its failure to become law. In 1894 journalist George Washburn Smalley gave insight into Gladstone's status in the United States as an icon of democracy. 'I take it', he observed, 'that what has made Mr. Gladstone an idol in America is the belief that he, more than any other, has been the representative of the people of England and the champion of their interests.'³ Like many admirers in Great Britain, for large numbers of Americans Gladstone remained 'the people's William' well into advanced age.

¹ Henry M. Field, 'William E. Gladstone', *NYE*, 26 May 1898, p. 7.

² For a larger discussion of these issues see Gerlach, *British Liberalism and the United States*, pp. 133-152.

³ *Ibid.*

The final installment of our study will primarily cover the years 1896 and 1898. The former year witnessed the arrival of Gladstone's much anticipated scholarship on Bishop Butler and the latter his death on 19 May 1898. As we have documented, opinions about the statesman as a Christian apologist had generally been mixed in his previous religious disputes. Examination of the 1896 literature will provide important clues about Gladstone's reputation as a Christian scholar and insight into whether or not he made a convincing case for Butler's relevance amidst the rising influence of higher criticism and modern science. 1898 will take us to news and opinion published at or near the time of Gladstone's death. After a brief examination of public mourning in the United States, the focal point here will be on estimates of his Christian piety and morality followed by those aspects of his statesmanship that Americans chose to emphasise in memorial tributes. The extent to which they perceived his political impulses to be driven by his personal piety will also be an important consideration, as will the presence of any disparaging commentary amidst the overwhelming presence of eulogy. Considered together, the years 1896 and '98 will illuminate our understanding of American perceptions of Gladstone at or near the end of his life in the following categories: Christian scholar, religious man and Liberal statesman.

As a Christian scholar, the study and use of Butler had been for Gladstone a life-long passion and his *locus classicus* for proper Christian polemics as well as wisdom for daily living. As he wrote in *Studies Subsidiary*:

The highest importance of Bishop Butler's works, and of the *Analogy* in particular, is to be found, not in his argument, but in his method, which is so comprehensive as to embrace every question belonging to the relations between the Deity and man, including therefore every question of conduct.⁴

⁴ WEG, *Studies Subsidiary to the Works of Bishop Butler* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896), p. 13.

In the eighteenth century, the Anglican theologian had provided the defenders of orthodoxy with a bulwark against deism through his principal works, *Fifteen Sermons Preached at the Rolls Chapel* (1726) and *Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed* (1736). In the *Analogy* Butler put forth his chief proposition that ‘probability is the very guide of life’.⁵ For apologists this provided the means to reconcile faith and reason by following evidence to its probable or likely conclusion as opposed to bearing the burden of seeking absolute certainty. As far back as the 1840s Gladstone had found Butler’s principle of probability useful for combating what he perceived to be the casuistical methods of the Jesuits.⁶ In that same period he had gleaned from the *Rolls Sermons* the notion of the conscience as the supreme human faculty, which provided him with an effective argument against the threat of authoritarianism in the Roman Church.⁷ Moreover, in the more recent battle with agnosticism, where the tactic of arguing from miracles had been severely weakened, Butler had ‘furnished materials available in the controversies now in hand against the several opposing systems which seek to abolish the idea of a personal and righteous Governor of the universe’.⁸ Gladstone was convinced of Butler’s continued relevance for persuasive Christian apologetics.

Scholars have debated the extent to which Butler’s influence waned in the latter half of the nineteenth century, but he was certainly a dominant figure in the early and middle decades. Jacob Cooper of Dartmouth College in 1896 noted the storied history of the *Analogy of Religion*: ‘Few books on theological or philosophical subjects’, he wrote,

⁵ WEG, ed, *The Works of Joseph Butler, D.C.L. Sometime Lord Bishop of Durham*, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1896), vol. 1, p. 5

⁶ DWB, *MoG*, p. 116.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

⁸ WEG, *Studies Subsidiary*, p. 14.

‘have passed through so many reprints or been used so widely as text-books in schools and colleges as the “Analogy”’.⁹ Butler was read throughout Great Britain and in colleges in the United States during the nineteenth century. In Oxford, for example, his works had enjoyed privileged status in the curriculum since the 1830s. And although revisions to the Oxford syllabus in the 1860s had demoted Butler from his previous rank, an event that was vexing to Gladstone, he had by no means been entirely cast aside.¹⁰ As Jane Garnett has discussed, his writings experienced a revival of interest during the latter decades of the century in the study of moral philosophy. Scholars may differ on the extent of the resurgence, but it is safe to say it was in evidence to some degree and, at the same time, as we shall see presently, that adherents of modernist theology had largely consigned Butler to the past.¹¹

Although modest in number, reviews from influential American publications were visible following publication of *Works* and *Studies Subsidiary*. Favourable commentary of both appeared in the evangelical press. A writer for the *New York Evangelist* hailed Gladstone’s *Works of Butler* as a ‘labor of love’ and the ‘latest and best edition’.¹² He believed modern apologists would do well to bring the same honesty of purpose, clear perception and self-restraint to the questions of the present day as Butler had brought to his time.¹³ The *Independent* listed the companion volumes among its ‘best books of the year’ in theology.¹⁴ Gladstone’s notes were judged to be far better than those of any previous

⁹ Jacob Cooper, *Reformed Quarterly Review*, April, 1896, p. 199

¹⁰ Jane Garnett, ‘Bishop Butler and the Zeitgeist: Butler and the Development of Christian Moral Philosophy in Victorian Britain’, in Christopher Cunliffe, ed, *Joseph Butler’s Moral and Religious Thought: Tercentenary Essays* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 63, 64.

¹¹ For a detailed historiographic essay, see Jane Garnett in *Ibid.*, pp. 63-96.

¹² *NYE*, 9 July 1896, p. 9

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *IND*, 19 Nov 1896, p. 22.

edition. For Lyman Abbott's liberal-leaning *Outlook*, the new edition was significant for marking 'the passing of the impression that Butler is out of logical relation to the attitudes of inquiry in our generation'.¹⁵ Moreover, Butler's sermons on human nature had not been invalidated by evolutionary teaching as some had contended. The author added, 'scarcely any work of English theological thinking has been more serviceable to high religious life than Bishop Butler's Analogy'.¹⁶ And, with 'vigor of hand' the 'venerable editor' had reclaimed for Butler his true place.¹⁷ Leading evangelical publications were clearly enthusiastic about Gladstone's Butlerian scholarship.

Gladstone also found support from the reputable evangelical Presbyterian academic, Jacob Cooper, Professor of Logic and Mental Philosophy at Rutgers College.¹⁸ A Butler enthusiast, Cooper had been in frequent correspondence with Gladstone. It was Cooper who persuaded him to take up the project and he also served as his editor.¹⁹ Not surprisingly, Cooper wrote several glowing reviews related to the volumes. In the *Independent* he declared that 'the world has been waiting for a competent editor who has at length appeared in the person of Mr. Gladstone'.²⁰ In *Bibliotheca Sacra* he asserted: 'Common consent will pronounce him the most competent for the task of all who have lived since Butler's day.'²¹ He also insisted that in 'breadth of intellect, in knowledge of men, in experience with all the affairs of life, whether moral, political, or religious, the

¹⁵ *Outlook*, 4 April 1896, p. 633-34.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ 'Death List of a Day', *NYT*, 1 February 1904.

¹⁹ 'Matters at Rutgers', *NYT*, 2 March 1896, p. 10.

²⁰ Jacob Cooper, *IND*, 12 March 1896, p. 16.

²¹ Jacob Cooper, *Bibliotheca Sacra*, July 1896, p. 495.

world has scarcely ever seen his equal'.²² In the *Reformed Quarterly Review* Cooper wrote of his high regard for Gladstone's scholarly acumen:

Possessed of every advantage of talent and culture, of devotion to the truths of revealed religion, with an encyclopaedic knowledge, an energy for work which knows no diminution from age; with a catholicity of spirit which acknowledges all that is pure and true and good in every branch of Christendom and Theistic faith, he is the one above all others living since Butler's time who will be acknowledged as the proper person for his editor.²³

Upon release of *Studies Subsidiary*, Cooper praised Gladstone for the 'supreme effort of his genius wrought in the maturity of his experience, and the undiminished luster of his perennial powers'.²⁴ For Cooper, Gladstone had made a momentous contribution to theological scholarship and had reinforced his own admiration for Butler. At the same time, Cooper's reviews must be balanced against the fact that he was clearly engaged in publicising that which he had prompted.

Among the non-evangelical religious press both the *Catholic World* and the *American Catholic Quarterly* refrained from commentary, suggesting perhaps that the breach that existed between them and Gladstone had not yet been fully repaired. However, in the Unitarian *New World*, successor in 1892 to the *Unitarian Review*, there appeared an extensive critique by the British Unitarian Richard Armstrong of Liverpool. Armstrong contrasted Gladstone's roles as statesman and theologian, which he thought a unique psychological phenomenon. As a statesman he was a 'broad and frank thinker', and 'an ardent apostle of progress'.²⁵ As a theologian, however, he was 'cautious, conservative, timid', as well as steeped in 'ecclesiastical treatises, pronouncements by Rome and

²² *Ibid.*, p. 496.

²³ Jacob Cooper, *Reformed Quarterly Review*, April, 1896, pp. 199,200.

²⁴ Jacob Cooper, 'Gladstone's Studies in Butler', *Reformed Quarterly Review*, October 1896; 4, p. 441.

²⁵ Richard A. Armstrong, 'Mr. Gladstone and Bishop Butler', *New World*, 5 (1898), p. 692.

Lambeth'.²⁶ Armstrong contended that in *Studies Subsidiary* Gladstone had with little exception followed the latter method. For example, where the statesman had taken issue with the role of evolutionary development in the human conscience and affections, as opposed to being divinely 'planted', he had, Armstrong insisted, 'placidly handed over the whole doctrine of evolution to the non-theist'.²⁷ Moreover, he accused the statesman of being an absolute 'scripturalist' and 'creedist' with respect to truth: 'An assertion in the Old or New Testament, or in the Apostles' or Nicene Creeds, overrides all adverse evidence, and is final and without appeal.'²⁸ Specifically, Gladstone had required the acceptance of orthodox dogmas in order to accept the moral teachings of Christ. 'Thus in a sentence', Armstrong insisted 'he overthrows the whole intuitive evidence of morals.'²⁹ In summary, Armstrong demanded, Gladstone had made no effort to distinguish in Butler those methods of reasoning that remained true in the nineteenth century and those which modern thought had superseded. 'At this', Armstrong declared, 'it need hardly be said, Mr. Gladstone makes no attempt.'³⁰ Butler, he conceded, had made a contribution to the study of ethics but he was a master only of method, while he had restricted the knowledge of the Christian life to probabilities and 'the deliberate calculations of the logician' rather than by the 'inspired passion of the prophet, that touches the souls of men to the spirit of Christ'.³¹ Armstrong had not pulled any punches in his critique.

The secular press generally took less interest in the works, but there were a few exceptions to the rule. The *Literary World* published complimentary reviews of both. In

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 694.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 696.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 703.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 704-705.

his edition of the *Works of Butler* Gladstone had presented them in ‘the best form in which they are to be had’. Furthermore, the review added, ‘It is no slight advantage to have such help as a man like Mr. Gladstone must render in mastering the system of a great thinker like Bishop Butler.’³² *Studies Subsidiary* was a ‘studious and scholarly essay’ that ‘gives a new sense of the amazing breadth, versatility, and virility of Mr. Gladstone’s intellectual power in his eighty-seventh year’.³³ Gladstone’s crowning achievement had received a warm welcome from at least one highly respected American literary review.

At the same time, more nuanced critiques could also be found. Beyond a few slights to the editing format, the most common complaint centred on the outdated theology of Butler, and by association, Gladstone. A writer for the *New York Tribune* thought the essays contained in *Studies Subsidiary* were more useful in understanding characteristics of Gladstone as a thinker and a man of action than for the elucidation of Butler. The interest of the book lay in the fact that it contains Gladstone’s philosophy of life, not merely a philosophy of faith. ‘His method of thought’ the author stated, ‘is never scientific, but it is scholastic and legal.’³⁴ A writer for the *Critic* magazine complained that since Butler had addressed deism, what was needed, but had not been provided, was an adjustment of Butler’s argument to the present intellectual conditioning that sprang from evolutionary theory and agnosticism.³⁵ Upon its release, the *Critic* also reviewed *Studies Subsidiary*. Gladstone was correct to insist that Butler’s value lay chiefly in his method, which was based on human experience. Yet he would have strengthened the work by adjusting the *Analogy* ‘to some modern ways of thinking’ such as evolution and the doctrine of

³² ‘Bishop Butler Edited by Mr. Gladstone’, *Literary World*, 21 March 1896, p. 87.

³³ ‘Mr. Gladstone’s Studies of Bishop Butler’, *Literary World*, 17 October 1896, p. 345.

³⁴ ‘A Politician’, *NY.Trib*, 18 November 1896, p. 8.

³⁵ ‘Literature’ *Critic*, 7 March 1896, p. XLIIA.

conditional immortality.³⁶ Moreover, Gladstone's forty-four theses on the topic did not adequately convince the doubter that the soul is immortal by nature. 'Not fitted to the times' and belonging to 'the apologetic literature of forty or fifty years ago' were the pronouncements of the *Critic*.³⁷

Similar disparaging remarks were published in the *Nation*. The author maintained that the battle ground had shifted significantly since Butler's day. The *Analogy* was *passé* given that the modern study of comparative religions had made analogies of Christianity to nature religions a less credible argument. The author wondered what his fate would have been in the modern world with so many facts 'undreamed of in his philosophy'.³⁸ The *New York Times* also featured some critical analysis with respect to Butler's obsolescence. Upon release of *Studies Subsidiary*, veteran editorialist Amos Kidder Fiske wrote a lengthy editorial on the volume. Fiske was a lawyer by training, but had spent most of his career with the *New York Times* as an editorialist and book reviewer. He also authored several books including the 1897 *The Myths of Israel: the Ancient Book of Genesis with Analysis and Explanation of its Composition*.³⁹ In the case of Butler, Fiske thought it would be 'easy to riddle his argument from analogy to shreds' because of the progress made in science and biblical studies in recent times.⁴⁰ As for Gladstone's *Studies Subsidiary*, Fiske judged it a failure. The statesman, he wrote, 'has not attained the nineteenth-century point of view, and is evidently incapable of understanding it. . . . In religion he appears to be the

³⁶ 'Mr. Gladstone on Bishop Butler', *Critic*, 24 April 1897, p. 283.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 284.

³⁸ *TN*, 19 March 1896, p. 241.

³⁹ 'Amos K. Fiske, Journalist Dead', *NYT*, 22 September 1921, p. 13.

⁴⁰ Amos Kidder Fiske, 'New Publications', *NYT*, 30 Aug 1896, p. 23.

contemporary of St. Augustine more even than of Bishop Butler'.⁴¹ Moreover, Butler's work had become irrelevant and Gladstone had shut his eyes while the 'dim religious light in which the progress of knowledge and of thought for two centuries is scarcely visible'.⁴² For Fiske and others in the mainstream press, Gladstone had once again been deemed a man of the past with regard to his religious views.

If the statesman's *magnum opus* had received limited fanfare and some critical reception in the United States press, news and commentary surrounding his death two years later would far eclipse it and all previous landmarks of his legendary career. Gladstone's death had come after a painful bout with facial cancer that had been diagnosed early in 1898. He spent his final months at Hawarden surrounded by family and news of his poor health captured the attention of the world. When news of his death arrived in America, similar to events in Great Britain, public memorials were held and symbols of mourning abounded.⁴³ A correspondent for the *Congregationalist* described the ubiquitous sentiment: 'Once Christendom knew that the great Christian statesman was dead his life, his deeds, his beliefs at once became the supreme theme of conversation, of editorials, of formal speeches before deliberative bodies, of sermons in the churches.'⁴⁴ In Chicago the multitude of flags flying over the stock yards were flown at half mast out of respect for the memory of Gladstone.⁴⁵ The *Chicago Tribune* reported that on the Sunday following his death no fewer than ten local ministers had delivered sermons dedicated to remembrance

⁴¹ Fiske, 'New Publications', *NYT*, 30 Aug 1896, p. 23.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ For a detailed study of British reactions to Gladstone's death see John Wolffe, *Great Deaths: Grieving, Religion, and Nationhood in Victorian and Edwardian Britain* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 169-191.

⁴⁴ 'Current History', *CON*, 26 May 1898, p. 761.

⁴⁵ *NYT*, 20 May 1898, p. 7.

of the statesman.⁴⁶ In Baltimore, the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church South adopted a resolution honoring the statesman as ‘the friend of America, the prophet of her greatness and the friend of God.’⁴⁷ A memorial service at Boston’s historic King’s Chapel featured eulogies by the mayor and other prominent citizens.⁴⁸ The *Los Angeles Times* reported that a memorial was held before a ‘large congregation’ at the Los Angeles Theater.⁴⁹ And in response to a numerously signed request, St John’s Episcopal Church in Washington D.C. announced it would hold a special memorial service for Gladstone on the same day as his funeral at Westminster Abbey.⁵⁰ The death of Gladstone had prompted memorial services and other visible expressions of mourning across the country.

In America reactions to the statesman’s death were much closer to those normally accorded to a beloved president than to a foreign leader. In a cable to the London *Daily Chronicle* Vice President Hobart wrote: ‘Not even in his own land was Mr. Gladstone more highly esteemed and venerated than in the United States.’⁵¹ ‘Oh, Eternal God’, prayed the chaplain before the U.S. Senate, ‘with the whole English-speaking race we stand as mourners beside the bier of the most eminent statesman of our generation.’⁵² Like heralds of his transatlantic apotheosis, American newspapers filled their pages with lofty pronouncements of Gladstone’s greatness. Among major secular papers the *Chicago Tribune* declared his career ‘unsurpassed if not unequaled by that of any other statesman in

⁴⁶ *CT*, 23 May 1898, p. 10.

⁴⁷ *NYH*, 20 May 1898, p. 12.

⁴⁸ ‘Boston Memorial Service’, *SR*, 29 May 1898, p. 9.

⁴⁹ ‘The Grand Old Man’, *Los Angeles Times*, 23 May 1898, p. 10.

⁵⁰ *Washington Post*, 27 May 1898, p. 10.

⁵¹ *NYT*, 29 May 1898, p. 7.

⁵² *NYT*, 20 May 1898, p. 7.

the long history of civil and religious liberty in all Christendom'.⁵³ An article in the *New York Tribune* announced: 'The world has lost its greatest citizen.'⁵⁴ The *New York Times* declared that in the Victorian age 'no other man in England has had so much to do with the embodiment in legislation of the social and political changes which the progress of opinion has wrought during that reign'.⁵⁵ Among evangelical papers there were similar sentiments. The *Outlook* pronounced: 'We count him as the greatest statesman of the century, and one among England's greatest statesman of any century.'⁵⁶ A correspondent for the *New York Observer and Chronicle* declared the nineteenth century to have 'witnessed no more remarkable career'.⁵⁷ Gladstone had achieved a reputation in America that was nothing short of legendary.

Another indication of how deep American devotion for Gladstone ran came in the form of original commemorative poems. The *New York Times* published one by Frederick Saunders, the long-time librarian of the Astor Public Library in Brooklyn, New York, entitled 'The Memory of Gladstone':

A garland for Gladstone, the good, noble,
 great!
 Whose life altruistic—untrammelled by
 State,
 Whose motto armorial was lived out so
 well,
 And whose wisdom and learning did no less
 excel!
 Whose memory endeared, all hearts now
 enshrine,
 And whose form to the Abbey we devoutly
 assign!

⁵³ Levi Wells Hart, 'Kin Beyond Sea', *CT*, 29 May 1898, p. 27.

⁵⁴ *NY.Trib*, 19 May 1898, p. 8.

⁵⁵ 'William Ewart Gladstone', *NYT*, 19 May 1898, p. 8.

⁵⁶ 'Mr. Gladstone', *Outlook*, 28 May 1898, p. 208.

⁵⁷ *NYO*, 16 June 1898, p. 828.

His record emblazoned in luminous lines
 As a beacon-light o'er the world now
 shines.
 His memorial, more enduring than e'en royal
 fanes,
 Will live in the lessons his life for us gains!⁵⁸

Another by the poet Emma Herrick Weed appeared in the *New York Observer and Chronicle* entitled 'Gladstone'. In it she celebrated Gladstone's faith and included the lines:

He sleeps . . . as a soldier bivouacked on the field,
 One of the staunch command of Jesus Christ;
 True to his cause, his colors, and his King,
 And under marching orders with the dawn!⁵⁹

In the *Washington Post* the American clergyman and poet Sam W. Small extolled the statesman's universal fame:

Be still, ye tribes of earth! That solemn toll,
 That sounds so grievously across the sea,
 Means loss to all mankind—or bond or free!
 It bids us say "farewell" to that great soul
 Whose name led all the rest on fame's fair roll.⁶⁰

Theron Brown, the American poet and assistant editor of the *Youth's Companion* magazine, composed 'When Gladstone Died', a portion of which read:⁶¹

The honor, and the love and grief and pride
 Of England, and the hopes that live again
 For years, that thro' all time he glorified
 With luster of his grand fourscore and ten,
 And blessings affluent as the world is wide
 Answered together in that meek "Amen"
 When Gladstone died.⁶²

⁵⁸ *NYT*, 4 June 1898, p. BR 369; and *NYT*, 25 November 1899, BR 804.

⁵⁹ Emma Herrick Weed 'Gladstone', *NYO*, 16 June 1898, p. 829.

⁶⁰ Sam W. Small, 'Gladstone', *Washington Post*, 22 May 1898, p. 4.

⁶¹ Charles Wells Moulton, ed, *The Magazine of Poetry: A Quarterly Review*, 3 (1891), p. 308.

⁶² Theron Brown, 'When Gladstone Died', *Youth's Companion*, 14 July 1898, p. 336.

As in Britain, Gladstone's passing had inspired his American admirers to write verse extolling his life and faith.⁶³

There were myriad ways in which Americans venerated Gladstone at the time of his death. As might be expected in such memorials, it was commonplace to include a litany of laudable traits such as the one that appeared in the *Outlook*:

Character, genius, learning, oratory, dignity of manner, charm of personality, fervor of temperament, reverence for history, ardor of progress, enthusiasm for religion—all these great qualities of the English race met in this man of many gifts and many achievements.⁶⁴

Several prominent themes related either to his individual Christian piety or his record of statesmanship. In the former category there were several articles that celebrated the Christian comportment of Gladstone and his family during his terminal illness and final hours of life. The reports give some insight into how people of the period imagined an ideal Christian death should occur. Harold Frederic, the London correspondent for the *New York Times*, reported that the 'marvelous courage and manliness shown by the dying statesman in almost intolerable agony had conquered the few hearts which up to then remained cold'.⁶⁵ As several other papers had done, the *New York Observer and Chronicle* recounted the solemnity of the household at his passing. The author suggested it was 'thoroughly in keeping with the tenor of the Christian Premier's life that when at his bedside his son recited the Litany, the last word of the dying statesman should be a softly murmured "Amen!"'⁶⁶ An article in the *Southwestern Christian Advocate* described the family kneeling at his bedside where they had 'seen with wonder and reverence how the

⁶³ For a few British memorial poems see Bebbington, *William Ewart Gladstone*, pp. 240-41.

⁶⁴ 'Mr. Gladstone', *Outlook*, 28 May 1898, p. 210.

⁶⁵ Harold Frederic, 'What Stirs London', *NYT*, 22 May 1898, p. 19.

⁶⁶ 'William Ewart Gladstone', *NYO*, 26 May 1898, p. 742.

noble face had lighted up with joy which was not that of this world'.⁶⁷ The *New York Tribune* reported that in his final moments the statesman's son, clergyman Stephen Gladstone, read prayers and hymns including his father's favourite, 'Rock of Ages'. When this was concluded Gladstone was heard to murmur, 'Our Father'.⁶⁸ Americans perceived Gladstone's death as a tragic event, but one that had been confronted in idyllic Christian fashion. The statesman had shown them how to die as well as how to live.

Among the references to Gladstone's personal traits, the greatest number comprised descriptions and anecdotes of his Christian devotion throughout his long life rather than during his dying days. Although columns in the secular press focused largely on celebrating his many political accomplishments, they were not to the exclusion of his religious piety. Several took the form of published memorial sermons. The *New York Times* published one such tribute by the distinguished Methodist clergyman S. P. Cadman of the Metropolitan Temple in New York City. In it he proclaimed:

When we come to sum up the secret of so great a life we must seek first to find the most potent element in it. In the life of Gladstone what do we find as the chief characteristic? None other than his devoutness and love for his Maker. Gladstone was from first to last in his life a religious man. This was the supreme glory of his life.⁶⁹

The sermon of Teunis S. Hamlin, pastor of the Presbyterian Church of the Covenant in Washington D.C., was published in the *Washington Post*. Beyond his great statesmanship, Hamlin described Gladstone as 'always courteous and humble in spite of his greatness, a

⁶⁷ 'The Life of Faith: Gladstone's Last Hours', *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, 28 December 1899, p.3.

⁶⁸ 'Gladstone is Dead', *NY.Trib*, 19 May 1898, p. 1.

⁶⁹ *NYH*, 23 May 1898, p. 4.

life-long believer in Jesus Christ and a confessor of salvation through him'.⁷⁰ Excerpts from several sermons delivered in Chicago appeared in the *Chicago Tribune*. At the Washington Park Congregational Church, William E. Danforth spoke on 'Gladstone: A Christian Man of the World'. He insisted the statesman had proved it was possible to be a man of the world and a Christian simultaneously. 'The religious element' he declared, 'was the bone and sinew of Gladstone's power.'⁷¹ While the statesman's political opinions could change, 'in his religious convictions he stood on the everlasting hills of orthodox truth'.⁷² The importance of faith in the life of Gladstone was the subject of sermons in churches across the United States and even in the columns of major newspapers.

Religious papers were understandably more inclined to emphasise Gladstone's faith. A writer for the *Catholic World*, although regretful that Gladstone had died outside the Catholic fold, described him as a deeply religious man who provided a refuge to many from the dangers of agnosticism. He suggested that what Queen Victoria herself had accomplished for English domestic life, Gladstone had done for religion.⁷³ Within the evangelical press all of the leading papers testified to the statesman's piety. Among them, an author for the *Independent* insisted with a note of irony that Gladstone's life itself was a more convincing argument than any that could be quoted from Bishop Butler. 'His creed was his life;' he added, 'his life was Christianity incarnate, the best, the newest, the most convincing Christian evidence that can be offered to a keenly observant world.'⁷⁴ A correspondent for the *New York Observer and Chronicle* declared: 'In it all he has believed

⁷⁰ *Washington Post*, 23 May 1898, p. 10.

⁷¹ 'His Life as a Text', *CT*, 23 May 1898, p. 10.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ 'William Ewart Gladstone', *CW*, 67 (1898), p. 410.

⁷⁴ *IND*, 26 May 1898, p. 12.

in his heart, confessed with his mouth, and earnestly contended for the faith once delivered to the saints.⁷⁵ An author for the *Congregationalist* concluded, ‘Above all things, he has been simply loyal to Jesus Christ.’⁷⁶ As might be expected, evangelicals were eager to celebrate Gladstone’s devotion to the Christian faith.

Several insightful testimonials to Gladstone’s piety came from eye witnesses. Frederick D. Greene, an American missionary to Armenia, and a member of the National Armenian Relief Committee, recalled his encounter with Gladstone in 1895 while visiting England in support of his cause. Greene and a delegation of Armenian refugees had been received enthusiastically at Hawarden estate. There, during an Easter service, an Armenian jewelled chalice was presented to Hawarden parish church as a token of appreciation for Gladstone’s support of Armenians suffering under the Turks.⁷⁷ During the service, Greene had taken particular notice of Gladstone’s passion for ‘entering heartily into the responses and prayers, kneeling and rising with promptness, and holding up his book with vigor before him so as to get the best light’.⁷⁸ In another account, an author for the *New York Evangelist* published a first-hand story of Gladstone’s stay at Inverary Castle in Scotland with members of his cabinet. He reported that the statesman was among the most frequent attenders at the morning religious service and on one occasion served as the replacement for an absent song leader. ‘There was a pathos about his singing’, the writer recalled, which resulted in ‘singing almost a solo to the weeping accompaniment of many.’⁷⁹ A third account came from Gladstone’s personal acquaintance Theodore Cuyler,

⁷⁵ *NYO*, 16 June 1898, p. 828.

⁷⁶ *CON*, 26 May 1898, p. 758.

⁷⁷ *IND*, 7 April 1898, pp. 5, 6.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁷⁹ *NYE*, 1 September 1898, p. 23.

who confided in the pages of the *New York Evangelist* that ‘nothing has impressed me so deeply as his beautiful and devout Christian character’.⁸⁰ And in an article for *Zion’s Herald*, Cuyler insisted that Gladstone’s genius as well as his scholarship and executive ability ‘owed their moral splendor entirely to the fact that Jesus Christ was enthroned in his capacious soul’.⁸¹ Americans who had personal encounters with the statesman considered Christian piety to be the driving force in his life.

Gladstone was without doubt thought to be a man of deep faith. But to what extent was that devotion perceived to be a catalyst for his political crusades? A correspondent for the *New York Times* included his belief that Gladstone ‘will be remembered not so much for his political work as for the great example, hardly paralleled in history, of the great Christian statesman’.⁸² Several articles made general allusions similar to R. Heber Newton, rector of All Souls’ Church in New York, who was quoted as saying: ‘In him we had a statesman who literally tried to administer government according to the ethics of Jesus Christ.’⁸³ An author for the *Outlook* insisted:

Any estimate of Mr. Gladstone would be singularly defective which did not recognize his Christian character. For it was the distinguishing mark of his statesmanship that, in marked contrast with his eminent political rival, Mr. Disraeli, he sought for the solution of the current political problems of his time in the application to them of religious principles.⁸⁴

The Catholic theologian John J. O’Shea observed in the *American Catholic Quarterly Review* that ‘religious tendencies had not been conspicuous characteristics of English

⁸⁰ *NYE*, 5 May 1898, p. 4.

⁸¹ *ZH*, 22 June 1898, p. 777.

⁸² ‘The Death of Gladstone’, *NYT*, 21 May 1898, p. 6.

⁸³ *NYH*, 23 May 1898, p. 4.

⁸⁴ ‘Mr. Gladstone’, *Outlook*, 28 May 1898, p. 209.

ministers prior to Gladstone'.⁸⁵ The statesman's faith was considered to be part-and-parcel of his political motives.

Within the same context, several authors placed specific emphasis on Christian 'morality' as the force behind Gladstone's statesmanship. Walter Littlefield of the *New York Times* supposed that, 'Mr. Gladstone was perhaps the most Christian statesman of his day; no hope of personal gain or profit to party, principle, or country ever succeeded in forcing him to divorce politics from morality.'⁸⁶ Henry Field of the *New York Evangelist* saw in Gladstone the inseparability of moral rectitude and governance:

This conviction guided him in all his public career, for he did not believe that any act could be politically wise which was morally wrong. Every right law must be founded in that eternal justice and authority which emanates from the throne of God.⁸⁷

A writer for the *Congregationalist* believed that in 'moral excellence' Gladstone had been more 'England's ideal than any other man in this century'.⁸⁸ He maintained that in all his functions, whether felling trees or denouncing Turkish barbarities, 'the underlying current and the controlling impulse of his thought was man's duty to know God's will and obey it'.⁸⁹ John J. O'Shea showered high praise upon Gladstone for his principled opposition to the 1857 Divorce Bill: 'No man in civil life ever stood up so manfully as he for the maintenance of the marriage contract in all its pristine Scriptural integrity. The battle which Mr. Gladstone waged for morality in this great question was no mere perfunctory

⁸⁵ John J. O'Shea, 'England's Second Great Commoner, Gladstone', *ACQR*, 23 (1898) p. 620.

⁸⁶ *NYT*, 3 April 1898, SM 14.

⁸⁷ Henry M. Field, 'William E. Gladstone', *NYE*, 26 May 1898, p. 6.

⁸⁸ *CON*, 26 May 1898, p. 758.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

piece of advocacy.⁹⁰ The American anthropologist Horatio Hale observed that the distinction of Gladstone's career was due to 'the elevation of moral character' rather than great intellectual power. Gladstone had been inspired by the sentiment that Sir John Seeley had styled the 'enthusiasm of humanity', by the 'desire of bringing all political and national movements into harmony with the practical precepts of Christianity'.⁹¹ Many Americans seem to have concluded that in the affairs of state Gladstone was driven by a passion for Christian morality rather than the cold calculus of political expediency.

Memorial articles quite predictably invited comparisons of Gladstone to other great leaders. Among them were scattered references to several towering historic figures, but perhaps the most revealing were those that invoked Abraham Lincoln. The *Congregationalist* reported on a service honouring the statesman wherein a speaker was quoted to say that Lincoln and Gladstone 'both represented the conscience of the English race'.⁹² Theodore Cuyler also drew a comparison to Lincoln: 'Our greatest countryman went up to his crown three and thirty years ago; and now on the brow and the world-wide fame of Britain's mightiest leader death is placing the diadem of the imperishable glory.'⁹³ A writer in the *Springfield Republican* insisted that Gladstone and Lincoln together represented the conscience of the Anglo-Saxon people.⁹⁴ In the *Chicago Tribune* a correspondent noted the coincidence of the two great men having been born in the same year (1809) and also of entering politics in the same year (1832). 'Mr. Gladstone was to English legislative history', he suggested, 'what a Webster or Clay were in America a half

⁹⁰ O'Shea, 'England's Second Great Commoner', p. 627.

⁹¹ *Critic*, 5 Feb 1898, p. 88.

⁹² 'The Conversation Corner', *CON*, 16 June 1898, p. 881.

⁹³ *NYE*, 5 May 1898, p. 4.

⁹⁴ 'Boston Memorial Service', *SR*, 29 May 1898, p. 9.

century ago, or to great political reforms in some sense what Abraham Lincoln was at a later and more stormy period.’⁹⁵ He added further that no statesman of the nineteenth century had equalled Gladstone except Lincoln ‘in the importance and far-reaching effect of the reforms which he instituted’. The name of Gladstone, he concluded, ‘will go down in history as that of England’s wisest, most liberal, and progressive statesman’.⁹⁶ In a way similar to their image of Lincoln, Americans perceived Gladstone as the embodiment of their core values and myths.⁹⁷ For many reform-minded people of the period Gladstone was the British Lincoln.

The comparison to Lincoln is consistent with perceptions of Gladstone as a champion of democracy and liberal reform, both recurring themes in this study; and he was celebrated for them at his passing. Catholic John J. O’Shea declared that ‘The history of Mr. Gladstone’s career is the history of modern progress in England.’⁹⁸ Although O’Shea had faulted him for being more politician than statesman, he also stated it would be difficult to find darker days in England than existed at the beginning of Gladstone’s career, yet by its end ‘every one of the evils which then existed was swept away, mainly through the efforts of the Liberal party and mostly at his own initiative’.⁹⁹ A writer for the *Outlook* noted the evolution of Great Britain throughout the century from an aristocracy towards greater democracy. ‘In this period of transition’, he concluded, ‘Mr. Gladstone has been the most prominent representative of the spirit of change.’¹⁰⁰ In the *New York Observer*

⁹⁵ ‘William Ewart Gladstone’, *CT*, 19 May 1898, p. 6.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ See Eric Foner, *The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2010), p. xv.

⁹⁸ O’Shea, ‘England’s Second Great Commoner’, p. 619.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ ‘Mr. Gladstone’, *Outlook*, 28 May 1898, p. 208.

and Chronicle he was dubbed the ‘apostle of British liberties’ for his many domestic reforms.¹⁰¹ A journalist for the *Chicago Tribune* insisted with respect to the importance and far-reaching effect of the statesman’s reforms, ‘His name will go down in history as that of England’s wisest, most liberal, and progressive statesman.’¹⁰² Gladstone also received high praise from a correspondent in the *New York Tribune* who asserted that his growth in advanced Liberalism had shown through in his oratory, which over time had become ‘more democratic in form and spirit’.¹⁰³ He also made the bold claim that ‘Every landmark of English progress since the passage of the great Reform Bill has been shaped by his hand.’¹⁰⁴ If Gladstone had been overly sanguine with regard to Ireland, he added, ‘the work remains, in volume and utility surpassing the achievements of any other statesman’.¹⁰⁵ Gladstone had certainly gained a reputation in the United States for being a democratic reformer. It is worth noting, however, that most Americans overlooked his steadfast devotion to institutions they considered undemocratic and un-American such as the Church of England, the monarchy and the aristocracy.

A second major area for consideration in the category of statesmanship was Gladstone’s commitment to liberal internationalism. It was a common theme in both secular and evangelical publications. About four months before his death, a writer for the *Chicago Tribune* observed the passion Gladstone had retained for the plight of Armenia, a

¹⁰¹ ‘Editorial Notes’, *NYO*, 21 July 1898, p. 77.

¹⁰² *CT*, 19 May 1898, p. 6.

¹⁰³ *NY.Trib*, 19 May 1898, p. 8.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

reference to the final speech he delivered in September 1896 at Hengler's Circus, Liverpool, regarding Turkish atrocities:¹⁰⁶

From his post as England's most distinguished private citizen, his eloquent denunciation of the unspeakable atrocities of the inhuman Turk in Armenia and in Greece has stirred the sympathies of the English nation and found an echo in the hearts of the friends of humanity on both continents.¹⁰⁷

A correspondent for the *New York Times* proclaimed that Gladstone's desire for England to be ethically justified in her foreign policy, rather than merely successful, gave him 'a moral power almost unique in the history of English politics'.¹⁰⁸ Among other things he cited the statesman's denunciation of oppression in Italy early in his career as an example.¹⁰⁹ The *New York Herald*, a frequent critic during his lifetime, declared Gladstone's influence upon the morals and politics of his age to be global in scope. 'The nations', the correspondent stressed, 'will mourn his death and his fame will be the common heritage of modern Christendom.'¹¹⁰ Gladstone's moral concern for liberty beyond his own nation was remembered and regarded highly in the pages of secular American newspapers.

Among evangelicals there was a similar consensus. David Beaton, a Congregational minister in Chicago, viewed Gladstone's denunciation of the Bulgarian atrocities as 'the crowning glory of his public service'.¹¹¹ He declared him 'the greatest figure of his age and the embodiment of the modern conscience of statesmanship'.¹¹² In a

¹⁰⁶ Matthew, *Gladstone*, p. 629.

¹⁰⁷ 'Two Grand Old Men of Europe', *CT*, 4 January 1898, p. 6.

¹⁰⁸ 'William Ewart Gladstone', *NYT*, 19 May 1898, p. 8.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ 'The Greatest Englishman', *NYH*, 19 May 1898, p. 8.

¹¹¹ David Beaton, 'William Ewart Gladstone—an Estimate of His Life', *CON*, 26 May 1898, p. 764.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

Homeric allusion that Gladstone would likely have appreciated, Beaton considered it a cherished privilege of his life to have witnessed in person ‘the return of the Achilles of modern politics from the tents of scholarship and theology to take part once more in the battle of the oppressed’.¹¹³ Henry Field made a point of recognising Gladstone’s importance in bringing the *Alabama* case to arbitration in Geneva. Field claimed that with it he had atoned for his 1862 misstatement, ‘Jefferson Davis had created a nation’.¹¹⁴ Relations between the two nations, Field observed, had been strained as a result of the war, but Gladstone’s handling of the *Alabama* controversy had been magnanimous. ‘An act so noble’, he declared, ‘should embalm the name of the great pacificator forever in the hearts of the American people.’¹¹⁵ It was a compelling statement on Gladstone’s significant role in Anglo-American relations. As they had done throughout his career, American evangelicals remained ardent supporters of the statesman’s policies.

The themes of Anglo-American unity and alliance abounded in American publications at the time of Gladstone’s death, a good portion of which had been hastened by British expressions of solidarity for the United States in the war with Spain.¹¹⁶ We shall see presently that such reports in the press often intersected with remembrances of Gladstone as a seminal figure of transatlantic rapprochement. As we have seen, an informal transatlantic alliance between liberal journalists and men of letters had been forged prior to and in the aftermath of the American Civil War for the purpose of shared intellectual development and liberal reform. And, with minor setbacks, Anglo-American political relations had steadily improved since the 1860s. Nevertheless, relations had taken

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ Henry M. Field, ‘William E. Gladstone’, *NYE*, 26 May 1898, p. 6.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ See Campbell, *Unlikely Allies*, pp. 191-194, 237-239.

a sharp turn for the worse in 1895 when President Cleveland, to the astonishment of Britons, had invoked the Monroe Doctrine and made statements interpreted as hostile towards the British government regarding a longstanding boundary dispute between Venezuela and British Guiana.¹¹⁷ Although a remote possibility, rumblings of war came from Washington, D.C., but a collision was averted through diplomacy.¹¹⁸ All the same, relations between the two nations had been damaged by the imbroglio that was ultimately decided through arbitration in 1899, largely to the advantage of British Guiana.¹¹⁹

In the immediate aftermath of the 1895 dispute, calls for rapprochement became more intense, especially in Great Britain. The framework for such a pact generally revolved around issues related to free trade, international courts of arbitration and a cooperative military alliance. Early in 1896 the Liberal MP and future ambassador to the United States James Bryce attested in the *North American Review* that as a result of the 1895 crisis both nations had ‘awakened to a warmer love of peace and a keener sense of kinship’.¹²⁰ He affirmed the hope of many in Britain for a permanent alliance ‘under which citizens of each country should have the rights of citizenship in the other and be aided by the consuls and protected by the fleets of the other all over the world’.¹²¹ There had been earlier calls for an alliance such as the arbitration movement that picked up steam in the late 1880s and early 90s.¹²² The Scottish-born American industrialist Andrew Carnegie, a close acquaintance of Gladstone, was among the leading advocates of the

¹¹⁷ See James Bryce, ‘British Feelings on the Venezuelan Question’, *NAR*, 162 (1896), pp. 145-154.

¹¹⁸ For discussion of the Venezuelan crisis see Gerlach, *British Liberalism and the United States*, pp. 219-235; see also Campbell, *Unlikely Allies*, pp. 188-192 and Butler, *Critical Americans*, pp. 221-223.

¹¹⁹ Henry F. Graff, *Grover Cleveland*, (New York: Times Books, 2002), pp. 123-125.

¹²⁰ Bryce, ‘British Feelings’, p. 152.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

¹²² Gerlach, *British Liberalism*, pp. 213-217.

alliance during the period, having published a June 1893 *North American Review* essay entitled ‘A Look Ahead’.¹²³ In it he stopped only just short of calling for the formal reunification of Great Britain and the United States. Another leading promoter throughout the 1890s was the British journalist W. T. Stead. His notion of ‘Americanisation’ culminated in *The Americanization of the World or the Trend of the Twentieth Century* (1902).¹²⁴ Stead drew upon Gladstone’s ‘Kin Beyond Sea’ and the widely read *American Commonwealth* (1888) by James Bryce. Like Gladstone, Stead predicted that the United States would dominate the global economy of the twentieth century. However, he went a step further by insisting the American constitutional model would triumph worldwide *vis-à-vis* that of Great Britain. In an extraordinary statement he offered the following plan: ‘Instead of counting Britain and the United States as two separate and rival States, let us pool the resources of the Empire and the Republic and regard them with all their fleets, armies, and industrial resources as a political, or, if you like, an Imperial unit.’¹²⁵ Hopes for greater transatlantic unity were prevalent among British Liberals.

A similar proposal for alliance came from *Outlook* editor Lyman Abbott. In an 1898 *North American Review* article he suggested the United States should end its tradition of foreign isolation, and, in partnership with Great Britain, seek to ‘promote that world civilization which is founded on political liberty, Christian ethics, and Anglo-Saxon energy’.¹²⁶ The American educator John C. Ridpath (publisher of an 1898 Gladstone biography) expressed, with some frustration, the ubiquitous calls for alliance: ‘From

¹²³ Andrew Carnegie, ‘A Look Ahead’, *North American Review*, 156 (1893), pp. 685-711.

¹²⁴ Campbell, *Unlikely Allies*, p. 246.

¹²⁵ W. T. Stead, *The Americanization of the world: or, The trend of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Horace Markley, 1902)

¹²⁶ Lyman Abbott, ‘The Basis for an Anglo-American Understanding’, *NAR*, 166 (1898), p. 520.

oversea, in the midday of our national turmoil, comes a wave of sentiment breaking on our shores and pervading the atmosphere. It is a call to our people to enter into alliance with the Mother Country.’ Ridpath bemoaned its universal presence in the press:

Their call for an Anglo-American alliance is caught in the great sounding-board of British journalism, and is flung almost vociferously abroad wherever the English language is spoken. The answering sounding-board of American journalism catches the echo and flings it back with hilarious approval.¹²⁷

If such calls came from liberals, it is also noteworthy that amidst the enthusiasm there were anti-imperialists such as E. L. Godkin and Charles Eliot Norton who envisioned an alliance based primarily on global peacekeeping. They were alarmed by the jingoistic tone that accompanied much of the alliance propaganda.¹²⁸ Nevertheless, alliance fever was spreading on both sides of the Atlantic.

Undergirding the movement was the notion of an Anglosphere—the awareness of a common race, religion and language between nations of the ‘English-speaking peoples’ and the ‘Anglo-Saxon race’.¹²⁹ In the thinking of the period, the Anglo-Saxon race was believed to possess unique political values and institutions related to freedom and democracy.¹³⁰ As the British journalist Arnold White remarked when describing Gladstone in 1898, the racial designation was used quite casually to invoke an admirable trait: ‘It is probable that Mr. Gladstone was the finest specimen of an Anglo-Saxon that ever lived. His soul was pure; his intellect unequalled; his bodily powers phenomenal.’¹³¹

¹²⁷ John Clark Ridpath, ‘The United States and the Concert of Europe’, *Arena*, 20 (1898), p. 145.

¹²⁸ Butler, *Critical Americans*, pp. 249-61; and Campbell, pp. 237-38.

¹²⁹ See Paul A. Kramer, ‘Empires, Exceptions, and Anglo-Saxons: Race and Rule between the British and United States Empire, 1880-1910’, *Journal of American History*, 88 (2002), pp. 1315-1353; Stuart Anderson, *Race and Rapprochement: Anglo-Saxonism and Anglo-American Relations, 1895-1904* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1981); and R. Horsman, ‘Origins of Racial Anglo-Saxonism in Great Britain before 1850’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 37 (1976), pp. 387-410.

¹³⁰ Kramer, ‘Empires’, p. 1322.

¹³¹ Arnold White, ‘Gladstone’, *HW*, 28 May 1898, p. 1.

When combined with a common aspiration for Christian missions, referencing the Anglo-Saxon race provided a justification and a potent stimulus (Rudyard Kipling's 'white man's burden') for imperialist adventures such as the American annexation of the Philippines in 1898.¹³² In his *North American* essay Abbott laid out the rationale for kinship: 'The two [nations] represent the same political ideal: they are both democratic; they both represent the same ethical ideals; they are Christian; and they both represent the same race leadership; they are Anglo-Saxon.'¹³³ Both sides saw mutual benefits and Americans were encouraged to claim their imperial Anglo-Saxon 'destiny' by Edward Dicey in a *Nineteenth Century* article entitled 'The New American Imperialism'.¹³⁴ Lurking underneath the language of race and kinship was the reality that the United States had become an imperial power with which Britain must co-exist.

As we have seen, Gladstone had sought to repair Anglo-American relations after the Civil War. Moreover, as Duncan A. Campbell has suggested, the phrase 'English-speaking peoples' likely had its origins with Gladstone's 'Kin Beyond Sea'.¹³⁵ Be that as it may, it was a phrase loaded with meaning for the statesman who in 1888 wrote an article for *Youth's Companion* entitled 'The Future of the English-Speaking Races'. In it he echoed the prophecy of America's rise to global prominence he had first uttered in 'Kin Beyond Sea' and predicted the explosive population growth of English speakers worldwide in the twentieth century. The future role of the United States was to be nothing short of 'colossal' with the British Isles also sharing a smaller portion of the 'vast common

¹³² Campbell, *Unlikely Allies*, pp. 238-39.

¹³³ Lyman Abbott, 'The Basis for an Anglo-American Understanding', *NAR*, 166 (1898), p. 520.

¹³⁴ Edward Dicey, 'The New American Imperialism', *Nineteenth Century*, 44 (1898), pp. 487-501.

¹³⁵ Campbell, *Unlikely Allies*, p. 3.

inheritance' to be realised in this 'new chapter of human destiny'.¹³⁶ 'For it is pre-eminently the Anglo-Saxon race', he declared, 'for which the future promises in many things to rival or outstrip the past.'¹³⁷ He also maintained that Anglo-American relations were improving steadily and hinted at a future alliance:

If there is a space between, it is a narrowing space. The great idea of a common inheritance, and to a large extent of common prospects, more and more regulates our relations, and makes easy and familiar the conditions of mutual approach. If not the actual sense, yet something like the actual sense, of a common country, is growing up afresh, and the elements of a new moral unity are gradually both multiplied, and shaped into familiar use.¹³⁸

Gladstone clearly understood the realities of America's rising status as a world power and thus actively encouraged measures aimed at rapprochement. As Colin Matthew has suggested, in it all his over-riding interest was for the expansion of free trade.¹³⁹ Although he would certainly have balked at acts of overt imperialism, Gladstone was inextricably linked with the move towards closer transatlantic relations.

Several examples of Gladstone being linked with talk of a transatlantic alliance appeared at the time of his death. The *New York Times* published two accounts of such meetings in London between Americans and Britons. The first was an annual meeting of the British Schools and University Club where several prominent figures gathered including club president and the editor of the *North American Review* David Munro, the American journalist and diplomat Whitelaw Reid and the Princeton University President Francis Patton. The principal speakers were the Americans who spoke in favour of stronger bonds of sympathy between Britain and America. 'The greatest enthusiasm was

¹³⁶ WEG, 'The Future of the English-Speaking Races', *Youth's Companion*, 1 November 1888, p. 557.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.558.

¹³⁹ Matthew, *Gladstone*, pp. 568-571.

manifested’, the correspondent wrote, ‘whenever even a reference was made to an Anglo-Saxon alliance.’¹⁴⁰ In his remarks, Bishop C. Henry Potter of the Episcopal diocese of New York referred to Gladstone as the statesman ‘who loved the country of which I am a son and who did so much to bind it and yours together. May that great spirit gild, enrich, and purify our American life’.¹⁴¹ The second instance was an 1898 Anglo-American banquet attended by numerous prominent individuals, among them its chairman, Lord Coleridge and novelist Arthur Conan Doyle. On the wall was a prophetic representation of a future flag described as ‘Stars and Stripes on the union jack, with the eagle and the lion at the corners, and clasped hands between.’¹⁴² Clearly these were anti-imperialist zealots as the correspondent observed the striking enthusiasm displayed for ‘defense and progress, rather than for land-grabbing and wars’.¹⁴³ The Bishop of Ripon spoke with emphasis on the theme ‘Kin Beyond Sea’: ‘It was the ardent and lifelong wish of Mr. Gladstone that these two great nations, forgetting and forgiving all bygone differences, should dwell for ever in harmony in “the temple of peace.” [Cheers.]’¹⁴⁴ The deceased statesman was being invoked among transatlantic enthusiasts.

The *New York Times* published two additional articles related to alliance passion and Gladstone. In the first, an author instructed his readers that intelligent Americans would read the memorial speeches delivered in Parliament on behalf of Gladstone with no less sympathy than British readers. He offered it as proof that in a very real sense an Anglo-American alliance already existed. Moreover, the British government had for two

¹⁴⁰ ‘An Anglo-Saxon Alliance’, *NYT*, 25 May 1898, p. 7.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² ‘Anglo-American Banquet’, *NYT*, 19 June 1898, p. 8.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

generations been undergoing a steady process of Americanisation. ‘It was the chief charge’, he added, ‘brought against Mr. Gladstone by his opponents that he had greatly promoted and accelerated the process.’ The author even referred to Gladstone as the ‘apostle of Americanization’.¹⁴⁵ In the second example, Gladstone was quoted from a previously unpublished letter to Scribner’s publishers dated 17 March 1880: ‘The union between the two countries is still an honor to all those who seek to corroborate the bond.’¹⁴⁶ Readers of one of America’s leading newspapers could easily infer that Gladstone was the seminal figure of Anglo-Americanism.

Similar accounts appeared in other mainstream publications. The *Chicago Tribune* reported that the ‘British-Americans of Chicago’ had been celebrating the diamond jubilee of Queen Victoria. In his toast, the association’s Chairman George Gooch delivered a remarkable proclamation of Anglo-American imperialism followed by a tribute to Gladstone:

We celebrate this day at the present time, seeing all around us and from unmistakable signs that the old prejudice between the mother and her greatest daughter is being rapidly removed, and the day is not far distant when the American flag will be floating over colonial possessions with no jealousy on the part of Britain’s Queen.¹⁴⁷

Gooch then suggested that the celebration had been marred by the recent death of Gladstone. ‘Of all the British Prime Ministers,’ he intoned, ‘he was the nearest to the hearts of Americans.’¹⁴⁸ In another example, an article entitled ‘Kin Beyond Sea’ by Levi Wells Hart, rector of the College Grammar School in Brooklyn, New York, appeared in the

¹⁴⁵ ‘The Funeral of Gladstone’, *NYT*, 29 May 1898, p. 18.

¹⁴⁶ ‘The Anglo-American Feeling’, *NYT*, 6 July 1898, p. 1.

¹⁴⁷ ‘All Hail the Queen’, *CT*, 25 May 1898, p. 5.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

Chicago Tribune.¹⁴⁹ Following a lengthy excerpt from Gladstone's classic essay of the same title, Hart declared it to be valuable for the current time and for the near future. He asserted his belief that the United States and Great Britain were practically one 'in the paramount essentials of race, language, literature, liberties, laws, and religion'; and he expressed his hope that they provided the foundation for 'the inseparable and fraternal relations between two of the great "living nations" of the world'.¹⁵⁰ As we shall see presently, no one at the time was more critical of Gladstone than long-time *New York Tribune* correspondent George W. Smalley. However, among his sparse offerings of praise he commended the statesman's leadership in warmer relations between the two nations. 'That clear vision', Smalley wrote, 'of the identity of interests between the two branches of one great race is the best legacy he has left.'¹⁵¹ From New York to Chicago Gladstone was hailed for promoting Anglo-American unity.

In the evangelical press there were similar references. *Zion's Herald* published an address delivered 13 June 1898 before the Boston Methodist Preachers' Meeting by Thomas Reuen in which he declared: 'A great idea has been for long time past before the Christ-inspired men of the Anglo-Saxon world—the idea of a union for the highest ends known to man of English-speaking peoples.'¹⁵² Reuen believed such an alliance should not merely be for war and conquest, but to oppose savagery and inhumanity in the interests of peace and progress. Echoing the Liberal panacea of free trade, he declared it would 'lift

¹⁴⁹ 'Obituary Record of Graduates of Yale University Deceased during the Academical Year ending in June 1899', p. 605. < http://mssa.library.yale.edu/obituary_record/1859_1924/1898-99.pdf.>; Hart served as Rector of College Grammar School from 1852 until his death in 1899.

¹⁵⁰ Levi Wells Hart, 'Kin Beyond Sea', *CT*, 29 May 1898, p. 27.

¹⁵¹ GWS, 'Reminiscences, Anecdotes, and an estimate', *Harpers New Monthly Magazine*, 97 (1898), p. 800.

¹⁵² Thomas Reuen, 'An Anglo-American Alliance', *ZH*, 15 June 1898, p. 743.

off the cruel and unjust taxations on all industries'.¹⁵³ It would require Christian leaders willing to subordinate all lower allegiances to Christ. The prime example of this, Reuen noted, had been Gladstone.¹⁵⁴ The *Congregationalist* devoted a portion of its 'Current News' column to 'The Anglo-American Fellowship', where it was stated that the 'best men of both countries are falling into line as advocates of an understanding, which, while not formal, shall be quite as effective as if it were.'¹⁵⁵ The author invoked the memory of Gladstone and recalled an 1884 statement in which he referred to a potential alliance as 'at once majestic, inspiring and consolatory' and one that should come about in 'an orderly and natural growth, requiring only that we should be reasonably true and loyal to our traditions and Great Britain to hers'.¹⁵⁶ In another example, the *Congregationalist* reported on the annual meeting of the Congregational Union of England and Wales. The assembly took on the double cause of expressing sympathy for Gladstone who lay dying, and to declare solidarity with the United States in its war with Spain. The correspondent proclaimed that the feeling of Anglo-American unity had 'grown in volume and intensity that we feel the impulse is of God rather than of man'.¹⁵⁷ And he believed it was 'hastening the coming of the day when all English-speaking peoples shall be united together for the furtherance of peace and righteousness'.¹⁵⁸ The *Outlook* also covered the meeting, its correspondent describing the scene following a speech by an American delegate as 'an outburst of enthusiasm for "our kin beyond sea" which is almost without

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 744.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 745.

¹⁵⁵ 'Current History', *CON*, 26 May 1898, p. 760.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ 'British Congregationalists' Sympathy for America', *CON*, 2 June 1898, p. 806.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

parallel'.¹⁵⁹ He also noted that wild cheering by those assembled followed.¹⁶⁰

Evangelicals were no less enthusiastic about the link between Gladstone and rapprochement.

Although the overwhelming majority of reporting on Gladstone in the wake of his death was extremely favourable, there were a few notable exceptions. Since most reporting on the death of famous leaders appears in the form of eulogy and may even lapse into hagiography, the presence of critical commentary at such a time is perhaps even more instructive. A theme that appeared in a few instances revolved around Gladstone's propensity to change his mind on issues of policy. In what may have been the only hint of negative press among evangelicals, a writer for the *Congregationalist* suggested: 'In Mr. Gladstone the world has known a statesman whose moral probity it has never dared to question, although at times forced to question his intellectual consistency.'¹⁶¹ English journalist and disaffected Liberal Arnold White wrote in *Harper's Weekly* that the statesman was a model of inconsistency, 'with a mind capable not only of splitting hairs, but of dividing them in filaments still finer'.¹⁶² Among the examples of 'Gladstonian doublespeak', Arnold included the statesman's contradictory explanations of the death of Gordon in Khartoum and the bombardment of Alexandria.¹⁶³ A writer in the *Catholic World* denounced him as a calculating politician without guiding principles: 'He trims his sails to the breezes, from whatever quarter they come. He is a man who feels the popular pulse, and moves and sways the crowds by controlling or yielding to popular passion as the

¹⁵⁹ 'The Religious World', *Outlook*, 4 June 1898, p. 349.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ 'Mr. Gladstone as a Statesman', *CON*, 26 May 1898, p. 758.

¹⁶² Arnold White, 'Gladstone', *HW*, 28 May 1898, p. 522.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

case may be. His greatness in politics merely reflected his ability to adapt to popular pressure.¹⁶⁴ Especially among his critics, Gladstone had developed a reputation for changing with the political winds.

In at least two instances Gladstone supporters came to his defence on the charge of change, and it is perhaps instructive that they felt the need to do so. R. Heber Newton of All Souls' Church in New York declared:

Justice was his pole star, by which he shaped his course. His changefulness was not the vacillation of uncertainty. It was not the contradiction of a man who never knew his own mind. He changed as the nation changed, whose movements were so quickly and sensitively sensed by him.¹⁶⁵

An author for the *Outlook* admitted that Gladstone had 'changed with the changing age', but his critics had wrongly accused him of merely seeking his own political advancement. The statesman's admirers understood 'that he had the genius to see in what direction the path of true progress lay'.¹⁶⁶ He had deliberately turned aside from early associations and viewpoints 'that he might identify himself with the people and consecrate to them his talents in unselfish service'.¹⁶⁷ The reasons offered for Gladstone's frequent evolution on important issues was clearly open to interpretation.

Quite predictably, Gladstone came under criticism in *Catholic World* and the *American Catholic Quarterly* for his pamphlets on the Vatican decrees, but the most sustained critique came from George W. Smalley in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*. As we have seen, Smalley reported on the statesman throughout much of his career at the *New York Tribune*. As the London correspondent, he had become a personal acquaintance of

¹⁶⁴ 'William Ewart Gladstone', *CW*, 399 (1898), p. 410.

¹⁶⁵ *NYH*, 23 May 1898, p. 4.

¹⁶⁶ 'Mr. Gladstone', *Outlook*, 28 May 1898, p. 209.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

the statesman through numerous encounters in social settings. A Liberal-Republican, Smalley had become more conservative by the 1880s and insisted on his own independent voice in his reporting and eventually fell out of favour with the liberal-oriented *Tribune*. His conversion to conservatism is signified by his employment beginning in 1895 as the New York correspondent for *The Times* of London.¹⁶⁸ In the three-part *Harper's Monthly* essay Smalley included some obligatory compliments about Gladstone's remarkable intellect, his powerful oratory and his mastery of budgetary finance, but on balance it was a no-holds-barred deconstruction of the man and the statesman. He began by recalling the popular idea that Gladstone would have preferred to be Archbishop of Canterbury rather than prime minister. Smalley quipped that he was better suited to be Pope because of, among other things, his reluctance to embrace the full implications of biblical criticism. 'Such a power as that', he insisted, 'the power of closing his mind to inconvenient knowledge, was one of the qualities which proved his singular fitness for the papacy.'¹⁶⁹ In contrast to most American opinion, Smalley also questioned Gladstone's estimate of the United States, claiming he had never forgiven them for the terms of the Geneva settlement in the *Alabama* arbitration. 'The sum of the whole matter', Smalley declared, 'may be stated in a sentence. It is very doubtful whether Mr. Gladstone has ever liked us.'¹⁷⁰

In other foreign affairs, Smalley did not share the popular view of Gladstone as a standard-bearer for liberal internationalism. He regarded the statesman as ill-informed and uninterested in the subject. Along with blame for the tragic fate of General Gordon in

¹⁶⁸ Harold E. Evans, 'George Washburn Smalley', *Biographical Dictionary of American Journalism*, pp. 649-50.

¹⁶⁹ GWS, 'Mr. Gladstone: Reminiscences, Anecdotes, and an Estimate' *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, 97 (1898), p. 476.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p. 648.

Khartoum, he criticised the policies of Gladstone's government during 1882 and '83 in Egypt and Sudan, which he described as having 'brought deep discredit on its authors—more especially its one author, who was Mr. Gladstone'.¹⁷¹ Moreover, his opposition to imperialism was also called into question. Smalley heartily concurred with an estimate given by an unnamed Gladstone colleague:

True, Mr. G. will not fight to please these jingoes, nor perhaps for the same objects which would lead them to war. But give him a cause he thinks just, and he will fight harder and longer than any of them. He will fight for the empire. He is an imperialist.¹⁷²

Under Gladstone's influence, England had lost prestige and, Smalley insisted, 'it will have to be said that they suffered from that influence'.¹⁷³ The journalist felt no compunction about landing blows so soon after the statesman's death.

Smalley's greatest departure from the prevailing climate of opinion was his rather dim view of Gladstone's commitment to democratic principles. He offered a more balanced view of his social reforms, stressing the essential conservatism that lay behind them. If Gladstone had expanded the vote for the working classes, he had never intended them to use it as a means to remodel society. 'He stood as a bulwark', Smalley declared, 'in defence of the existing order. It is one of the highest eulogies that can be bestowed on him.'¹⁷⁴ The same conservatism was visible in ecclesiastical matters. Gladstone, he believed, had allowed himself to contemplate the disestablishment of the Church of England only because he thought it would foster reforms that would 'strengthen the

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 478-80.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 798.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 800.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

spiritual life of the church’ and ‘increase its hold on the people’.¹⁷⁵ (It was a moot point given Gladstone’s steady resistance to the idea.) As for the disestablishment of the Irish Church, Smalley gave the statesman no credit for championing democratic principles in that instance. He had merely sacrificed it to ‘political necessity’.¹⁷⁶ ‘Those of his American idolaters’, the journalist insisted, ‘who love to think him impeccable and infallible must reconcile it as best they may with their own conceptions of social democracy. At best he was never much of a democrat, as we understand the word. He never accepted the American idea.’¹⁷⁷ Gladstone may have wanted to be remembered as a champion of liberty, but Smalley considered him a political opportunist: ‘At no time during his great career was he the first to take up any great political or social reform.’¹⁷⁸ In sharp contrast to opinions in both secular and religious publications, Smalley challenged Gladstone’s *bona fides* as a democratic reformer and a liberal internationalist. If those judgments were over-stated he had come closer to the mark by accurately describing the statesman’s essential conservatism.

In sum, the years 1896 and ’98 provide us an illuminating view of Gladstone as Christian scholar, religious man and Liberal statesman. His final foray into the realm of religion and apologetics had once again arrived in America to mixed reviews. The evangelical press had been fervent in support of his Butlerian scholarship. Even the liberal-leaning *Outlook*, which under its previous title the *Christian Union* had been critical of Gladstone’s apologetics, had delivered high praise for his work. Evangelicals considered his edition of the *Works of Bishop Butler* to be the best to date and his *Studies*

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 649.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 799.

Subsidiary had demonstrated Butler's ongoing relevance for the time. Despite his mostly stellar reputation as a statesman, however, the secular press was largely critical of his Butlerian scholarship, primarily because he had not dealt with the bishop in the context of modern currents of thought. As Christian scholar, Gladstone had once again divided Americans with respect to traditional notions of belief versus modern currents of thought.

As both a religious man and a Liberal statesman Gladstone's death was the catalyst for visible expressions of mourning across America. Writers in the secular and evangelical press were nearly unanimous in their opinion that he was the greatest English leader of the current or any century. Gladstone's final days of suffering afforded writers the opportunity to revere his manliness and piety while extolling the virtues of an ideal Christian death. His Christian devotion was a prominent theme among those who eulogised him, whether in sermons or published articles. Without doubt the broad swathe of Americans considered him a man of sincere Christian faith. Those personally acquainted with him such as Theodore Cuyler were certain religion was the driving force of his life and work. The correlation between his religious piety and his political crusades was a commonly held sentiment, whether in his denunciation of Turkish atrocities in Armenia or his opposition to laws easing restrictions on divorce. As a devout Christian man, his moral character was a distinguishing mark of his statesmanship for all but Gladstone's harshest critics.

Americans had also celebrated Gladstone as Liberal statesman in numerous ways. They compared him to Lincoln, their most venerated president. Both were thought to be men of conscience who soared above base politics. Gladstone was an icon of liberal reform and democracy for most Americans. He was associated with words such as 'progress', 'evolution', 'change' and 'democratic' with respect to his influence as a

political reformer. The sentiment had been expressed in secular, evangelical and Catholic publications. Yet at the same time most American voices in the press chose to ignore Gladstone's essential conservatism with regard to the Church of England, the monarchy and the aristocracy. Gladstone had also received substantial praise for his work in foreign affairs. He was admired for the passion he displayed for international justice throughout his career. His Midlothian Campaigns had been well remembered as had his more recent 1896 speech condemning Turkish atrocities. Moreover, his work in bringing the *Alabama* claims to international arbitration was hailed as an act of consummate statesmanship. Both secular and evangelical voices remembered Gladstone favourably as a paragon of leadership in the quest for peace and progress in world affairs.

Another significant area of emphasis with respect to statesmanship revolved around Gladstone's distinctive role in Anglo-American relations. In an ethos of heightened calls for an alliance his record on transatlantic relations came into sharper focus, with 'Kin Beyond Sea' serving as his signature contribution. His name was frequently invoked in 1898 at transatlantic conferences and in newspaper columns related to rapprochement. Gladstone was also celebrated as the embodiment of Anglo-Saxon progress and the hopes of many for a more closely aligned and unified English-speaking world. The theme appeared in both secular and evangelical publications. To a certain extent Gladstone was being exploited, perhaps unwittingly, to serve a larger cause. Although he was beyond question a proponent of an informal rapprochement, which he had articulated in his 1888 *Youth's Companion* article, the more formal proposals would doubtless have made him bristle. Nevertheless, whether correctly interpreted or not, Gladstone had for most

Americans come to represent their essential values of liberty and democracy as well as their myths about Anglo-Saxon supremacy.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

This thesis has examined the evolving reputation of William Gladstone in America as witnessed through the religious and secular press of the period. It has followed the published opinions from just after the close of the Civil War, when Gladstone was held in disrepute, to the time of his death in 1898, when he was celebrated as an American icon. In seeking to account for the transformation of his reputation, our study has focused primarily on opinions of his role as a Liberal reformer in a few key issues where conflicts between church and state had arisen; his work as a Christian apologist and intellectual; and on estimates of his religious piety with additional consideration of whether or not that devotion was evident in acts of moral and virtuous leadership. Our investigation of the primary sources has also considered ways in which writers misread Gladstone's true intentions or were influenced in their opinions of him by looking at events primarily through the prism of American ideas and events.

Our survey of American opinion of Gladstone as Liberal reformer began in the late 1860s with a brief examination of published reports concerning his role in the Liberal government's 1867 Reform Bill, which suggested that American mistrust incurred during the Civil War had begun to change. His liberal *bona fides* advanced significantly as a result of the Irish Church Act. Despite some dissatisfaction over the terms of disendowment in act, Americans on the whole considered it a significant advancement in religious liberty and liberal reform. The overall response among the American press both secular and religious had been one of approval. And, in the case of evangelicals and

Catholics, disestablishment was greeted with jubilation. A few deemed it to be both providential and revolutionary in the removal of ecclesiastical injustice. A smaller number of more measured responses appeared among secular papers, whose writers applauded disestablishment but understood it to be merely the first step in a more pervasive transformation that would require additional reforms to Irish land and education. Nevertheless, the Irish Church Act had gone a long way towards reversing negative opinions of Gladstone among Americans.

During the *Vatican Decrees* controversy of 1874 and 1875 Gladstone's reputation in America as a champion of liberty continued to advance for nearly everyone but Roman Catholics. He faced a couple of reproofs from non-Catholics who thought he had gone too far in questioning the ability of English Catholics to remain loyal to the Crown as a result of papal infallibility. They largely agreed with Gladstone in theory, but found his fears of Catholic disloyalty to be misplaced. Unsurprisingly, withering criticism had been published in abundance by Roman Catholics. Among other things, they accused him of poorly translating the Latin text of the Syllabus with respect to rights of speech and the press and fabricating in his own mind apprehensions about the civil loyalty of English Catholics. The influential Orestes Brownson contended that both Manning and Newman had made Gladstone look like a small man. The critique from American Catholics was severe. Nevertheless, the lion's share of American opinion warmly embraced Gladstone's political expostulation. Protestant and secular papers enthusiastically agreed with his central assertions regarding the threat posed by papal infallibility to the civil loyalty and intellectual freedom of English Catholics. The evangelical *New York Observer* crowned him no less than the champion of the world in the battle for liberty. Additionally,

Protestant and secular voices were also in hearty agreement with Gladstone in denouncing what they perceived to be the ambitious political designs of ultramontanist in Germany and throughout Europe, writing sympathetically about Bismarck's *Kulturkampf*. A significant number of Americans shared the statesman's alarm over the infallibility decree. Gladstone's expostulation was seen to be a credible and necessary call for lovers of liberty to beware.

In the years between the Vatican decrees debate and the Bradlaugh controversy of the 1880s, American admiration for Gladstone's statesmanship continued to move in an upward trajectory. Our study has taken note of several signposts that pointed in that direction during the period including critical acclaim in 1876 for the *Bulgarian Horrors* pamphlet, and the 'Kin Beyond Sea' essay of 1878, through which he had endeared himself to large numbers Americans. Moreover, in coming out of retirement to regain the premiership in 1880, flattering views of his statesmanship at the commencement of the Bradlaugh affair were more plentiful than ever. The middle to late 1870s had been a period of highly favourable opinions of Gladstone for his role as a liberal statesman, with the notable exception of Roman Catholics in the Vaticanism controversy.

Yet despite Gladstone's booming popularity in America upon entering his second premiership in 1880, the protracted nature of the Bradlaugh controversy had raised questions among some about his strength of leadership, particularly among the secular publications. The most persistent criticism had been levelled at Gladstone for failing to bring forward the Affirmation Bill sooner than he had. His endorsement in 1883 of the Affirmation Bill, which sought to allow Bradlaugh the opportunity to retake his seat in the Commons, presented a significant risk to his reputation among religious conservatives.

Nonetheless, the Bradlaugh affair failed to excite much interest in the evangelical press, perhaps indicating that they trusted Gladstone to handle the matter properly or had qualms about criticising their hero. There were, however, sharp rebukes in the Roman Catholic reviews, which censured the statesman for undermining both Christian faith and English civilisation with his sponsorship of the Affirmation Bill. All the same, outside of Catholics much of the criticism subsided following Gladstone's endorsement of the 1883 Affirmation Bill. His speech in the Commons introducing the Bill had been widely hailed, with George Washburn Smalley calling it the best of the session. The Bradlaugh controversy also revealed that a unity of Christian thought and democratic values existed between Gladstone and the secular press in the United States. In general, the non-religious press had also expressed an aversion to atheism, but agreed that one's religious views should not be a disqualification for holding public office, a seminal principle of the American constitution. Protestant and secular-minded Americans shared with Gladstone a social and religious conservatism that was sufficiently tempered by liberal democratic principles.

Gladstone's reputation as a liberal reformer between the Bradlaugh controversy and his death made its most significant progress during the mid-1880s. Our survey has noted through several news reports that in 1885 and 1886 Americans held the statesman in extremely high regard. For the most part they lauded his accomplishments during the second government, both with regard to international relations and democratic reforms. However, the issue of Irish Home Rule had found widespread approval in the United States both in the secular and religious press. Despite its failure to become law, his reputation as a champion of liberty in America reached new heights from which he would never fall

during the nineteenth century, and Anglo-American relations also improved as Fenian violence began to subside. Gladstone's Home Rule policy had also brought American Protestants and Catholics into closer agreement about him than had existed since the Irish Church Act.

Finally, we have examined perceptions of Gladstone as Liberal reformer at the time of his death, an event that dominated the front pages of newspapers in our survey. American commentators for the most part celebrated Gladstone's liberal statesmanship in numerous ways. He was compared to Abraham Lincoln for his ability to soar above base politics, and his admirers lauded him as an icon of liberal reform by using words such as 'progress', 'evolution', 'change' and 'democratic' to describe his influence. The sentiment was expressed in secular, evangelical and Roman Catholic publications. Gladstone had also received substantial praise as a standard-bearer for liberal internationalism and humanitarian intervention in world affairs. His Midlothian Campaigns were celebrated by many as had his more recent 1896 speech condemning Turkish atrocities. Moreover, his role in bringing the *Alabama* claims to international arbitration was hailed as an act of consummate statesmanship. Both secular and evangelical voices remembered Gladstone favourably as a paragon of leadership in the quest for peace and progress in world affairs. He was also admired for his distinctive role in Anglo-American relations, having been mentioned frequently as a seminal figure in the movement for rapprochement between the United States and Great Britain. Both the secular and the evangelical press celebrated Gladstone as the embodiment of Anglo-Saxon progress and of the hopes of many for a more closely aligned and unified English-speaking world. He had been transformed from Civil War era pariah to an American icon of political and religious liberty.

In the second major category of inquiry, that of Gladstone as Christian apologist, our study has revealed a far more narrow slice of admiration. In his first debate with T. H. Huxley, Gladstone's critics concluded he had relied upon outdated scholarship and had failed to consider that the relationship between science and theology had been markedly transformed and professionalised by 1885. Leading organs of progressive orthodoxy such as the *Christian Union* and *Andover Review* considered his attempts at harmonising to be unnecessary and even a set-back to the cause of true faith. They shared neither his scientific explanations nor his belief that Genesis contained scientific revelation. Liberal Protestants shared Gladstone's belief in the dangers of infidelity, but they considered his apologetics to be a thing of the past. A general consensus existed among all the major groups that in 'Dawn of Creation' he had fallen short in his grasp of scientific matters by use of the four-fold succession. Roman Catholics and moderate Protestants of Gladstone's ilk agreed that in 'The Proem to Genesis' he had recovered well and delivered a decisive blow to Huxley. As in previous controversies such as *Vatican Decrees* and the Bradlaugh Affair, Gladstone seemingly had the support of most conservative evangelicals. Moreover, endorsements from James D. Dana, the evangelical Harvard geologist and George Frederick Wright, the Oberlin theologian, had undoubtedly raised his status as a plausible and effective spokesman on issues related to science and theology. The statesman's lack of formal training in science and theology appears not to have been an issue for conservative evangelicals.

The second controversy with Huxley over the Gadarene swine miracle attracted considerably less attention from the secular and religious press than had the first. Although it included relevant issues such as higher criticism and historical geography, the

controversy would live in popular memory as a rather amusing debate over the keeping of pigs. All the same, several important observations about Gladstone's reputation as an apologist may be drawn from the controversy. He clearly emerged from it as a plausible lay theologian in the opinion of evangelicals and orthodox moderates; and despite the trend towards specialisation and professionalism, the statesman was regarded by them as an effective Christian apologist. Yet, as with the Genesis controversy, his views on higher criticism were out of step with progressive orthodoxy, as Lyman Abbott of the *Christian Union* attested. Abbott also hinted at the statesman's amateurism by noting his lack of time in study of the relevant sources. In both controversies with Huxley, Gladstone received favourable reviews among Catholics, suggesting a likeminded on issues of faith and science. He was hailed as the English champion of faith among devout conservatives.

With his entry into the Field-Ingersoll debate in 1888, Gladstone had reached the heights of his fame as a popular Christian apologist among American evangelicals. The debate came during the peak of his popularity as a statesman and religious conservatives were jubilant that a man of his renown would enter the lists against their dreaded foe Robert Ingersoll. Several major evangelical papers pronounced Gladstone the clear winner of the dispute. At the same time, a few evangelicals had stated their belief that Gladstone had triumphed in the debate but voiced some discomfort that Ingersoll had been afforded the opportunity of debating with such an honourable opponent. The reticence said as much about their respect for Gladstone as it did their disdain for Ingersoll. Nevertheless, Gladstone also faced major criticisms in the exchange with Ingersoll. Freethinkers at the *Boston Investigator* were predictably unanimous in their conviction that Gladstone had suffered humiliating defeat at the hands of Ingersoll, while the *Andover Review* had judged

his attack on infidelity to have fallen short of the mark. Unitarians such as Frederick H. Hedge, the former Harvard theologian, viewed the statesman's theology to be out of keeping with modern currents of thought. That opinion had been reiterated in the final instalment of the *North American Review* symposium, in which several elite opinion-makers had taken issue with Gladstone's approach and his qualifications. Even though some support for Gladstone could be found in mainstream newspapers, conservative evangelicals stood nearly alone, at least as far as published opinion would suggest, in their belief that Gladstone had prevailed over Ingersoll. Moreover, nearly all evangelicals papers and a few secular ones featured opinions that observed how Gladstone's fame had brought greater national attention to the symposium. Gladstone had been envisioned by supporters and detractors alike as a titan of the faith who had intervened from across the Atlantic to vanquish one of Christianity's greatest enemies.

In the *Robert Elsmere* debate American orthodox Christians, both conservatives and progressive, expressed points of agreement with Gladstone. They insisted that Ward had inadequately represented the arguments of orthodox apologists, and they were also critical of the theism represented in the character of Elsmere. Additionally, they shared with Gladstone the view that both a belief in miracles and the human need for divine redemption were indispensable. Among heterodox Unitarians and Universalists, however, the opposite was the case. They warmly embraced the novel and concurred with the views of its protagonist. Julia Ward Howe provided the most detailed critique of Gladstone and of orthodox belief. Echoing German higher critics, she found his orthodox views to be the residual influence of primitive religious belief. As had been the case in the Ingersoll debate, there was general agreement in all quarters that Gladstone's *Nineteenth Century*

article played a significant role in the popularity of *Robert Elsmere* and that he had been the catalyst for wider debate about its meaning.

With his 1896 *Works of Bishop Butler* and *Studies Subsidiary*, Gladstone's final foray into the realm of religion and apologetics had also arrived in America to mixed reviews. The evangelical press was fervent in support of his Butlerian scholarship. Even the liberal-leaning *Outlook*, which under its previous title the *Christian Union* had been critical of Gladstone's apologetics, had delivered high praise for his work. Evangelicals considered his edition of the *Works of Bishop Butler* to be the best to date and his *Studies Subsidiary* had demonstrated Butler's ongoing relevance for the time. Despite his mostly stellar reputation as a statesman, however, the secular press was largely critical of his Butlerian scholarship, primarily because he had not dealt with the bishop in the context of modern scholarship. In the role of Christian scholar, Gladstone had once again divided Americans with respect to traditional notions of belief versus the new learning. In sum, Gladstone had produced a landmark work of scholarship for the evangelical faithful, but among elite opinion makers he had not achieved the same level of acclaim as he had for his statesmanship.

In our third major category of assessment, that of American perceptions of Gladstone as religious man and Christian statesman, our sample of publications did not yield the same fertile harvest as the previous two topics. Nevertheless, we have uncovered a few opinions that contain hints of how Americans perceived Gladstone the man. During the Irish Church debate he received accolades in the *Springfield Republican* for his honest statesmanship and integrity. The *New York Observer* described him as noble-hearted, the purest of living English statesmen and one who would restore the power of religion in the

British government. Despite these quite favourable estimates of his Christian character, however, at least one commentator felt otherwise. An author in the *Nation* suggested he lacked the qualities of tact, sympathy and forbearance. Although the sentiment certainly existed in the late 1860s, it was not yet clear from published stories in the press that Gladstone was universally considered to be a principled man of devout faith and Christian statesmanship.

In the Vaticanism debate, opinions about Gladstone's character traits took a decisive step towards the negative despite the widespread praise he received for his pamphlets. Almost alone among favourable commentators at this juncture was Theodore Cuyler, who in the *New York Evangelist* lauded his moral purity and believed he as much as anyone deserved to be called a Christian statesman. Cuyler also asserted that the statesman had taken no care for his political fortunes in writing the *Vatican Decrees* pamphlet. In the *New York Tribune* Gladstone was ranked as a man of conscience as opposed to one of force in a comparison with Bismarck. All the same, negative comments about his temperament and motives were noticeable in several publications. The *New York Times* described him as driven by sycophancy and carried away with his own celebrity, and, like the pope, by his own infallibility. The *Nation* insisted that, in spite of his moral elevation, he had been driven from office the previous year by defects of character. Moreover, commentary questioning his temperament was evident among his evangelical supporters at both the *Congregationalist* and the *Christian Advocate*, the latter calling him ill-tempered. Gladstone's motives in waiting four years before attacking papal infallibility were also called into question. A large body of opinion had chalked it up to his personal bitterness over the failure of the Irish University Bill, including evangelicals,

Episcopalians, Unitarians, and the *New York Times* and *Herald*. Catholics took an even dimmer view of his motives. Bishop Lynch of Charleston believed Gladstone was raising a no-popery cry as a way to regain power, and Edward McGlynn in the *American Catholic Quarterly* accused him of being in league with Satan. Isaac Hecker found Gladstone's statements so incorrect and so misleading that someone less eminent could be charged either of criminal ignorance or of willful intention to mislead. There were serious questions about the statesman's character, motivations and temperament.

Between the Vaticanism controversy and his death in 1898, our sources yielded little in the way of commentary on Gladstone's personal Christian piety or moral leadership, but in an editorial about Home Rule in *Zion's Herald* by Abel Stevens, the historian and Methodist minister, provided some insight in how he was perceived by evangelicals at that time. Steven described him as a Christian statesman who understood the moral responsibilities of his position. If there was a paucity of such sentiments in print overall during his lifetime, Gladstone's death brought forth a torrent of such expression among American eulogists. Gladstone's final days of suffering before death had afforded writers the opportunity to revere his manliness and piety while extolling the virtues of an ideal Christian death. His Christian devotion was a prominent theme among those who memorialised him whether in sermons or published articles. Without doubt the broad swath of Americans considered him to have lived his life as a man of sincere Christian faith. Those personally acquainted with him such as Theodore Cuyler were certain it was the driving force of his life and work. Additionally, the correlation between his religious piety and his political crusades was a commonly held sentiment, whether in remarks about his denunciation of Turkish atrocities in Armenia or his opposition to laws easing

restrictions on divorce. As a devout Christian man and statesman, his moral character was a distinguishing mark of his life for all but Gladstone's harshest critics.

As we reflect on some of the secondary literature, it is hoped that this thesis will expand upon the current body of Gladstonian literature. To date, no more insightful summary of Gladstone's apologetic work and Butlerian scholarship has been published than David Bebbington's masterful study *The Mind of Gladstone*, which has proven indispensable in this study. Although American perceptions of Gladstone were not in the purview of Bebbington's analysis, one finding of this thesis helps to shed additional light on Gladstone's first dispute with T. H. Huxley in 1885 and 1886. As Bebbington correctly observed, Gladstone had been demolished by Huxley in his attempt to elucidate an essential harmony between Genesis and a four-fold model of creation.¹ Moreover, Bebbington also noted that with his riposte to Huxley in 'Proem to Genesis' Gladstone had presented a stronger case than is usually supposed through his use of Butlerian methodology in order to challenge the claims of science to epistemological supremacy.² Although such a case carries some degree of subjectivity, it is nevertheless true that the American primary sources in our study lend credence, for the most part, to two of Bebbington's central assertions. First, they are in agreement that Gladstone's use of the four-fold creation in 'Dawn of Creation' had been a failed strategy with which to confront Huxley. Even among his staunchest evangelical supporters the statesman had been criticised for employing the model. Second, Gladstone's reply in 'Proem to Genesis' had been received in the United States by Roman Catholics and most orthodox Protestants as a trenchant response to Huxley. At the same time, however, we can perhaps now augment

¹ DWB, MoG, p. 238.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 240-241.

Bebbington's conclusion about the success of Gladstone's 'Proem' with the fact that, at least in America, liberal evangelicals and Unitarians remained unconvinced by Gladstone's realist approach to interpreting the Genesis creation narrative.

In contrast to previous secondary literature on Gladstone and the United States, which has focused primarily on the Civil War period, this thesis has looked chiefly at issues related to the statesman's role in the convergence of religion with politics, agnosticism and science. And it has attempted to plough new ground by examining perceptions of Gladstone as found in the American press. At the same time, it has benefited from previous studies and seeks to build upon them, in particular Murney Gerlach's monumental 2001 study *British Liberalism and the United States*. As noted in the introductory chapter, Gerlach effectively demonstrated that liberalism was a vibrant transatlantic movement in the late Victorian Age with Gladstone playing a central role within it. While Gerlach detailed many of Gladstone's interests in, and points of confluence with, the United States, by contrast this thesis has demonstrated the extent to which Gladstone penetrated American consciousness as an exemplar of Liberal reform and Christian apologetics. Thus, while not contradicting Gerlach's research, the present study has demonstrated, from an opposite point of analysis, the important relationship that existed between Gladstone and America.

The other significant monograph that examined Gladstone and America was Robert Kelley's 1969 comparative study *The Transatlantic Persuasion: the Liberal-Democratic Mind in the Age of Gladstone*. Although Kelley demonstrated quite effectively the affinities between transatlantic liberals such as Grover Cleveland and Gladstone in the 1880s, we have seen evidence in this thesis that such resemblances were

visible much earlier among the northeastern liberals, who in the aftermath of the Civil War were active in the Republican party and were the driving force behind publications such as the *Nation*, *Harper's Weekly*, and the *North American Review* under Charles Eliot Norton. The findings of this study suggest that Gladstone was viewed as a paramount figure among the circle of elites who were active in the antebellum and Gilded Age press. At the same time, however, we have also seen that those publications were willing to criticise Gladstone on several occasions.

The 'high politics' school discussed in the introduction also gives us a measure of insight as to why some Americans viewed Gladstone's motives with a degree of scepticism. We have seen that when this school of interpretation is applied to Gladstone, his policies, especially with respect to Ireland, have been interpreted as politically calculating with an eye towards the world of political manoeuvre and opportunism among parliamentary elites. Although nearly all evangelical, and many secular, papers in America perceived him as conscientious and statesmanlike, we have also seen traces of high-political suspicions expressed within the primary sources. The issue that aroused misgivings in America more than any other was the controversy over *Vatican Decrees*. There were opinions expressed within all publication groups within our survey that Gladstone had ulterior motives in writing the pamphlet, the most common being revenge against the Irish bishops for the failure of his Irish University Bill in 1873. The harshest critiques, and the most conspiratorial, came from American Roman Catholics who believed his 'no-popery' crusade was designed to restore him to power or perhaps even to abolish Catholic emancipation. Roman Catholics could only see political machinations as the underlying motive behind *Vatican Decrees*.

More than any other author or publication, George Smalley of the *New York Tribune* offered opinions about Gladstone that consistently reflected a sceptical cast of mind. In the Irish Church debate he saw the cold calculation of resolving the Irish question at work in Gladstone's Church reform rather than genuine concern for ecclesiastical justice. And during the same period Smalley remained suspicious of Gladstone's intentions towards the United States given the impolitic comments during the Civil War. By publishing *Vatican Decrees*, Smalley insisted, Gladstone had succeeded in his attempt to expose ultramontane Catholics as disloyal to the Crown and liberal Catholics as Englishmen first and Catholics second. Yet Smalley expressed his most critical analysis of all in his 1898 articles for *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*. Despite Gladstone's concerted efforts to restore his reputation in the United States, Smalley insisted that the statesman he never really liked Americans. Perhaps most insightfully, Smalley commented on the prevailing opinion in the United States that Gladstone was a champion of liberty and democratic reform. Instead, Smalley, who was by then a convert to conservatism, declared that Gladstone was no reformer but a bulwark in defence of the established order both in political and ecclesiastical matters. Gladstone, he demanded, had never been the first to pursue political or social reform; he had merely been an opportunistic politician. The influence of Smalley on American opinion should not be under estimated given he was the London correspondent for the highly influential *New York Tribune* and, at the time of Gladstone's death, the New York correspondent for *The Times* of London.

Public perceptions of famous figures are often more imagined than real, and that was certainly the case with some views of Gladstone in the American press. Here D.A.

Hamer's essay 'Gladstone as Myth' offers a few beneficial parameters for analysis.³ In it he contended that the 'Gladstone' whom his contemporaries discussed, followed after or vigorously opposed was 'a construct of interpretations placed on his personality and conduct which tell us at least as much about the aspirations and attitudes of the people doing this interpreting as about Gladstone himself.' The misconceptions and exploitations of Gladstone by Americans in our study provide a view into their aspirations and attitudes and the extent to which they interpreted him through the lens of American ideas and institutions, or even of myth.

One such example is the exuberance expressed by Americans for the disestablishment of the Irish Church. Among both religious and secular papers several authors interpreted the bill as a catalyst for more than just the elimination of an ecclesiastical injustice in Ireland. It also portended the disestablishment of all other establishments in Great Britain including the Church of England, a move that Gladstone had opposed. Additionally, for some Americans it not only signalled the full separation of church and state, but the removal of aristocratic privilege and the end of the peerage itself. Writers in religious and secular papers saw hopeful signs of revolution in the British social hierarchy. In a few cases the idea was accompanied by a chauvinistic form of American exceptionalism like that published in the *New York Herald*, which declared that disestablishment was a sign that popular government as practiced in the United States was destined to revolutionise the world. These outcomes, however, were beyond the purview of Gladstone's goals for pacifying Ireland. Moreover, some papers, both religious and secular, revealed an underlying 'No-popery' theme in their reporting of events surrounding

³ D. A. Hamer, Gladstone: The Making of a Political Myth, *Victorian Studies*, 22 (1978), pp. 29-50.

the act. Gladstone's election victory in the 1868 general election was seen as a victory for the true Protestant faith. For other evangelicals, Gladstone's policy offered the bonus of restraining the flow of unwelcome Irish-Catholics to the United States. And both religious and secular papers printed articles about Gladstone and disestablishment that included Protestant paranoia about papal interference in American life. Gladstone, it may be inferred, was seen by many Americans to be the tip of the spear that would slay the remaining establishments of religion in Britain, possibly the aristocracy and the despotic policies of the papacy.

A second example may be seen during the Vaticanism dispute when an even more pronounced anti-Catholic sentiment was pervasive in the primary literature. Some American writers exploited the controversy to highlight the domestic conflict between Catholics and Protestants. Apprehensions over papal plots in the United States became a frequent theme of editorial content, with the struggle over public education taking centre stage. Gladstone's *Vatican Decrees* thus became a convenient launching point to address the period's religious culture war. In so doing, evangelicals and liberals alike expressed the uniquely American theme of separating church and state in order to attack Roman Catholic efforts at accommodations within the public schools. In several stories published about the *Vatican Decrees* the issue became a recurrent subtext. The history of corrupt Democratic politics in New York City, along with that party's support for Irish Catholics, no doubt fuelled the resentment, especially among New York based papers. Moreover, in their reporting on Gladstone's pamphlets the amount of attention devoted to events in Germany surrounding Bismarck's *Kulturkampf* is suggestive of trepidation about papal interference in American society more generally. Viewed in this context, the enthusiastic

support for Gladstone's *Vatican Decrees* was largely rooted in an anti-Catholicism that was endemic to American life throughout much of the nineteenth century.

Another example of Americans misreading Gladstone came in his debates with T.H. Huxley. In that case, however, the misinterpretation was not contemporaneous but came in the following decade. In several instances influential Americans over-stated or distorted Gladstone's role in the clashes between Genesis and geology. Later in the century Gladstone's first Huxley debate was immortalised in when he was cast as an equal standard-bearer alongside leading Christian scientists of the period such as Guyot and Dana. In the most conspicuous example, Andrew Dickson White, in his influential *History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom* (1896), engraved the statesman into popular memory by naming him among the last great reconcilers of Genesis and science and those who were insistent upon keeping geology within the letter of Scripture. White's narrative had disingenuously portrayed Gladstone as an opponent of science and progress. American perceptions of his role in the historical controversies of the period had to some degree passed into the realm of legend.

A final example in which Americans exploited Gladstone relates to the theme of a formal Anglo-American alliance which was popular at the time of his death. It appeared in 1898 as a topic in both secular and evangelical publications, fuelled in large part by anxieties over the Spanish-American War. Amid the enthusiasm Gladstone was celebrated by some as the embodiment of the racially-tinged notion of 'Anglo-Saxon' supremacy and of the hopes of many for a formal Anglo-American treaty of alliance that would unify the English-speaking world. In some cases those seeking such an alliance were motivated by imperialism. The theme appeared in both secular and evangelical publications and it is

difficult not to interpret much of this as exploitive given the political climate of the time. Obviously a deceased Gladstone could not respond to the more radical proposals for Anglo-American alliance that he would have been highly unlikely to approve. Thus, by 1898 Gladstone had for many Americans become the embodiment of their essential values of religious and political liberty as well as their hopes for continued Anglo-Saxon supremacy.

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