

STEPHEN J. PETERSON

★★★  
**GLADSTONE'S  
INFLUENCE  
IN AMERICA**

*Reactions  
in the Press  
to Modern  
Religion &  
Politics*



## Gladstone's Influence in America

Stephen J. Peterson

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Reactions in the Press to Modern  
Religion and Politics

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*For Debbie and David*

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# ABBREVIATIONS

## PRIMARY SOURCE PUBLICATIONS

ACQR	American Catholic Quarterly Review
AR	Andover Review
BQR	Baptist Quarterly Review
CA	Christian Advocate
CO	Christian Observer
CON	Congregationalist
CT	Chicago Tribune
CU	Christian Union
CW	Catholic World
HW	Harper's Weekly
IND	Independent
MQR	Methodist Quarterly Review
NAR	North American Review
NYE	New York Evangelist
NYH	New York Herald
NYO	New York Observer
NYT	New York Times
NY.Trib	New York Tribune
SR	Springfield Republican
TN	The Nation
UR	Unitarian Review
ZH	Zion's Herald

## INDIVIDUALS

WEG	William Ewart Gladstone
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PART I

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Prologue



## CHAPTER 1

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# Introduction

### THE MOST FAMOUS STATESMAN IN THE WORLD

William Ewart Gladstone (1809–1898) was arguably the most popular prime minister in British history, and he undoubtedly ranks among the period’s most eminent Victorians. Yet what more can be written about him? The published literature now exceeds 600 works and will likely keep growing, if at a slower pace than during the bicentennials of his death and birth. Perhaps Colin Matthew best captured the continued fascination: “An assessment of Gladstone is a personification of an assessment of Britain’s moment in world history.” He was the towering figure of that moment. By the mid-1860s he was known affectionately as the “People’s William” and, from the early 1880s, the “Grand Old Man.” His populist brand of political oratory—more American in style than British—was embraced by commoners, and his cult-like following at home spread throughout the English-speaking world and beyond.<sup>1</sup> As leader of the Liberal Party for almost 30 years, Gladstone’s career in public affairs was nothing short of legendary, comprising 62 years as an MP and an unprecedented four terms as prime minister. In later years, his celebrity status was exploited, as his name was affixed to commercial products such as umbrellas, carriages, claret, and, most famously, the Gladstone Bag.<sup>2</sup> By century’s

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 48, 49 in D.A. Hamer, “Gladstone: The Making of a Political Myth”, *Victorian Studies*, 22 (1978), 29–50. Hamer suggests that cult of Gladstone began to emerge in Great Britain around 1875.

<sup>2</sup> “Gladstone’s Imperishable Memorial,” *New York Times*, June 19, 1898, 8.

end, countless towns, parks, and streets were named “Gladstone” from New Zealand to North America. He was the most famous statesman in the world and that was no less true in the United States.

The primary objective of this book is to demonstrate the extent to which Gladstone acted as a catalyst for opinions in the American press, an aspect of the statesman heretofore not considered, but one cannot fully appreciate his influence without some sense of how famous he was in the United States during the last three decades of the nineteenth century. Few in our time know, for example, that no fewer than 14 cities and villages throughout the United States are named Gladstone.<sup>3</sup> By 1887, his star shone so brightly in the American firmament that the US Constitutional Centennial Commission invited him to preside as sole foreign dignitary at the Philadelphia commemoration, a request he reluctantly declined.<sup>4</sup> That same year, a delegation of distinguished Americans—headed by newspaper publisher Joseph Pulitzer and US Congressman Perry Belmont—traveled to London and presented him with an elaborate three-foot-high silver testimonial trophy on behalf of over 10,000 New Yorkers in honor of his service to the cause of Irish Home Rule and religious liberty.<sup>5</sup> And among Gladstone’s American admirers was a future president, Woodrow Wilson, who in his teenage years purportedly hung a portrait of the statesman above his desk at home. When a visiting cousin inquired about it, he declared, “That is Gladstone, the greatest statesman who ever lived. I intend to be a statesman too.”<sup>6</sup>

If Gladstone became a legend in life, he achieved virtual sainthood in death. Granted a state funeral, an honor rarely afforded those outside the monarchy, thousands of ordinary citizens filed past his body as it lay in repose at Westminster Hall. His apotheosis was consummated in 1903, when an over-life-sized marble statue in his likeness was placed in Westminster Abbey.<sup>7</sup> In the United States, news of his death set off a wave

<sup>3</sup> Cities or villages named Gladstone exist in the following states: CO, IA, IL, KS, MI, MN, MO, NE, ND, NJ, NM, OH, OR, VA ([Google.com](https://www.google.com/search) search).

<sup>4</sup> “Mr. Gladstone and the American Constitution,” *The Times*, September 7, 1887, 10.

<sup>5</sup> “The American Presentation to Mr. Gladstone,” *The Times*, July 11, 1887, 11; “News of the Week,” *The Spectator*, 11 July 1887, 946.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in John M. Mulder, *Woodrow Wilson: The Years of Preparation*, *Wilson Supplemental Volumes* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 40.

<sup>7</sup> “William and Catherine Gladstone,” website for Westminster Abbey, accessed July 20, 2018, <https://www.westminster-abbey.org/abbey-commemorations/commemorations/william-and-catherine-gladstone/#i15200>

of national grief more closely resembling the passing of an American president. As Chap. 9 will highlight, mourners across the country crowded churches to hear Gladstone eulogized as the greatest Christian statesman of the century. Comparisons to Abraham Lincoln appeared in published memorials and obituaries, and from the nation's capital Vice President Garret Hobart cabled the *London Daily Chronicle* declaring: "Not even in his own land was Mr. Gladstone more highly esteemed and venerated than in the United States."<sup>8</sup> The *Chicago Tribune* pronounced his career "unsurpassed if not unequaled by that of any other statesman in the long history of civil and religious liberty in all Christendom."<sup>9</sup> As will become apparent in this study, Gladstone was not without his critics in the United States, but millions of its citizens idolized him as a standard-bearer of their values. Considering that popularity, it is perhaps only slightly overstated to call him "America's William."

Yet given the troubled history of Anglo-American relations during the nineteenth century, it is reasonable to ask: how did a British statesman become such an iconic personality in the United States? After all, formal rapprochement between the two nations would not be achieved until World War I, and the so-called special relationship would not be forged until World War II. Diplomatic tensions arose frequently throughout the nineteenth century over the Monroe Doctrine, the disputed Oregon territory, and US complicity in the slave trade.<sup>10</sup> The American Civil War had been especially problematic. Despite an official government position of neutrality, many in Britain harbored sympathies toward the South even if they objected to slavery. A chief concern was the loss of southern cotton, a vital component of the lucrative British textile industry. For his part, Gladstone was ambivalent about the war. His firm belief in the principle of national self-determination had given him pause, and, with news of Confederate triumphs early on in the conflict, he had publicly betrayed his doubts about Union success during his 1862 Newcastle speech. There he infamously declared that Jefferson Davis and the Confederacy had "made a nation." Given that Gladstone was Palmerston's Chancellor of the Exchequer, the pronouncement at Newcastle had violated the spirit if not the letter of British neutrality.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> *NYT*, 29 May 1898, 7.

<sup>9</sup> Levi Wells Hart, "Kin Beyond Sea," *Chicago Tribune*, May 29, 1898, 27.

<sup>10</sup> Duncan Andrew Campbell, *Unlikely Allies: Britain, America and the Victorian Origins of the Special Relationship* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2007), 1–10.

<sup>11</sup> Peter J. Parish in Peter John Jagger, ed., *Gladstone* (London: Hambledon Press, 1998), 96.

Although Gladstone later took pains to distance himself from the remarks, the speech was considered hostile by the Lincoln administration, and it was excoriated in the northern press. An article of November 2, 1862, in the *New York Times* titled “A Rebuke to Mr. Gladstone” brought the issue to the attention of Americans. It contained several reprinted articles from various British papers critical of the speech. A piece in the *Daily News* argued that the Cabinet should either acknowledge Gladstone’s statement as true or remove him from his position as Chancellor.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, the speech had come just months after relations between Britain and the Union government had been strained by an incident involving the British mail carrier HMS *Trent*, which had raised the specter of war between the two nations. In November 1861 the vessel had been intercepted by USS *San Jacinto* in international waters and two Confederate diplomats aboard the *Trent* were taken into custody. The incident was at last resolved when the Lincoln administration agreed to release them.<sup>13</sup> A second source of tension revolved around 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 such as 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.<sup>14</sup>) The war had left Anglo-American relations deeply strained, and Gladstone had risen to leadership in the Liberal Party just two years after its conclusion.

As late as 1869, the memory of Gladstone’s offense of 1862 could still be found in America’s most respected newspaper, the *New York Tribune*. Its London correspondent, George Washburn Smalley, whom the reader will encounter throughout this book, wrote that the statesman’s regard for America was greater than during the war, but he cautioned, “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.” “It must be remembered,” Smalley continued, “that Mr. Gladstone has hith-

<sup>12</sup> “Seven Days Later from Europe”, *NYT*, 2 November 1862, 1.

<sup>13</sup> Duncan Andrew Campbell, *Unlikely Allies: Britain, America and the Victorian Origins of the Special Relationship* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2007), 145–150.

<sup>14</sup> See Charles S. Campbell, *From Revolution to Rapprochement: The United States and Great Britain, 1783–1900* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1974), 111–135.

erto shown a singular want of tact on American questions.”<sup>15</sup> By the end of the Civil War, and for some time thereafter, it was not clear if Americans, at least in the North, would take kindly to any British politician, let alone Gladstone. Certainly the *New York Tribune* did not. In such an environment there was little reason to suppose he would become the object of hero worship in the United States.

## GLADSTONE, POLITICS, AND RELIGION

Nevertheless, the British statesman would soon become an American icon. His fame, of course, rested largely upon his remarkable achievements as prime minister, but his scholarly pursuits were also an important factor. With respect to his career in public affairs, the focus of this book is primarily on his encounters with the politics of church and state and individual religious liberty. In those, and a host of other issues, his positions could be quite modern. As David Bebbington has detailed in his monumental study, *The Mind of Gladstone: Religion, Politics and Homer*, the statesman’s political philosophy was clearly influenced by modern ideas. For example, he embraced key facets of classical liberalism in the vein of the Manchester school—free trade and laissez-faire—and, from classical liberalism more broadly, he exalted individual freedom over the authority of the state. Moreover, Bebbington has noted that Gladstone’s concept of freedom comprised free speech, freedom of the press, freedom to worship, and freedom of the person, all of which share obvious affinities with the American Bill of Rights.<sup>16</sup> However, upon closer examination, a more complex mixture of ideas, fed by religious convictions, emerges in Gladstone’s notion of democracy, which was established by several important studies in the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>17</sup> Building upon these earlier works,

<sup>15</sup> George Washburn Smalley, *NY Trib*, June 29, 1869, 1.

<sup>16</sup> David Bebbington, *Mind of Gladstone: Religion, Homer, and Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 261.

<sup>17</sup> 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), 27–340; 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).

Bebbington focused more intently on the statesman's thought process, locating a cognate of Christian faith and Homeric studies with respect to political liberty.<sup>18</sup> And Frank Turner drove home a similar theme at the 2009 bicentenary conference by insisting that the complexity of Gladstonian Liberalism cannot be properly understood apart from an overwhelmingly Protestant religious impulse.<sup>19</sup> Elsewhere Turner has observed 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. His religious views have become an important prism through which to view his personal and political motivations.<sup>20</sup> He was certainly no theocrat, but his political philosophy was undoubtedly informed by his faith.

Despite the statesman's clear evolution toward liberalism, he retained essential conservative sensibilities that prevented him from embracing social egalitarianism.<sup>21</sup> "England," he declared in 1871, "is a great lover of liberty, but of equality she has never been so much enamoured."<sup>22</sup> Gladstone was no proto-socialist. Throughout his career, he maintained unwavering support for both the monarchy and the aristocracy as necessary institutions, and he was no less committed to preserving the Church of England and orthodox Christian dogma. Therefore, although he eventually changed his mind about preserving the established Church of Ireland, the subject of Chap. 3, he remained firmly opposed to disestablishing the Church of England. Gladstone's embrace of reform arose largely from a desire to stave off radicalism. Similarly, despite his staunch opposition to imperial wars for territorial conquest, he remained an equally staunch defender of the empire. As will become clear in subsequent chapters, some of his more enthusiastic supporters in the United States misunderstood, or simply ignored, this conservative component of his worldview.

Religion and politics also converged for Gladstone in his complicated interaction with Roman Catholicism. His theological views had drifted closer to Rome during his adult years, engendering friendships with liberal Catholics like Lord Acton and Ignaz von Döllinger, but his earlier suspi-

<sup>18</sup> Bebbington, *Mind of Gladstone*, 258.

<sup>19</sup> Frank M. Turner, "Gladstone: A Political not a Social Radical" in Quinault, ed, *William Gladstone*, 24–28.

<sup>20</sup> Frank M. Turner, "Gladstone: A Political not a Social Radical" in Quinault, ed, *William Gladstone*, 24–28.

<sup>21</sup> See Bebbington, *Mind of Gladstone*, 257–268.

<sup>22</sup> Quoted in Bebbington, *Mind of Gladstone*, 265.



cions about papal tyranny were heightened during the pontificate of Pius IX. Gladstone, like most Protestants—and a fair number of Catholics—was alarmed by the 1870 decree of papal infallibility handed down at the Vatican Council, along with Pius’s 1864 Syllabus of Errors, which had condemned all things liberal and modern. The infallibility decree was influenced by an ultramontane revival within the Catholic Church. Fueled by the Jesuit order, the movement emphasized intense devotional piety, opposition to secular liberalism, control of Catholic education, and, of greatest concern to Gladstone, increased centralization of authority within the Vatican.<sup>23</sup> With its emphasis on loyalty to the church, ultramontanism stood opposed to the radical nationalism sweeping across Europe, especially during the battle for Italian unification, *The Vatican Decrees in Their Bearing on Civil Allegiance: A Political Expostulation*. In Chap. 4, Gladstone will be seen unveiling his politically charged 1874 pamphlet. In it, he argued trenchantly that papal infallibility was a dangerous theological innovation, subordinating 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, he believed the decree had rendered Catholics in England incapable of concurrent loyalty to both the British Crown and Rome, a charge Catholics in England and the United States vigorously denied. Many Protestants in the United States, already fearful of papal interference in American politics, warmly embraced *Vatican Decrees* for its condemnation of a perceived Catholic assault on civil and religious liberty.

While Gladstone is remembered largely for his political achievements, he was also highly regarded for his religious and intellectual pursuits. An erudite scholar in his own right, the life of the mind and the pen were among the driving impulses of his life, and he frequently found refuge from the demands of political life at his home library in Hawarden, Wales. In an 1828 biography of his father, Herbert Gladstone recalled: “But the real truth is that at heart he was a student, with an intense love of home life and its uninterrupted quietude.”<sup>24</sup> If his writing was not always greeted with critical acclaim, he lived the life of an intellectual as much as humanly possible, and, given the responsibilities of state, his productivity as a scholar seems almost

<sup>23</sup> Joseph A. Komonchak, “Modernity and the Construction of Roman Catholicism”, *Christianesimo nella storia*, 18 (1997), 353–385.

<sup>24</sup> Gladstone, The Rt. Hon. The Viscount, *After Thirty Years* (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1928), 5.

preternatural—more than 34 books and pamphlets including several weighty tomes on Homer and the ancient Greeks. He also published over 200 articles that appeared in distinguished journals on both sides of the Atlantic, including the *Nineteenth Century* and the *North American Review*.<sup>25</sup> Critics of his writing notwithstanding, Gladstone ranked among the most respected authors of the period, as an 1883 survey of the public reveals.<sup>26</sup>

Evangelicalism had been the dominant influence on William's childhood, leaving a lasting imprint upon his life of religious devotion. But it could not contain him, as theological exploration during his teens and early twenties drew him increasingly closer to High Church Anglicanism. His growing sense of a calling to the priesthood became the primary catalyst for deeper reflection. It is likely he became convinced of it just a few months prior to his enrollment at Oxford in 1828. Some 50 years later he would write: "The desire of my youth was to be a clergyman. My mental life (ill represented in the moral being) was concentrated in the Church."<sup>27</sup> Since early childhood, William had been aware of an overwhelming sense of duty to God, and within the subculture of evangelicalism, such strongly held sentiments quite naturally led to consideration of holy orders, and Christian teaching linked both personal fulfillment and eternal salvation with obedience to divine providence. But the scriptures also commanded obedience to parents, and John Gladstone was insistent that his son would pursue a career in law and politics.<sup>28</sup> His own growing attraction to a career in public affairs during his Oxford years further complicated his inner struggle.

Visits to Rome in 1832 and 1838 proved significant milestones in his theological evolution. The trips left him both attracted to and repulsed by Roman Catholicism. The beauty of the Catholic worship he witnessed at St. Peter's Cathedral enthralled him, but he was equally disgusted by the pope's claims to temporal power, which, he believed, was a chief source of division within Christianity. Because of his exposure to Rome, he was left both mournful about what might have been and hopeful about what could still be—a reunited Catholic Church. As Peter Jagger has discussed at length, by 1832, he had had adopted an essentially "catholic" position with respect to the Christian doctrines of baptism, communion, the

<sup>25</sup> I. H. C. G. Matthew, comp., *The Gladstone Diaries*, vol. 14 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 797–803.

<sup>26</sup> See Bebbington, *Mind of Gladstone*, 2.

<sup>27</sup> Quoted in Jagger, *Gladstone*, 106.

<sup>28</sup> Jagger, *Gladstone*, 100–103.

church, and the ministry.<sup>29</sup> By the 1840s, his theology had moved much closer to that of the Tractarians, the Oxford-based High Church movement led by John Henry Newman, John Keble, and Edward Bouverie Pusey. Henry Manning, Gladstone's close friend and, later, a convert to Rome along with Newman, played a crucial role in his transformation. By the end of the decade the entire structure of his Low Church theology had been demolished and replaced with High Church Anglicanism.<sup>30</sup>

By the 1870s, Gladstone became convinced that the battle for the welfare of mankind would not be fought in the world of politics but in the arena of thought. "A deadly attack is made 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," Gladstone wrote in a letter to his wife.<sup>31</sup> The assailant, he insisted, was disbelief in the form of agnosticism fed by the overreaching use of scientific tools. His defense of faith was grounded on his unshakeable belief in both the authority of the Bible and the testimony of the church throughout history. His methodology was based on the writings of Bishop Joseph Butler, whom he counted as one of his "four doctors," along with Aristotle, Augustine, and Dante. In his classic work, *The Analogy of Religion* (1736), Butler's probabilistic apologetics and inductive logic had set the standard for reasonable defense of orthodoxy against deism in the eighteenth century. Butler had fallen out of fashion in the nineteenth century, but Gladstone insisted he remained a necessary tool in the battle for belief.<sup>32</sup> "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."<sup>33</sup> Chapter 7 will highlight Gladstone's distaste for the less restrained prose of Robert Ingersoll who failed to follow Butler's rules for polite debate.

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

<sup>29</sup> Jagger, *Gladstone*, 110–116.

<sup>30</sup> For a detailed discussion of Gladstone's embrace of Tractarian theology see Bebbington, *Mind of Gladstone*, 77–104.

<sup>31</sup> William Gladstone to Catherine Gladstone, April 6, 1874, in A. Tilney Bassett, ed., *Gladstone to His Wife* (London, 1936), 201–202.

<sup>32</sup> William Gladstone to Catherine Gladstone, April 6, 1874, in Bassett, *Gladstone to His Wife*, 247–252.

<sup>33</sup> William Gladstone to Samuel Laing, in Lathbury, *Correspondence on Church and Religion*, vol 2, 114.

example, read no fewer than 53 titles related to human evolution between 1869 and 1877.<sup>34</sup> A series of memoranda written by Gladstone in December 1881 demonstrates 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."<sup>35</sup> 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."<sup>36</sup> Thus, Gladstone did not retreat into fundamentalism or anti-intellectualism in his defense of faith.

By the 1880s, he had established himself as a popular apologist for Christian orthodoxy. As secularism increasingly gave cover to more aggressive forms of unbelief and heterodoxy, he took up the mantle as defender of the faith. Lethal enemies were arrayed against true faith and required a call to arms. In the battle for orthodox faith, the statesman would participate in some of the most significant religious disputes of the period, resulting in several published works encountered in this book. As was the case with his political philosophy, Gladstone also proves a nuanced study with respect to his religious views. Although he vigorously opposed radical currents in modern thought, and, in the parlance of our time, may be called a culture warrior, he was no fundamentalist. 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. In fact, by the 1850s, his theology began to evolve as he became increasingly sympathetic to the liberal Broad Church movement. By the 1860s there was a distinctly liberal quality to his faith, although he accommodated modern biblical scholarship only to point where it threatened Christian orthodoxy.<sup>37</sup> In that respect his religious orientation was closer

<sup>34</sup> Bebbington, *Mind of Gladstone*, 235.

<sup>35</sup> Quoted in Bebbington, *Mind of Gladstone*, 236.

<sup>36</sup> William Gladstone, *Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture*, (Philadelphia: Henry Altemus Company, 1890), 217.

<sup>37</sup> Bebbington, *Mind of Gladstone*, 131, 139.

to that of his politics than might be assumed at first blush. He welcomed modern ideas in both arenas provided they remained within the boundaries of traditions established by Christian civilization. Such conditions were necessary, he believed, for both social cohesion and political liberty.

### THE FOCUS AND SCOPE OF THIS BOOK

This book sheds considerable light on American perceptions of Gladstone, but opinions about him ultimately serve a larger purpose: that of an entry point or portal into understanding American views about modern developments in religion and politics. The primary focus rests upon American perceptions of Gladstone during several pivotal events, beginning in 1868 with his first premiership and culminating in 1898 with his death. By drilling down into the periodicals, both religious and secular, a spotlight is shown on published reactions to the statesman's participation in two significant nineteenth-century trends associated with religion: his role in political issues related to church disestablishment and individual religious liberty—the politics of religion and his avocation as a Christian apologist in the Victorian crisis of faith. Considering Gladstone's prodigious accomplishments in public affairs, it is beyond the scope of this book to comprehensively review them in their entirety. However, for context, brief summaries of several landmark moments in his political career are included, providing the reader with a general sense of how they were perceived in the mainstream press. It is also beyond the boundaries of this study to account for all of the statesman's published works. As the late Frank M. Turner aptly noted, if collected, Gladstone's articles alone would fill several stout volumes.<sup>38</sup> And if issues revolving around religion seem to dominate the book, it is hoped the reader will be struck by the extent to which theological disputes were a prominent theme of the period, and, in ways similar to present-day United States, bled over into political life. Nineteenth-century America was nothing if not overtly religious, and establishment Protestantism still maintained hegemonic control over much of society, including politics and the press. For the purposes of this study, therefore, Gladstone's moment in world history becomes an effective spotlight for illuminating modern religious and political controversies of the Gilded Age, along with providing insight into how he was perceived in the United States.

<sup>38</sup> "Professor Frank Turner, review of *Reading Gladstone*, (review no. 787)" Reviews in History (website), accessed February 25, 2013, <http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/787>

The modern movements that challenged existing American ideas and institutions are outlined in Chap. 2, along with significant changes to journalism during the latter half of the nineteenth century. For perspective, a summary of the primary newspapers and journals used in this study is also included, identifying their political and religious affiliations. Gladstone's involvement in the politics of religious liberty is the focus of Chaps. 3, 4, and 5. Chapter 3 examines his commitment to passing the Irish Church Act. In 1868, his proposal for disestablishing the Church of Ireland propelled him to his first premiership. Chapter 4 centers on another Roman Catholic issue, the controversy over Gladstone's politically charged 1874 pamphlet *The Vatican Decrees in Their Bearing on Civil Allegiance: A Political Expostulation* and its sequel the following year, *Vaticanism: An Answer to Reproofs & Replies*. In both works, he insisted the decree of infallibility represented a dangerous theological innovation, subordinating Catholics in Britain (and elsewhere) to the dictates of the pope both in matters of faith and, more alarmingly, in their civic loyalty. Gladstone's screed exposed the tensions that existed in United States between an expanding Catholic population and the Protestant establishment, which genuinely feared such migrants and, along with them, interference by the Vatican in American politics. Chapter 5 looks at the controversy that ensued, in 1880, when the newly elected atheist and Republican Charles Bradlaugh was barred from taking his seat in the House of Commons. The controversy arose as Gladstone was beginning his second government, and his reputation as a Christian statesman and a champion of liberty was tested in the lingering dispute over the practice of swearing the oath in the name of God. The introduction of the Affirmation Bill by Gladstone's government in 1883 became a crucial development in the clash. Americans heard in it echoes of their own constitution.

Chapters 6, 7, and 8 revolve around opinions of Gladstone's avocation as a Christian apologist and public intellectual. Americans across the religious spectrum were captivated by the statesman's role as a controversialist. Chapter 6 considers American perceptions of his two debates with T.H. Huxley in the British review *Nineteenth Century*. Their first dispute of 1885–1886 over “Genesis and Geology” revisited earlier nineteenth-century controversies surrounding the scientific accuracy of the biblical creation narrative. The second debate of 1890–1891 was an argument over the encounter between Jesus and the Gadarene demoniac of the New Testament gospels—it remains a part of the lore in the period's battle, such as it ever existed, between science and religion. Chapter 7 examines

Gladstone's 1888 foray into Christian apologetics. His *North American Review* article denouncing the popular American agnostic Robert Ingersoll was the most widely reported of his religious disputes. Ingersoll's riposte to the statesman was an unrestrained assault upon the Bible and orthodox Christianity. The American press was captivated by the spectacle, and the articles published tell us much about the rise of disbelief in the United States and how Christians debated how best to contain it. Two separate events in Chap. 8 are used to assess Gladstone's status as a Christian intellectual and apologist. The first examines reactions to Gladstone's 1888 review of *Robert Elsmere*—Mary Ward's popular, and controversial, novel of lost faith. In it she had openly promoted humanistic religion. The crucial issue confronted by Gladstone in the review was his anxiety over the excesses of higher critical methodology. Ward was the granddaughter of the influential Rugby headmaster Thomas Arnold and niece of the poet and essayist Matthew Arnold, both of whom were sympathetic to higher criticism of the Bible. Gladstone's review sparked debate in the United States over the use of liberal theology and the statesman's effectiveness as a spokesman for orthodoxy. In the second instance, the American reception of his 1896 magnum opus, *The Works of Joseph Butler*, is considered. The two-volume work had been a decades-long dream of the statesman and was accompanied by *Studies Subsidiary to the Works of Bishop Butler*, a monograph devoted to analysis of the Anglican theologian's major apologetic themes and methods. In addition to evaluating Gladstone's skill as an editor and theologian, American reviews of his work centered on the relevance of Butler's apologetics for the nineteenth century.

Finally, in Chap. 10, American opinions of Gladstone at his death in 1898 are surveyed, emphasizing how Americans remembered and celebrated the legendary statesman at his passing. Given the timing of his death, a significant area of emphasis revolved around Gladstone's distinctive role in Anglo-American relations. The Spanish-American War had created an ethos of heightened calls for a formal transatlantic alliance. Thus, his record on forging improved transatlantic relations came into sharper focus. His name was frequently invoked in 1898 at transatlantic conferences and in newspaper columns related to rapprochement. Gladstone's legacy was also being celebrated by some as the embodiment of Anglo-Saxon progress and hope for a more closely aligned and unified English-speaking world.

By examining the American press of the period, it becomes evident that perceptions of the statesman—along with the issues he raised—were often filtered through events much closer to home and colored by modern dis-

ruptions to traditional political, religious, and intellectual life. Such disturbances, which provide the backdrop for this study, resulted from a convergence of factors in American society, including debates over religious establishments, conflicts between religion and science, the rise of radical skepticism, ongoing tension between Protestants and Catholics, and the emergent rift between conservative and liberal evangelicals. Moreover, Gladstone's political actions were being assessed within the context of a vibrant postbellum movement in America aimed at expanding democratic principles. As Chap. 2 will detail further, a new vision of liberal democracy, more progressive in its emphasis, was emerging in the aftermath of the Civil War. Of course, similar battles were being waged by Gladstone in Great Britain, so naturally Americans could relate to him. There is, therefore, a significant transatlantic dimension to this book. For political liberals and evangelicals (groups that often overlapped), the sense of a shared "Anglosphere" was a hallmark of the late nineteenth century, recent tensions between the two nations notwithstanding.

Scholars have almost always included some mention of Gladstone in the context of the American Civil War, but precious little has been devoted exclusively to his relations with the United States outside of the war. The first monograph to do so was Robert Kelley's *The Transatlantic Persuasion: The Liberal-Democratic Mind in the Age of Gladstone* (1969).<sup>39</sup> In it he defined a common set of political principles among the liberal parties of Great Britain, 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 properly placed him in a tradition that applied political moralism to a host of social, economic, and international issues. Although a valuable comparative study of a shared Anglosphere, Kelley's treatment of the United States focused largely on Gladstone's influence on Democratic Party leaders Samuel Tilden and Grover Cleveland, with little attention paid to American opinions of Gladstone—and virtually no focus on the popular press.

Thus far, 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 America. His survey of interaction between liberals in Britain and the United States

<sup>39</sup> Robert Kelley, *The Transatlantic Persuasion: The Liberal-Democratic Mind in the Age of Gladstone* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969).



during the late nineteenth century provides unprecedented treatment of the statesman's role in Anglo-American history. Gerlach has also given ample treatment to the statesman's opinions of the United States. Yet he was chiefly concerned with the influence of America upon leading British liberals, which is the opposite tack taken in this study. Moreover, he included little analysis of the American press. This volume seeks to build upon the works of Kelley and Gerlach by adding another chapter to Gladstone's relationship with his "kin beyond sea." Admittedly, more research is necessary for a complete picture. For reasons that are delineated in Chap. 2, the eastern press provides the core sample for this study. An examination of southern and western publications could highlight regional differences of opinion, and further investigation into American perceptions of Gladstone's role in foreign policy and his domestic legislative agenda—especially Irish Home Rule—would also be important contributions.

### HOW THIS STUDY WAS UNDERTAKEN

The research for this book was conducted using a broad range of opinion in both secular and religious publications, having been drawn from the pages of the leading American religious and secular press dating from approximately 1868 to 1898. The study sample is representative of newspapers and journals with a national reputation during the postbellum and Gilded Age periods. Therefore, they come largely from the religious and secular press located in New York City, home during the period to most publications with a national circulation and to those of lesser distribution that carried significant clout among the intellectual set—I discuss this trend in Chap. 3. It also draws from a few important papers in Boston, Philadelphia, and Chicago. Such leading publications were also more likely to feature international news and employ correspondents in London. The sample for this study, then, admittedly leaves out papers from the former Confederate states and most western states.

American opinion in the press is examined in the general categories of major secular news organs, conservative evangelicals, liberal evangelicals, Roman Catholics, and, to a lesser degree, Unitarians and free-thought agnostics. The study sample includes 12 religious publications and 10 that may be considered secular, although they also frequently feature writers who were religious. Numerous other periodicals are cited in the book, but the core of the study sample includes the following: *American Catholic Quarterly Review*, *Andover Review*, *Baptist Quarterly Review*, *Catholic*

*World, Chicago Tribune, Christian Advocate, Christian Observer, Christian Union, Congregationalist, Harper's Weekly, The Independent, Methodist Quarterly Review, The Nation, North American Review, New York Evangelist, New York Observer, New York Herald, New York Times, New York Tribune, Springfield Republican, Unitarian Review, and Zion's Herald.* In addition to a wide variety of periodicals, this study is also enriched by the presence of numerous influential American and British authors and journalists of the period. A recurring figure is the journalist George Washburn Smalley who maintains a consistent presence throughout the book. As the London correspondent for the *New York Tribune* (later New York correspondent for *The Times* of London), Smalley was a personal acquaintance of Gladstone and wrote about him frequently and with more candor than most correspondents.

Finally, before embarking on any study of famous figures, it is worth remembering that perceptions held by their contemporaries may have been more imagined than real. And sometimes, perhaps especially in newspapers—those “first rough drafts of history”—they were simply wrong. As I will demonstrate at several junctures in this book, misconceptions about Gladstone in the American press are part of the historical record. Here D.A. Hamer’s 1978 essay “Gladstone as Myth” provides useful parameters. Hamer contended that the “Gladstone” whom his contemporaries discussed, followed, 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.”<sup>40</sup> Certainly Hamer’s point is applicable to most famous people, but Gladstone was, and is, a uniquely complex onion to peel given the enormity of what he said, wrote, and did over a remarkably lengthy career. All the same, mythic interpretations of, and misconceptions about, Gladstone, which sometimes appeared in the American press, may provide us insights into the author’s—as well as the publisher’s—aspirations and attitudes.

<sup>40</sup>D. A. Hamer, “Gladstone: The Making of a Political Myth,” *Victorian Studies*, 22 (1978), 29–50.



## CHAPTER 2

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# Religion, Politics, and Journalism: Modern Influences in Nineteenth-Century America

### THE NEW THEOLOGY

In the United States, traditional ideas and institutions were battered steadily by progressive developments during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Opinions about Gladstone in the American press were often framed in a climate of revolutionary changes to religion, politics, and journalism. The conservative-Protestant hegemony was under direct assault. By the late 1860s, as George Marsden has well diagnosed, the old established Protestant order—consisting of a unified theory of truth between faith, science, the Bible, morality, and civilization—had been struck almost simultaneously by the convulsive forces of evolutionary naturalism, higher criticism of the Bible, and the newer Idealistic philosophy and theology.<sup>1</sup> These trends were part of a revolution in modern ideas that by the turn of the century had largely wrested control of American higher education from traditional Protestantism.<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> Critical scholars subjected the Bible to modern tools of

<sup>1</sup>George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 16, 17, 26.

<sup>2</sup>Mark A. Noll, *History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992), 393.

<sup>3</sup>Alasdair I. C. Heron, *A Century of Protestant Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1980), 38–60.

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.

German theological liberalism, or “new theology,” 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.<sup>4</sup> 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 to New School versions of New England Theology.<sup>5</sup> Not until the 1880s did progressive orthodoxy—or evangelical liberalism—begin to make inroads, first at Andover Theological Seminary and then even more so at Union Theological Seminary. Others would follow thereafter.<sup>6</sup> 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 nonsectarian 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 emphasized specialized training and graduate studies.<sup>7</sup> The overall trend on both sides of the Atlantic was toward specialization and professionalism within the various academic disciplines, while amateur scientists and theologians were losing prestige among the elite intellectual set.<sup>8</sup> The issue, as will be demonstrated later on, would confront Gladstone in the 1880s when he waded into the waters of scientific and theological controversy.

<sup>4</sup> James Moorehead, *World Without End: Mainstream American Protestant Visions of Last Things, 1880–1925* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), 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), 45–124.

<sup>5</sup> Gary Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology: Imagining Progressive Religion, 1805–1900* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 261.

<sup>6</sup> Dorrien, *Making of American Liberal Theology*, 292–293.

<sup>7</sup> Dorrien, *Making of American Liberal Theology*, 365.

<sup>8</sup> For developments in Great Britain see Frank M. Turner, “The Victorian Conflict between Science and Religion: A Professional Dimension,” *Isis* (69), 356–376.

Three general approaches to the new learning were emerging on both sides of the Atlantic in the latter half of the century. First, orthodox Christians, who were wary but willing to address modern developments with caution. Gladstone was of their ilk. They were open to the claims of evolutionary science and biblical criticism insofar as orthodox belief and traditional design arguments were not threatened. By the 1880s, the new learning had penetrated more deeply into mainstream society, creating new fault lines separating orthodox moderates from reactionary biblical literalists.<sup>9</sup> At the opposite pole stood a second, much smaller—but highly influential—group comprising skeptics, atheists, and agnostics who had fully embraced the new learning, exploiting it to malign the Bible in particular and religion more generally.

The third major group 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 historic creeds—but they generally accepted developments in evolutionary science and higher criticism, formulating what became known as progressive orthodoxy. Unitarians also shared an appreciation for liberalism, but they took its implications even further to the left. In Great Britain, the most visible expression of liberalism was seen in the Broad Church movement within the Church of England—defined most clearly by the controversial monograph *Essays and Reviews* (1860).<sup>10</sup> 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 in the English-speaking world.<sup>11</sup> Central to the new theology was the integration of Darwinian evolutionary theory into the romanticism of Schleiermacher. It had first been attempted by Newman Smyth in *The Religious Feeling* (1877), but the keystone of the liberal theology movement in America was Theodore Munger’s *The Freedom of Faith* (1883).<sup>12</sup> Various forms of theistic evolution were also being expounded, including that of James McCosh, president of Princeton University. Evolutionary theology was

<sup>9</sup> Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 22–25.

<sup>10</sup> 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, 28–40.

<sup>11</sup> Noll, *History of Christianity*, p. 238; Dorrien, *American Liberal Theology*, xx.

<sup>12</sup> Dorrien, *American Liberal Theology*, 282, 293–304.

popularized 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.<sup>13</sup> Progressive evangelicals and Unitarians of the period had found ways to coexist quite comfortably with the new learning. The extent to which Gladstone apologetics find approval from this influential group will be an important consideration going forward.

### THE CATHOLIC-PROTESTANT DIVIDE

Another important dimension to consider in nineteenth-century American religion revolves around ongoing tension between Protestants and Catholics. From roughly 1820 to 1860, there existed a distinct cultural uniformity that, as John F. Wilson and Donald L. Drakeman have suggested, may be characterized as “a Protestant Christian republic in substance if not in form.”<sup>14</sup> Beyond the more familiar historical conflicts and doctrinal differences dating back to the Reformation, bigotry toward Catholics in the United States had been triggered by a 900 percent 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.<sup>15</sup> The founding in 1850 of the nativist American Party—or “Know Nothings”—had thrust the issue onto the national political stage. With the motto “Americans must rule America,” its members even had to 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.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, by that time, 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 given way to the ultramontane revival among American Catholic leaders.<sup>17</sup> Evangelicals, although sharply divided over Know-Nothingism, were a driving force

<sup>13</sup>Lindberg, David C. Lindberg and Ronald L. Numbers, eds, *When Science and Christianity Meet* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 378–383.

<sup>14</sup>John F. Wilson and Donald L. Drakeman, *Church and State in American History*, 2nd ed (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987), xvii, xviii.

<sup>15</sup>Jay P. Dolan, *In Search of an American Catholicism: A History of Religion and Culture in Tension*. (Cary, NC: Oxford University Press, 2002), 58.

<sup>16</sup>Dolan, *In Search of an American Catholicism*, 14, 57.

<sup>17</sup>Patrick W. Carey, “Republicanism within American Catholicism, 1785–1860,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 3 (1983), 416, 417.

behind the fiercely anti-Catholic and anti-immigrant American Party in the 1850s, especially in New England.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, most Protestants had been taught from birth to abhor Catholicism. Moreover, the decades following the Civil War witnessed an increase in tensions over public schooling as Catholics sought accommodation for their beliefs. The “common schools,” as they were referred to then, were public in theory, but in reality served as bastions of Protestantism.<sup>19</sup> 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, had been granted in the state of New York due to its swelling Catholic population.<sup>20</sup>

Another source of tension between Catholics and Protestants arose as a result of secular nationalism in nineteenth-century Europe. As a result, Jesuits were expelled from Switzerland in 1847 followed by their departure from Italy, Spain, Germany, and France between 1859 and 1880. Many found their way to the United States where their views clashed with nativist Protestants who already harbored anti-Catholic sentiments. Jesuits in America also faced opposition from disillusioned anti-Catholic radicals from Europe, who had also emigrated to the United States in significant numbers in the aftermath of the failed revolutions of 1848.<sup>21</sup> A clash of cultures had broken out on both sides of the Atlantic. The American reception of Gladstone’s writings and policies related to Catholicism were doubtless colored by the religious controversies of the period.

## POSTBELLUM LIBERAL AMERICAN POLITICS

Politically, postbellum America had witnessed the rise of a new generation of liberal reformers centered largely in New York City and Harvard University. Most were active in the Republican Party or in the short-lived Liberal Republican Party, when in 1884 many defected to Grover Cleveland and the Democrats. The Civil War had been instrumental in the

<sup>18</sup> Richard J. Carwardine, *Evangelicals Politics: Antebellum America* (University of Tennessee Press, 1997), 245–255.

<sup>19</sup> Dolan, *In Search of an American Catholicism*, 59–60.

<sup>20</sup> Daniel Dorchester, *Romanism versus the Public School System* (New York: Phillips and Hunt, 1888); McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom*, 115–116.

<sup>21</sup> 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.

rise of modern newspapers and periodicals as news staffs were expanded for the intensified reporting. After the war, many experienced reporters went on to become editors or owners of their own publications.<sup>22</sup> In *Critical Americans: Victorian Intellectuals and Transatlantic Liberal Reform*, Leslie Butler has argued convincingly 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. Moreover, according to Butler, their liberalism was more a language providing the vocabulary of reform rather than a strict set of doctrines. Their primary concerns were clustered around faith in popular government, progress, justice, and a commitment to orderly change and cosmopolitan open-mindedness.<sup>23</sup> A crucial component of their agenda was a heightened sense of nationalism born of the Union triumph over the Confederacy, which was also 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 at reforming the United States.

Charles Eliot Norton, editor of the influential *North American Review*, perhaps best articulated the postwar hopes for the spread of democracy and, in doing so, reflected a new 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 because 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 outcome. This new phase was a breakthrough without parallel or exemplar, allowing for "distinctively American" political principles "to have a fuller scope and development," including full citizenship for both black men and all women.<sup>24</sup> Norton traced the nation's political evolution in an essay titled "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,

<sup>22</sup> Edwin Emery, *The Press and America: An Interpretative History of Journalism*, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1962), 387.

<sup>23</sup> Butler, *Critical Americans*, 5–10.

<sup>24</sup> James Turner, *Liberal Education of Charles Eliot Norton* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1999), 201–204.



freedom, and moral responsibility had produced in America a “new type of character,” more noble than anything seen in ancient Greece or Rome.<sup>25</sup> This new character, he believed, had begun to emerge only in the last generation, especially as demonstrated by the heroism of Union troops in the Civil War. The United States was “maturing a national character” or a “distinct moral nationality.”<sup>26</sup> American democracy, therefore, fostered the moral improvement of its people, which distinguished it from other polities. Presenting us with an interesting parallel to Gladstone’s religiously infused ideas of liberty, 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 Boston Unitarianism.<sup>27</sup> 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.<sup>28</sup> 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. Even before the war had ended, 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.”<sup>29</sup> While still at Oxford, Norton’s friend Goldwin Smith also perceived larger implications for the war. In an 1865 letter to Norton, he declared the Union victory a demonstration of “a great liberal party of the world” having triumphed over the forces of illiberalism.<sup>30</sup> “English Liberals have just cause to be thankful,” Smith wrote, “for the heroic constancy and the still more heroic self-control of the American people.”<sup>31</sup> Along with an even wider group of American liberals—among them such famous names as Henry Adams, Charles Francis Adams, William Dean Howells,

<sup>25</sup> Quoted in Turner, *Liberal Education*, 203.

<sup>26</sup> Quoted in Turner, *Liberal Education*, 204.

<sup>27</sup> Turner, *Liberal Education*, 204.

<sup>28</sup> See J. P. Ellens, *Religious Routes to Gladstonian Liberalism: The Church Rate Conflict in England and Wales, 1832–1868* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994)

<sup>29</sup> James Turner, *Liberal Education*, 183.

<sup>30</sup> Quoted in Butler, *Critical Americans*, 89.

<sup>31</sup> Quoted in Butler, *Critical Americans*, 89.

William James, and Mark Twain—they were consciously transatlantic, having in their sphere of friendships such like-minded Britons as James Bryce, Lord Rosebery, Sir William V. Harcourt, John Morley, and of course W.E. Gladstone.<sup>32</sup> The extent to which Americans interpreted Gladstone's statesmanship in this context poses a crucial question in this study.

### THE NEW JOURNALISM

Since the primary focus of this book is on American opinions about Gladstone expressed in the press, it will be instructive to survey the newspapers and journals that have been consulted and provide some context on the state of print journalism in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The sheer magnitude of new journals and newspapers during the period presents a particular challenge for selecting a study sample, with the total number of periodicals increasing from 700 in 1865 to 3300 by 1885.<sup>33</sup> The sample for this book is largely represented by newspapers and journals with a national reputation. As a result, they come largely from the religious and secular press located in New York City, home during the period to most publications with a national circulation—and to those of lesser distribution that had a significant influence on the intellectual set. The sample also draws from a few important papers in Boston, Philadelphia, and Chicago, which will be addressed presently. They were also more likely to feature international news and employ correspondents in London.

Religious journals of the period were usually published as monthlies or quarterlies while religious newspapers appeared weekly. Journals were devoted primarily to theology and other scholarship while weekly newspapers printed secular news along with general religious and denominational fare. For much of the nineteenth century, therefore, religious weeklies provided secular news, literature, and culture along with church and theological matters. By the 1870s, however, they began losing subscriptions as the secular daily press became more professionalized 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. Nevertheless, some continued to provide respectable

<sup>32</sup> Murney Gerlach, *British Liberalism and the United States: Political and Social Thought in the Late Victorian Age* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), xv.

<sup>33</sup> James Playsted Wood, *Magazines in the United States*, 3rd ed. (New York: Ronald Press, 1971), 95–96.

social and political editorials.<sup>34</sup> 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 1800.<sup>35</sup> Newspapers 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.<sup>36</sup> The Gilded Age has rightly been called the golden age of newspapers.<sup>37</sup>

Journalistic practices also underwent profound changes throughout 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 to create mass appeal.<sup>38</sup> The telegraph revolutionized the speed of newsgathering, especially after the transatlantic cable was laid in 1858.<sup>39</sup> Secular newspapers during the first half of the nineteenth century had followed largely upon partisan lines in their reporting, but, from the 1870s onward, 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 commercialization as the driving force behind changes in the industry during the Gilded Age.<sup>40</sup> That is not to say party affiliation disappeared entirely, but it was increasingly the case that publishers and editors were emboldened to criticize their parties or take a more objective editorial position to avoid alienating potential readership. 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.”<sup>41</sup> The world of publishing was in a fluid state with dynamic changes taking place throughout the industry.

<sup>34</sup> Wood, *Magazines in the United States*, 66.

<sup>35</sup> Wood, *Magazines in the United States*, 95–96.

<sup>36</sup> Ted Curtis Smythe, *The Gilded Age Press, 1865–1900* (London: Praeger, 2003), 71, 98.

<sup>37</sup> George H. Douglas, *The Golden Age of the Newspaper* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999).

<sup>38</sup> Douglas, *Golden Age of the Newspaper*, 1–9.

<sup>39</sup> See John Steele Gordon, *A Thread across the Ocean: The Heroic Story of the Transatlantic Cable* (New York: Walker Publishing, 2002).

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

<sup>41</sup> Smythe, *Gilded Age Press*, 19, 72–73.

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE PRINCIPAL PUBLICATIONS

The primary sources for this book include 12 religious publications and 10 that are secular. Among the core religious press, two influential papers loom large and provide a liberal evangelical perspective, both of which were influenced by the redoubtable Henry Ward Beecher. The first, *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 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.<sup>42</sup> 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 along with his protégé Theodore Tilton who was the acting editor-in-chief until 1870.<sup>43</sup> In the postbellum era it was a loyal Republican organ until the nomination of James Blaine in 1884.<sup>44</sup> 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.<sup>45</sup> The paper featured luminaries such as Henry James, William Cullen Bryant, William Dean Howells, and John Greenleaf Whittier, along with influential liberal theologians Horace Bushnell and Washington Gladden. Its circulation leveled off in 1870 following Beecher's departure, but it retained importance among American weeklies throughout the period.<sup>46</sup>

The second important liberal religious weekly influenced by Beecher was the *Christian Union* (from 1893 *The Outlook*). Like *The Independent*, it was largely free of denominational control.<sup>47</sup> 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.

<sup>42</sup> Dorrien, *American Liberal Theology*, 195–207.

<sup>43</sup> Dorrien, *American Liberal Theology*, 201.

<sup>44</sup> Mott, *American Magazines*, vol 3, 281.

<sup>45</sup> Mott, *American Magazines* vol 3, 76, 282.

<sup>46</sup> Dorrien, *American Liberal Theology*, 195–207.

<sup>47</sup> Mott, *American Magazines*, vol 3, 59.

After just three years it attained the largest circulation ever witnessed by a religious periodical, reaching over 132,000 subscribers.<sup>48</sup> But disaster struck as quickly as had success 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 partner Theodore Tilton.<sup>49</sup> Within two years the paper lost three-fourths of its circulation. After a period of reorganization, 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.<sup>50</sup> "The Outlook" was an important editorial column and in 1893 it became the new name of the paper.<sup>51</sup> Richard Hofstadter has argued 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.<sup>52</sup>

Several leading conservative-evangelical papers are represented in this study. The two important New York Presbyterian weeklies of the period were *The Observer* and *The Evangelist*.<sup>53</sup> *The Observer* was launched in 1833 by Sidney E. and Richard Morse, brothers of the inventor Samuel Morse. Its longtime 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."<sup>54</sup> *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, progress of the gospel, and occupations for women.<sup>55</sup> Throughout the period of this study it was under the distinguished editorship of Henry M. Field, a participant in the 1887 and '88 *North American Review* symposium in which Gladstone confronted Robert Ingersoll—the subject of Chap. 7.

<sup>48</sup>Mott, *American Magazines*, vol 3, 425.

<sup>49</sup>Applegate, *The Most Famous Man in America: The Biography of Henry Ward Beecher* (New York: Doubleday, 2006), 421–425.

<sup>50</sup>Mott, *American Magazines*, vol 3, 425–426.

<sup>51</sup>Mott, *American Magazines*, vol 3, 428.

<sup>52</sup>Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought* (New York: George Braziller, 1959), 27–28.

<sup>53</sup>Mott, *American Magazines*, vol 4, 293.

<sup>54</sup>Mott, *American Magazines*, vol 4, 293.

<sup>55</sup>Mott, *American Magazines*, vol 4, 288, 293

Two important Methodist papers included in this 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.<sup>56</sup> There were 15 other regional versions, for example, the *Western Christian Advocate*. From 1880 to 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.<sup>57</sup> A regular contributor was Dr. Theodore L. Cuyler, the eminent pastor of the Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church in Brooklyn. He was an acquaintance of Gladstone and will be encountered several times in this book.<sup>58</sup> *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.<sup>59</sup>

Influential among the Congregational churches was the Boston *Congregationalist*, which began in 1849 as a voice for the New Divinity school of theology. The Boston *Recorder* was merged into it, in 1867, becoming *The Congregationalist and Boston Recorder* until it reverted to *The Congregationalist* in 1870.<sup>60</sup> 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 editorialized 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.<sup>61</sup> In addition to denominational news, it featured American and international news. Frank L. Mott,

<sup>56</sup> Mott, *American Magazines*, vol 3, 70.

<sup>57</sup> George Preston Mains, *James Monroe Buckley* (New York: Methodist Book Concern, 1917), 100.

<sup>58</sup> Mains, *James Monroe Buckley*, 102.

<sup>59</sup> Mott, *American Magazines*, vol 1, 138.

<sup>60</sup> 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), 478.

<sup>61</sup> Dorrien, *American Liberal Theology*, 290–291.

in his *History of American Magazines*, has referred to it as among the “outstanding journals of Congregational faith or flavor.”<sup>62</sup>

Protestant theological reviews were generally focused on doctrinal issues and thus had little to say about Gladstone—*Princeton Review* said little but more than many others—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. Modeled after the *Arminian Magazine* of the English Methodists, it frequently published extracts from that magazine and others. Under Daniel D. Whedon, editor from 1856 to 1884, it achieved its zenith of influence. Whedon wrote vigorously, giving attention to general literature, public affairs, education, and science, in addition to theology and church polity.<sup>63</sup> In the 1890s under William Valentine Kelly it became more literary than theological.<sup>64</sup> 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. Its renowned contributors included George Santayana, Josiah Royce, William James, Lyman Abbott, and Moncure Conway.<sup>65</sup> The *Baptist Quarterly Review*, which represented the interests of those who in 1907 organized as the Northern Baptist Convention, also provided important commentary for this book.

Roman Catholic opinion is drawn primarily from the *Catholic World* (1865–1906) and the *American Catholic Quarterly* (1876–1924). The mission of both was to stand as a bulwark against modern secular trends. The *Catholic World* was founded by Paulist priest Father Isaac Hecker, who sought to synthesize Roman Catholicism with an American identity. He was a leader in the emergence of a distinctive “Americanism” that appeared in the 1870s and continued until condemned by the Vatican in

<sup>62</sup> Mott, *American Magazines*, vol 3, 76.

<sup>63</sup> Mott, *American Magazines*, vol 3, 70, 71.

<sup>64</sup> Mott, *American Magazines*, vol 4, 291.

<sup>65</sup> Mott, *American Magazines*, vol 4, 294–95.

the 1890s.<sup>66</sup> The review shared with most evangelicals of the period a fear and loathing of atheism, along with a concern to promote temperance and the welfare of blacks and working men.<sup>67</sup> The *American Catholic Quarterly* was published in Philadelphia and was never as widely distributed as the *Catholic World*, but it had a similar Americanist tone. Its principal editor was James Corcoran, who had opposed the infallibility ruling during the First Vatican Council.<sup>68</sup> *Brownson's Journal* was also an important Catholic organ but only appears in Chaps. 3 and 4 of this book, having ceased publication in 1875. The highly respected Catholic organ was founded in 1844 by Orestes Brownson, a convert from transcendentalism. The review had always functioned chiefly as a vehicle for his views. Brownson ceased publication in 1864 but continued again from 1873 to 1875.<sup>69</sup> A leading voice of American Catholic thought for decades, *Brownson's* championed the liberal Catholic movement in the 1850s, but after the papal promulgation of the Syllabus of Errors retreated into strict Catholic conservatism.<sup>70</sup>

Among the important religious reviews researched in this study, but which appear infrequently due to a lack of commentary about Gladstone, are the following: the *Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review*, the leading organ of Old School Presbyterians; *Bibliotheca Sacra*, the Congregational organ affiliated with the Andover Seminary until Edwards Amasa Park, its editor, had it relocated to Oberlin, Ohio, in 1884<sup>71</sup>; the *Andover Review*, which arose in 1884 and became a leading voice of progressive orthodoxy<sup>72</sup>; the venerable Congregational *New Englander*, which in 1892 became the *Yale Review*; the *Reformed Quarterly Review*; the *Episcopalian Church Review*; the *Quaker Friends' Review*; and the *Universalist Quarterly*.

The principal secular sources include the following ten publications. By the 1840s, the *New York Herald* and the *New York Tribune* were the two powerhouses of the newspaper world and continued to be influential

<sup>66</sup> 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), 206–227.

<sup>67</sup> Ronald Lora and William Henry Longton, eds, *The Conservative Press in the Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century America* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), 369–371.

<sup>68</sup> Lora and Longton, *Conservative Press*, 381.

<sup>69</sup> Lora and Longton, *Conservative Press*, 358.

<sup>70</sup> McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom*, 45, 89.

<sup>71</sup> Lora and Longton, *Conservative Press*, 91–101.

<sup>72</sup> Dorrien, *American Liberal Theology*, 291, 292.



national papers for much of the nineteenth century.<sup>73</sup> The two great rivals eventually merged in 1924 to form the *New York Herald Tribune*. Founded by Horace Greeley in 1841, the *Tribune* 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 Republicans, and officially with Liberal Republicans who in 1872 nominated him 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 criticized 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, numbering 23. The *Times* of London by comparison had 19.<sup>74</sup> The *Herald* was the most popular American newspaper in Europe for much of the nineteenth century.<sup>75</sup>

The *New York Times* was founded in 1851 by Henry J. Raymond and was highly successful by the 1860s and 1870s. Although Raymond was active in Republican politics, he envisioned the paper to be an impartial news source that would avoid the excesses of sensationalism often practiced by other New York papers.<sup>76</sup> The *New York Times* was nominally Republican, but in 1872 endorsed the Liberal Republican presidential candidate Horace Greeley; and in 1884 it bolted, along with fellow Republican “Mugwumps,” to the Democratic candidate Grover Cleveland. The paper lost significant readership in both instances.<sup>77</sup> 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.<sup>78</sup>

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. The venerable but steadily declining journal was transformed into an organ for radical Republicanism and Millian liberalism.<sup>79</sup> Its editors built up a staff of con-

<sup>73</sup> Douglas, *Golden Age*, 23–24.

<sup>74</sup> Smythe, *Gilded Age Press*, 58.

<sup>75</sup> Emery, *Press and America*, 290.

<sup>76</sup> Douglas, *Golden Age*, 119–130.

<sup>77</sup> Douglas, *Golden Age*, 120; and Smythe, *Gilded Age Press*, 20–21.

<sup>78</sup> Smythe, *Gilded Age Press*, 176–177.

<sup>79</sup> Turner, *Liberal Education*, 187–190.

tributors 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.<sup>80</sup> The review underwent more change in 1877 under Allen Thorndike Rice, who in only his mid-twenties took over as owner and editor and changed it from a quarterly to a bimonthly and eventually to a monthly.<sup>81</sup> Circulation of the magazine increased markedly under Rice by placing greater emphasis on current events and by courting prominent authors like Gladstone—who contributed numerous articles. It soon came to rival the popular illustrated magazines in popularity.<sup>82</sup> Rice also began to emulate the symposium format that had been so successful for James Knowles' London-based *Nineteenth Century*.<sup>83</sup> Such controversies would prove highly profitable, especially when famous personalities were the featured writers.

Another important magazine in the sample, and perhaps the most influential among the liberal elite, was *The Nation*. Founded in 1865, 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.<sup>84</sup> Charles Eliot Norton, then editor of the *North American Review*, became one of the driving forces in its founding and enlisted as editor his new friend Edwin L. Godkin, the Irish expatriate formerly of the London *Daily News*.<sup>85</sup> Godkin acquired a national reputation, first at *The Nation* and then, in the 1880s, as editor-in-chief of the *New York Evening Post*, which in 1881 had acquired *The Nation*. Henry Villard, the journalist turned railroad magnate, purchased the magazine from Godkin and it became a weekly supplement to the *New York Evening Post* until 1900.<sup>86</sup> As editor of the *Post*, Godkin also remained in charge of *The Nation*. Although never widely circulated—it had only 8000 subscribers by 1880—it exerted a strong influence on intellectuals and featured famous authors such as Longfellow, Lowell, Henry James, and

<sup>80</sup> Mott, *American Magazines*, vol 3, 263.

<sup>81</sup> Mott, *American Magazines*, vol 3, 31.

<sup>82</sup> "Death of Allen Thorndike Rice," *CT*, May 17, 1889, 4.

<sup>83</sup> "Death of Allen Thorndike Rice," *CT*, May 17, 1889, 37–38.

<sup>84</sup> Quigley, *Second Founding*, 31.

<sup>85</sup> Turner, *Liberal Education*, 185, 197.

<sup>86</sup> Arthur J. Kaul, "Edwin Lawrence Godkin," in McKerns, Joseph P., ed, *Biographical Dictionary of American Journalism* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989), 277–279.

Norton himself, a regular contributor to book reviews.<sup>87</sup> Beyond politics, Godkin's *Nation* published favorable articles about evolutionary writings. Its reviewers were among the first to praise Darwin, Wallace, and Spencer.<sup>88</sup>

This book draws upon 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 of New York founded *Harper's* in 1857. It had been preceded by *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* (1850), which was devoted primarily to republishing literature from other magazines.<sup>89</sup> *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.<sup>90</sup> 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.<sup>91</sup> *Harper's* merged with *The Independent* in 1916, which then merged with *The Outlook* in 1928.

Two important papers outside of New York that appear prominently in this book 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 the more influential newspapers of the nineteenth century.<sup>92</sup> Bowles was a leading activist in the Republican Party who, along with Charles Eliot Norton and E.L. Godkin among others, wrote the party platform in 1866.<sup>93</sup> The other significant 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.<sup>94</sup> The *Tribune* was instrumental in the nomination of Abraham Lincoln in 1860

<sup>87</sup> Mott, *American Magazines*, vol 3, 40, 329–346; and Turner, *Liberal Education*, 197.

<sup>88</sup> Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism*, 23–24.

<sup>89</sup> Wood, *Magazines in the United States*, 73.

<sup>90</sup> Wood, *Magazines in the United States*, 86–92.

<sup>91</sup> Wood, *Magazines in the United States*, 80; and Mott, *American Magazines*, vol 4, 211.

<sup>92</sup> Emery, *Press and America*, 241.

<sup>93</sup> Turner, *Liberal Education*, 209.

<sup>94</sup> Douglas, *Golden Age*, 50.

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.<sup>95</sup> After the war, Horace White was installed as editor-in-chief and in 1872 the paper endorsed Liberal Republicans. The *Tribune* also took a radical stand toward the Freedmen following the war, advocating black suffrage.<sup>96</sup> 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.”<sup>97</sup> 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 center of the period, thus making it a compelling contribution to the study sample.

Two important publications bring a unique perspective to this undertaking. The first is the Boston *Investigator*, a leading free-thought paper throughout the nineteenth century. It was founded in 1831 by Abner Kneeland, a former Baptist minister turned agnostic who was the only person ever imprisoned for blasphemy in Massachusetts, having been indicted in 1834.<sup>98</sup> Horace Seaver presided as editor from 1839 to 1876, followed by Lemuel K. Washburn from 1876 until publication was suspended in 1904. Washburn was a former Unitarian minister and a free-thinker in the mold of Robert Ingersoll—both men will be encountered in Chap. 7.<sup>99</sup> The second journal 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” toward the latter.<sup>100</sup> Several other publications that lie outside the study sample are utilized in this study as well. In certain instances, they provide useful or colorful insights and have been cited where relevant.

<sup>95</sup> Douglas, *Golden Age*, 64.

<sup>96</sup> Eric Foner, *The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2010), 331–332.

<sup>97</sup> Jackson Lears, *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877–1920* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2009), 141.

<sup>98</sup> Roderick, Bradford, *D. M. Bennett: The Truth Seeker* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2006), 97–102.

<sup>99</sup> Bill Cooke, “Boston Investigator,” Tom Flynn, ed, *New Encyclopedia of Unbelief* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2007), 150.

<sup>100</sup> Mott, *American Magazines*, vol 3, 548–551.

PART II

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Gladstone as Champion of  
Religious Liberty



## CHAPTER 3

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# The Politics of Religion: Disestablishing the Irish Church

*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 Gladstone (Quoted in Morley, *Gladstone*, vol 2, 257)

The Irish Church Act of 1869 shook the foundations of established religion in Great Britain and set the American press ablaze with enthusiasm about its meaning. The act disestablished the Church of Ireland, the state arm of the Church of England since the Act of Union in 1801.<sup>1</sup> As Liberal Party leader, Gladstone put forth the daring proposal in 1868. It became the decisive political question that year, propelling him into the premiership over his great rival Benjamin Disraeli. John Morley, Gladstone's original biographer, described the occasion as "a monument to difficulties surmounted," adding: "I know not where in the records of our legislation to find its master."<sup>2</sup> As proceedings in Parliament began to unfold, both mainstream and religious publications in the United States reported on its significance for Ireland and Great Britain, and for the future of liberal

<sup>1</sup> P. M. H. Bell, *Disestablishment in Ireland and Wales* (London: SPCK, 1969), 26.

<sup>2</sup> Morley, *Gladstone*, vol 2, 258.

democracy. The London correspondent for the *New York Evangelist* proclaimed, "Not in the annals of our history, has there occurred an event more important."<sup>3</sup> The *New York Herald* credited American democracy for the bill's passage, declaring: "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."<sup>4</sup> Not all commentators wrote in such high-flown prose, but Irish Church disestablishment was followed closely in the American press.

### THE IRISH CHURCH AND ITS DISESTABLISHMENT

As a religion under the authority of the Irish Parliament, the Church of Ireland had afforded its members privileged social and political status. But when united in 1801 with the Church of England, it came under the direct control of the British state in all matters of polity and doctrine. Thus, for example, the appointment of bishops fell under the authority of the Crown, and appointees were automatically elevated to peers of the realm. Additionally, Parliament possessed the right to define the doctrines of the church and to regulate its revenues and property. Moreover, Irish landholders (until repealed in 1833) were required to pay tithes for the church's maintenance regardless of their religion.<sup>5</sup> For Ireland's Catholic majority, the Irish Church was a source of unrelenting affront to the island's Roman Catholic majority and yet another reminder of English tyranny dating back to Henry VIII.

The Irish Church Act arose within the larger context of a nineteenth-century trend in Great Britain toward reduced privileges for established religion and, conversely, increased rights for Nonconformists and Roman Catholics. The drive began well before Gladstone took up the reins. The initial phase unfolded when the Irish Catholic Church made it clear to British liberal politicians that there would be no tranquility in Ireland without disestablishment. Their leading voices of agitation for reform of land, church, and education were the extreme ultramontane Archbishop (by 1866, Cardinal) Paul Cullen, and the Irish National Association, founded in Dublin in 1864. Although it went against the grain of Catholic teaching, practicality necessitated that the association embrace a voluntarist

<sup>3</sup> "Our Correspondence," *NYE*, March 25, 1869, 2.

<sup>4</sup> *NYH*, July 23, 1869, 4.

<sup>5</sup> Bell, *Disestablishment in Ireland and Wales*, 4, 5.

position rather than fight for an established Roman Catholic Church. It was crucial for them to forge an alliance with British liberals in order to placate anti-Catholic sentiment and temper cries of “no Popery.”<sup>6</sup> The approach bore fruit: the National Association soon entered into negotiations with the Liberation Society, which was eager to exploit disestablishment in Ireland as the first step toward disestablishing the Church of England. The alliance was also crucial in giving Gladstone a parliamentary majority in the 1868 general election.<sup>7</sup>

The Irish Church Act also unfolded in the context of violent Irish Republicanism. For British politicians, the problem of ongoing Fenian hostility had become acute by 1868.<sup>8</sup> One of several recent incidents occurred in December of 1867 with the bloody assault on Clerkenwell prison, resulting in 12 killed and over 100 injured in an unsuccessful attempt to free Fenian prisoners.<sup>9</sup> American interest in the Ireland question piqued in the late 1860s after Fenian violence erupted in North America, Ireland, and Britain, further complicating transatlantic relations. Among Irish immigrants, a fervent nationalism had been brewing from the 1840s onward. One of the earliest expressions of Irish nationalism in America was support for repealing the Act of Union. When the repeal movement waned, nationalistic Republicanism filled the vacuum. The Irish Republican Brotherhood or Fenians 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, who provided leadership for the cause of liberating the Irish homeland.<sup>10</sup> When that movement began to lose steam, large numbers of Irish Americans turned to the Clan na Gael as the preferred expression of Irish nationalism, as did members of the Irish Republican Brotherhood. Jerome J. Collins founded Clan na Gael in 1867, but the organization came to be dominated by John Devoy, who arrived in the United States in 1871 after being paroled from a British prison.<sup>11</sup> These events, combined with the general

<sup>6</sup> Donald Harman Akenson, *The Church of Ireland: Ecclesiastical Reform and Revolution, 1800–1885* (London: Yale University Press, 1971), 227.

<sup>7</sup> Parsons, “Irish Disestablishment,” 131–32.

<sup>8</sup> For a thorough examination of Fenian influences on Irish nationalism, see M. J. Kelly, *The Fenian Ideal and Irish Nationalism, 1882–1916*, Boydell & Brewer Ltd, 2006.

<sup>9</sup> Bell, *Disestablishment*, 81.

<sup>10</sup> Lawrence J. McCaffrey, *The Irish Catholic Diaspora in America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976), 144.

<sup>11</sup> McCaffrey, *Irish Diaspora*, 157.



ethos of anti-Catholic and anti-immigrant prejudice, doubtless factored into the American press' interest in Irish Church disestablishment.

### GLADSTONE'S IRISH CHURCH BILL

Gladstone's personal opinion of the Irish Church had evolved along with his philosophy of church-state relations.<sup>12</sup> An 1867 letter to the radical MP John Bright reveals his initial change of opinion, which he arrived at following his resignation in 1845 from Peel's cabinet. "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."<sup>13</sup> He had been liberated from the views he had put forth in his *The State in Its Relation with the Church* (1838). In that youthful work, he had promoted a confessional state governed by the morals and tenets of the United Church of England and Ireland.<sup>14</sup> His belief that state power was impeding missionary work in Roman Catholic Ireland lay at the root of his transformation. In a March 30, 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.<sup>15</sup>

This is not to say he understood separation of church from state in Great Britain in the same way Americans did. On the contrary, religion and politics remained indissolubly linked in his mind and he would not brook calls

<sup>12</sup> Gladstone's thinking on disestablished was influenced in part by Thomas Chalmers. See Stewart Brown "Gladstone, Chalmers, and the Disruption of the Church of Scotland," 10–28, in David Bebbington and Roger Swift, eds., *Gladstone Centenary Essays* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000)

<sup>13</sup> WEG, "Letter to John Bright," Dec 10, 1867, in Lathbury, D. C., *Correspondence on Church and Religion of William Ewart Gladstone*, 2 vols (London: John Murray, 1910) I, 154–155.

<sup>14</sup> J. P. Parry, *Democracy and Religion: Gladstone and the Liberal Party, 1867–1875* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 153.

<sup>15</sup> WEG, "The Irish Church," *Speeches on Great Questions of the Day*, 2nd ed (London: John Camden Hotten, Piccadilly, 1869), 153.

to disestablish the Church of England.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, his opinion toward established religion in Ireland had clearly softened.<sup>17</sup>

Gladstone's evolved views on the Irish Church were partially rooted in the principle that government should not take precedence over those Christian denominations which held sway in any nation. But, the modern condition of religious pluralism in Ireland had made the establishment untenable.<sup>18</sup> In answer to those who believed disestablishment would prove injurious to Protestantism in Ireland, Gladstone had stated in a speech before the Commons that the maintenance of the establishment had been accompanied by "an immense increase in the proportion of Roman Catholics to Protestants in Ireland."<sup>19</sup> 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.<sup>20</sup>

Given the acrimony in Ireland, Gladstone decided as Liberal leader to stake the prestige of the party on Irish Church disestablishment. The statesman announced his goal of disestablishment in a speech at Southport on December 19, 1867.<sup>21</sup> The relationship of Fenianism to necessary action in Ireland was unveiled in his March 16, 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.<sup>22</sup>

On March 23, he introduced three resolutions laying out his plan for disestablishment. It became the decisive political question of 1868, thrusting

<sup>16</sup> Parry, *Democracy and Religion*, 153.

<sup>17</sup> For a thorough discussion on Gladstone and Irish nationalism, see Alan O'Day "Gladstone and Irish Nationalism: Achievement and Reputation," 163–183, in Bebbington and Swift, *Gladstone Centenary Essays*.

<sup>18</sup> Bebbington, *William Ewart Gladstone*, 147.

<sup>19</sup> WEG, *Speeches on Great Questions of the Day*, 2nd ed., (London: John Camden Hotten, 1869.), 155–156.

<sup>20</sup> WEG, "Letter to Sir R. Phillimore", 4 April 1868, in Lathbury, *Correspondence on Church and Religion*, vol 1, 153.

<sup>21</sup> Akenson, *Church of Ireland*, 234.

<sup>22</sup> WEG, "State of Ireland, House of Commons, 16 March 1868," *Speeches on Great Questions*, 109.

the Liberals and Gladstone into power. Nevertheless, he understood that disestablishment was merely a crucial first step toward the larger goal of pacifying strife and violence in Ireland.<sup>23</sup> The peasantry of Ireland was also bitterly resentful of the landlords and their invidious system of rents and evictions.<sup>24</sup> Having studied the Irish question thoroughly, he realized it would also require land and educational reforms to bring about his intended outcome—Ireland's continued adherence to existing institutions and political parties.<sup>25</sup> Gladstone was summoned by the Queen on December 1, 1868, to form a new government. Upon receiving the news, he was heard to say, "My mission is to pacify Ireland."<sup>26</sup> In a letter to the Queen's secretary, he 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."<sup>27</sup> Others, on both sides of the Atlantic, saw something more in it: a vital first step toward disestablishing all religion in Britain, including the Church of England. Regardless of how one viewed it, the proposal was considered a remarkable event.

With Gladstone ensconced firmly as prime minister, 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."<sup>28</sup> To bolster his case, the statesman published *Chapter of Autobiography*. Its purpose was to justify his transformation on the question of the Irish Church. The divorce from his former view was complete:

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.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Bebbington, *William Ewart Gladstone*, 149.

<sup>24</sup> Bebbington, *William Ewart Gladstone*, 149.

<sup>25</sup> Matthew, *Gladstone*, 194.

<sup>26</sup> Quoted in J. L. Hammond, *Gladstone and the Irish Nation*, 2nd ed (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1964), 81.

<sup>27</sup> Quoted in Matthew, *Gladstone*, 194.

<sup>28</sup> "A Settlement of the Irish Church Bills," *The Times*, July 23, 1869, 9.

<sup>29</sup> WEG, *Chapter of Autobiography* (London: J. Murray, 1868), 21.

He expressed a similar sentiment in a speech delivered in the town hall at Warrington on October 12, 1868, wherein he described the Irish Church as a “contradiction of all the principles on which Church Establishments ever have been founded.”<sup>30</sup> And in a speech before the Commons that year he declared: “As a State Church, [it] must cease to exist.”<sup>31</sup> 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.<sup>32</sup>

Following Gladstone’s clear majority victory in the November 1868 elections, a faction of Tory opponents—hoping for their most favorable 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.<sup>33</sup> To a lesser degree, concurrent endowment already existed in Ireland because 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.<sup>34</sup> Concurrent endowment was favored by Disraeli and many Tories, but also by some Whig-Liberals, most notably Lord John Russell.<sup>35</sup> 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

<sup>30</sup> 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), 15.

<sup>31</sup> Quoted in Bell, *Disestablishment*, 75.

<sup>32</sup> Parry, *Democracy and Religion*, 178.

<sup>33</sup> Parsons, *Religion in Victorian Britain*, vol 2, 27.

<sup>34</sup> Donald Harman Akenson, *The Church of Ireland: Ecclesiastical Reform and Revolution, 1800–1885* (London: Yale University Press, 1971), 227.

<sup>35</sup> Matthew, *Gladstone*, 195.

handed over to the Irish Church again. A small lump 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*.<sup>36</sup> 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.

Following stiff opposition in Parliament and the House of Lords, the Irish Church Act passed into law on July 26, 1869, with May 1, 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.<sup>37</sup> The response from the United States was immediate and, by and large, extremely favorable.

### A MAJOR TRIUMPH FOR RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

Americans of the period were proud of the constitutional principle separating church and state, and the Irish Church Act appeared consistent with that view. If there was a smattering of disapproval over the terms of disendowment, most reports in the press took on a tone of triumphalism. The most common response was to celebrate a major triumph for the modern principle of religious liberty and the liberal reform movement that had been building on both sides of the Atlantic. There were expressions of outright euphoria among the evangelical press. For the Presbyterian *New York Observer* the policy was “tantamount to an ecclesiastical revolution.” Within the British public, the author asserted, “All invest it with a grandeur and importance second to no event in English history since the Revolution.”<sup>38</sup> Moreover, he insisted, Gladstone had achieved a victory for the right “more signal and momentous than any leader before him.”<sup>39</sup> Henry Ward Beecher’s *Independent* declared Gladstone’s resolution “the most radical and revolutionary measure that had been proposed in Parliament since the time of the Duke of Wellington’s Emancipation

<sup>36</sup> Justin McCarthy, ‘Irish Church Dethroned’, *Galaxy*, 8 (1969) pp. 399–404.

<sup>37</sup> Akenson, *Church of Ireland*, 268–273.

<sup>38</sup> “Great Ministerial Defeat,” *NYO*, April 9, 1868, 114.

<sup>39</sup> “Great Ministerial Defeat,” *NYO*, April 9, 1868, 114.

Act.”<sup>40</sup> 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.”<sup>41</sup> The reporter was confident that established abuses were on the decline while education, voluntary Christianity, and freedom for oppressed people were increasing. 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.”<sup>42</sup> In at least one instance there was an allusion to postmillennialism, a popular end-times doctrine of the period that had, in effect, merged the hallmarks of modern progress with the imminent appearance of Christ’s kingdom. The London correspondent for the *New York Evangelist* described Gladstone’s April 1868 speech in support of the bill before the Commons as such:

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.<sup>43</sup>

He left no doubt about its millennial implications by declaring the “providential events” to be nothing less than a sign that “Christ’s kingdom spreads and triumphs among men.”<sup>44</sup>

Secular publications also conveyed expectations of revolution. The nationally circulated, free-thought *Boston Investigator* described the Irish Church Act as “a revolution which has been silently pressing forward, removing every obstacle as it advances.”<sup>45</sup> In this instance, the paper’s secular goal of free expression found common ground with the evangelical goal of religious equality. Still under the ownership of James Gordon Bennett Sr., the *New York Herald* matched evangelical zeal, calling dises-

<sup>40</sup> “An Ecclesiastical Cancer Removed,” *IND*, April 9, 1868, 4.

<sup>41</sup> *CA*, May 14, 1868, 156.

<sup>42</sup> “Disestablishment and Disendowment,” *Western Christian Advocate*, April 22, 1868, 132.

<sup>43</sup> Caledonia, “The Disestablishment of the Irish Church,” *NYE*, April 30, 1868, 1.

<sup>44</sup> Caledonia, “The Disestablishment of the Irish Church,” *NYE*, April 30, 1868, 1.

<sup>45</sup> “The English Revolution,” *Boston Investigator*, August 11, 1869, 117.

tablishment “a modern revolution.”<sup>46</sup> With evangelicals leading the way, some in the American press saw providential or revolutionary implications in the removal of the Irish Church establishment.

A second kind of reporting included writers who believed the act portended the abolition of all established religion in Britain. Among evangelical publications, the *New York Observer* declared it to be “one long step toward the separation of the Church and State, and the emancipation of England.”<sup>47</sup> 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.”<sup>48</sup> If the injustice in England did not exactly parallel that of Ireland, the *Evangelist* writer, nevertheless, insisted: “The principle is the same, and that the wrong in the two cases differs only in degree.”<sup>49</sup> The *Western Christian Advocate* perhaps best articulated the voluntarist 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, unpinioned. No temporal head to the Church of God in any part of Britain will then stand between it and its true and only head.<sup>50</sup>

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 drama of the total severance of church and state in the entire British empire.”<sup>51</sup> The religious press obviously supposed 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

<sup>46</sup> *NYH*, April 8, 1868, 6.

<sup>47</sup> “The Great Ministerial Defeat,” *NYO*, April 9, 1868, 114.

<sup>48</sup> “The Irish Presbyterian Church,” *NYE*, July 2, 1868, 2.

<sup>49</sup> “A Peaceful Revolution,” *NYE*, March 25, 1869, 1.

<sup>50</sup> “Disestablishment and Disendowment,” *Western Christian Advocate*, April 22, 1869, 132.

<sup>51</sup> “The Irish Church Act of 1869,” *CW*, 50 (1869), 238.

mouldering stones of some venerable ruin.”<sup>52</sup> 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* correspondent proclaimed, “visible all over Europe, is particularly noticeable at the present moment in Great Britain.”<sup>53</sup> Another article in the *Herald* announced: “The cry will soon be loud against the Church of Scotland. It will soon be loud against the Church of England.”<sup>54</sup> 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 toward 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.”<sup>55</sup> A broad spectrum of opinion had expressed their hopes for the disestablishment of all religion in Great Britain. Clearly, such a view was a core belief of nineteenth-century Americans.

Within the same body of opinion were those who took their expectations even further and believed that the Irish Church Act also signaled the abolition of all forms of aristocratic privilege. That 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.”<sup>56</sup> 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.”<sup>57</sup> A writer 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

<sup>52</sup> “Mr. Gladstone’s Resolutions on the Irish Church,” *NYH*, March 25, 1868, 6.

<sup>53</sup> “Mr. Gladstone’s Resolutions on the Irish Church,” *NYH*, March 25, 1868, 6.

<sup>54</sup> “The Irish Church Bill—the Revolution Averted—the Compromise,” *NYH*, July 23, 1869, 4.

<sup>55</sup> Goldwin Smith, “Ecclesiastical Crisis in England,” *NAR*, 110 (1870), 159.

<sup>56</sup> “The Irish Church Bill,” *ZH*, July 8, 1869, 318.

<sup>57</sup> “The Doomed Establishment,” *NTE*, July 16, 1868, 1.



birth to them, and their proper place is to be found in medieval history.”<sup>58</sup> In the *Chicago Tribune*, an author suggested Gladstone’s resolutions were “but one sign of the breach which democracy is making in the defences of English Conservatism.”<sup>59</sup> “The Church Establishment,” he declared, “did not have long to live and the reign of caste in Great Britain will come to an end.”<sup>60</sup> Following the initial 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.”<sup>61</sup> At least a few leading papers had expressed the belief that a true state of liberty was possible only when both establishments of religion and hereditary 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 realization of their hopes.

### AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM

As discussed in Chap. 2, liberal thinkers like Charles Eliot Norton believed the Civil War had ushered in a new age of distinctly American ideas about democracy that would serve as a template for future moral republics. This version of American exceptionalism was reflected in some of the editorial comments surrounding the Irish Church Act. Several papers published articles that saw in Gladstone’s policy the intrinsic superiority of America as a model for modern 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.”<sup>62</sup> The *Round Table* provided one of the clearest statements of American exceptionalism. It was “a com-

<sup>58</sup> “The Irish Church Disestablished-What Next in Great Britain?,” *NYH*, August 1, 1869, 6.

<sup>59</sup> “Democratic Movements in England,” *CT*, April 4, 1868, 0\_2.

<sup>60</sup> “Democratic Movements in England,” *CT*, April 4, 1868, 0\_2.

<sup>61</sup> “The Crisis in England,” *CT*, 23 July 1869, 0\_2.

<sup>62</sup> “Foreign Religious Intelligence,” *MR*, 21(1869), 601–602.

pliment to American principles,” the writer observed, 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.”<sup>63</sup> Indeed, another step had been taken in “the grand process of ‘Americanizing’ that empire.”<sup>64</sup> 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 experience of religion in 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 years than in the three centuries of the regime of the Establishment in Ireland itself.<sup>65</sup>

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

Even more explicit American exceptionalism came from two New York daily papers. The *New York Herald* published an article declaring disestablishment in Ireland as an example of “the success of popular government in the United States is destined soon to revolutionize the world.” Moreover, it was a sign that “the example set by the United States of favor to none and toleration to all has already been widely contagious.”<sup>66</sup> 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.<sup>67</sup>

The *New York Times* took a similar view. “There is much in our history and in the character of our institutions,” its correspondent noted, “which

<sup>63</sup> “The Divorce of Church and State,” *Round Table*, 204 (1868), 399.

<sup>64</sup> “The Divorce of Church and State,” *Round Table*, 204 (1868), 399.

<sup>65</sup> “Disestablishment,” *Princeton Review*, 2 (1869), 267.

<sup>66</sup> “The Irish Church Bill,” *NYH*, July 23, 1869, 4; and “The Irish Church and the Progress of Religious Liberty,” *NYH*, April 8, 1868, 6.

<sup>67</sup> “Irish Church Bill,” *NYH*, July 23, 1869, 4.

compels us to watch with an attentive and sympathizing interest the progress of genuine reform in all parts of the world.”<sup>68</sup> He believed 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, which has inspired the nations with hope, offers, at the same time, a guarantee of ultimate success to all who wisely and patiently struggle for their rights,” he wrote.<sup>69</sup> Such expressions of American exceptionalism, in both the secular and religious press, suggest that many in the United States believed their form of government was not only superior, but that it had been a seminal force behind Gladstone’s Irish Church policy.

### MEASURED EXPECTATIONS

Amid the cacophony of overly hyped reporting, there were several editorials of a more measured tone about what the Irish Church Act could realistically accomplish with respect to justice and peace in Ireland. A writer for *The Nation* was under no illusions that the measure alone would pacify Ireland. After the bill had passed its author presented a realistic view of where things stood in Ireland: “In peaceable fashion or violent fashion we have to go through a revolution, of which no man can foretell the progress or the end.”<sup>70</sup> 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 interests in both the House of Lords and the Parliament.<sup>71</sup> 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.”<sup>72</sup> A *New York Tribune* correspondent thought the Irish Church question was superficial in comparison to the issues of land reform and universal manhood suffrage. At the same time, he believed Gladstone had been “equally right in foreseeing that not to enter upon Reform is only to

<sup>68</sup> “Mr. Gladstone and the Reform League,” *NYT*, September 2, 1866, 4.

<sup>69</sup> “Mr. Gladstone and the Reform League,” *NYT*, September 2, 1866, 4.

<sup>70</sup> “England,” *TN*, January 20, 1870, 41.

<sup>71</sup> “England,” *TN*, January 20, 1870, 41.

<sup>72</sup> *HW*, April 10, 1869, 227.

hasten Revolution.”<sup>73</sup> He also thought the idea of Irish nationality would not be satisfied and the measures of the English Parliament would prove futile to avert revolution.<sup>74</sup> A writer in the *New York Herald* celebrated the Church Act, but insisted “the ball still must be kept moving,” toward tenant reform.<sup>75</sup> Among religious papers, the *Catholic World* appeared to be alone in expressing lowered expectations. One 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 own view, 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.”<sup>76</sup> At least a few American voices reflected an understanding of the Irish Church Act more consistent with Gladstone’s own expectations.

### A CHORUS OF ANTI-CATHOLICISM

A final category of opinion gives us additional insight into American enthusiasm over 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. At first glance such religious chauvinism might appear to be a decidedly anti-modern trait. But the surging numbers of Catholic immigrants coming to the United States was compounding paranoia about the pope’s potential reach into American politics. A quote in the *Methodist Review* provides a window into how the Protestant establishment viewed Irish Catholic immigrants during 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.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>73</sup> *NY Trib*, April 18, 1868, 6.

<sup>74</sup> *NY Trib*, April 18, 1868, 6.

<sup>75</sup> “The Irish Church Disestablished-What next in Great Britain?,” *NYH*, August 1, 1869, 6.

<sup>76</sup> “Ireland’s Mission,” *CW*, 62 (1870), 1.

<sup>77</sup> Quoted in *NYE*, April 1, 1869, 6.

The correspondent conceded that Ireland had given to America “many noble citizens,” but her “Popish masses” were a source of corruption, constituting “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.”<sup>78</sup> Gladstone’s bill would allow Ireland to rise morally and intellectually as well as politically, and her people would be better able to live at home, he insisted.<sup>79</sup> Irish Catholic bigotry could thus be cloaked in the language of democracy. The conservative *Princeton Review*, under the editorship of renowned theologian Charles Hodge, also expressed blatant paranoia about Catholicism. One author described the Catholic 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 forever.”<sup>80</sup> 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.”<sup>81</sup> 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.”<sup>82</sup> 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 the spread of wickedness expressed in Psalm 37:35.<sup>83</sup> But the Irish Church issue had brought out more than just prejudice against the Catholics of Ireland. Writing about the landed Catholics in England who had 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 brothers.”<sup>84</sup> As such they were naturally opposed to the principle that would divorce any church from any

<sup>78</sup> Quoted in *NYE*, April 1, 1869, 6.

<sup>79</sup> Quoted in *NYE*, April 1, 1869, 6.

<sup>80</sup> *Princeton Review*, July, 3, 1868, 409.

<sup>81</sup> “Disestablishment,” *Princeton Review*, 2 (1869), 290.

<sup>82</sup> “An Ecclesiastical Cancer Removed,” *IND*, April 9, 1868, 4.

<sup>83</sup> “An Ecclesiastical Cancer Removed,” *IND*, April 9, 1868, 4.

<sup>84</sup> “The English Elections,” *IND*, December 3, 1868, 4.

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.”<sup>85</sup> The mistrust of Catholics by evangelicals of the period was palpable. It was not simply the spread of Catholicism that alarmed many Protestants, but fear of the menacing influence of the pope in the affairs of government, an apprehension that was certainly shared by Gladstone, as will be seen in Chap. 4.

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.”<sup>86</sup> Although anti-Catholic sentiment in the Irish Church affair was voiced primarily by evangelical periodicals, *Harper’s Weekly* published an overtly 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.”<sup>87</sup> Whether directed against Irish immigrants in the United States or the forces of ultramontaniam, anti-Catholic rhetoric had found its way into the American press, especially among Presbyterian publications concerned about the fate of their Irish co-religionists. Gladstone had aroused Protestant passions in the United States.

Finally, what opinions had Americans expressed with respect to Gladstone’s personal moral character? 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* declared, “by the convictions not less of his

<sup>85</sup> “The English Elections,” *IND*, December 3, 1868, 4.

<sup>86</sup> “The New British Parliament,” *NYO*, December 24, 1868, 413.

<sup>87</sup> *HW*, October 17, 1868, 658–659.

enemies than of his friends.”<sup>88</sup> The author noted further: “[He] is honest from the earnestness of his devotion to political principles, and from his royal wholeheartedness. There is nothing negative about his integrity.”<sup>89</sup> The conservative-Presbyterian *New York Observer* was perhaps the most generous in its praise of the statesman, calling him “the purest as well as the wisest of living English statesmen.”<sup>90</sup> A second article proclaimed that divine 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”<sup>91</sup> In a third article, the *Observer*’s 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.”<sup>92</sup> The reason cited 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 included “Mr Gladstone, Sir Roundell Palmer, Mr Coleridge, and Mr Bright.”<sup>93</sup> *The Independent* reported that recent events called out for statesmanship, and “the Liberals were fortunate in a leader who was equal to the occasion.”<sup>94</sup> Gladstone had received high praise in America for both his faith and personal moral bearing from evangelical and secular publications.

At the same time, there was at least one unflattering story about Gladstone going the rounds that suggested a character flaw. An author for *The Nation* certainly agreed with his disestablishment policy, but misgivings were expressed about the statesman’s demeanor. Gladstone possessed “an offensive tact at best, and he is devoured by ‘earnestness,’” the columnist stated. Moreover, the difficulties of the Irish Church were sure to challenge Gladstone because, the author believed, his “great intellectual power and dexterity will need to be largely supplemented by tact and sympathy and forbearance—qualities for which he is not remarkable.”<sup>95</sup> 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

<sup>88</sup> *SR*, May 2, 1868, 4.

<sup>89</sup> *SR*, May 2, 1868, 4.

<sup>90</sup> “Great Ministerial Defeat,” *NYO*, April 9, 1868, 114.

<sup>91</sup> *NYO*, July 29, 1869, 238.

<sup>92</sup> “New British Parliament,” *NYO*, December 24, 1868, 413.

<sup>93</sup> “New British Parliament,” *NYO*, December 24, 1868, 413.

<sup>94</sup> “An Ecclesiastical Cancer Removed,” *IND*, April 9, 1868, 4.

<sup>95</sup> “The Political Result in England,” *TN*, November 26, 1868, 434.

British Liberal establishment often distrusted Gladstone's judgment, fearing he lacked stability.<sup>96</sup> If by 1868 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. Writing 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 as an end desirable in itself," Smalley wrote, "but the conciliation of the Irish people as a means to their better government."<sup>97</sup> It was similar to Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, which, Smalley insisted, was not issued for its virtue but rather as a war measure.<sup>98</sup> The correspondent grasped the realities of political maneuvering for bringing about changes in policy. Gladstone's co-religionists at the Episcopal *American Quarterly Church Review* expressed a measure of uncertainty about his true intentions while giving 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.<sup>99</sup>

Gladstone had received a couple of unfavorable comments about his temperament and the purity of his motives for pursuing disestablishment from some of the leading papers in the country. Yet there were also strong endorsements of his religious devotion, moral character, and Christian statesmanship.

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

<sup>96</sup> Jonathan Parry, *The Rise and Fall of Liberal Government in Victorian Britain* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 258–259.

<sup>97</sup> George Washburn Smalley, *NY.Trib*, March 16, 1869, 1.

<sup>98</sup> George Washburn Smalley, *NY.Trib*, March 16, 1869, 1.

<sup>99</sup> *American Quarterly Church Review*, 1 (1870), 153.



the purpose of political gain, a charge frequently leveled 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."<sup>100</sup> 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 10 or 20 years ago, the correspondent added, "Is Mr Gladstone alone to be denied participation in the great advance of liberal sentiments?"<sup>101</sup> 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.<sup>102</sup>

Moreover, it was just like Gladstone to take the side of justice and humanity. He was the same man, but now he was "inspired with the spirit of a wiser and a better age."<sup>103</sup> 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*.<sup>104</sup>

## SUMMARY

Overall, Americans celebrated Gladstone for disestablishing the Irish Church. The act was emblematic of their aspirations for the expansion of modern democracy. Amid the jubilation, a few papers correctly acknowledged the need for further reform in Ireland. Nearly all published opin-

<sup>100</sup> "The Irish Question," *SR*, April 4, 1868, 5.

<sup>101</sup> "The Irish Question," *SR*, April 4, 1868, 5.

<sup>102</sup> "The Irish Question," *SR*, April 4, 1868, 5.

<sup>103</sup> "The Irish Question," *SR*, April 4, 1868, 4.

<sup>104</sup> Emery, *Press and America*, 241.

ions considered disestablishment a major triumph for Ireland and for the larger goal of establishing democratic institutions.

Nevertheless, apart from the many anti-papery sentiments, the most prevalent themes addressed in the American press were the least Gladstonian. Those themes revolved around the liberal view that Irish Church disestablishment was emblematic of a larger democratic trend at work. Evangelical and secular papers displayed a passionate hope for the possibility of English Church disestablishment and, perhaps, even the fall of the aristocracy. Given the momentum of democratic reforms in the antebellum era, these expectations were not unfounded. They were not, however, Gladstonian. Indeed, however much this view was shared on both sides of the Atlantic, it stood in sharp relief to the statesman's, 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.<sup>105</sup> American liberals were much more radical in their conception of democracy than the author of Irish disestablishment.

The Americans press, especially evangelicals, also conveyed 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 Presbyterian papers. The exuberance over disestablishment was doubtless based, at least in part, on 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*. Moreover, evangelicals largely abstained from printing critical or nuanced analysis of the measure. On balance, evangelical and secular publications shared Gladstone's fear of ultramontane meddling in government affairs. American Roman Catholic support for Gladstone's Irish Church policy was solid, but obviously focused on correcting the injustices in Ireland. At the same time, political liberals were largely united in seeing Gladstone's policy in Ireland as part of a growing trend in transatlantic reform, with more than a few giving voice to American exceptionalism.

<sup>105</sup> *NYO*, July 29 1869, 238, 149.



## CHAPTER 4

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# The Specter of Popery: Infallibility and 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 (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), 31)

Gladstone’s pamphlet decrying papal infallibility became the most widely distributed and controversial of his writings. In November 1874, *The Vatican Decrees in Their Bearing on Civil Allegiance: A Political Expostulation* appeared in print, creating an immediate sensation. It provoked over 20 published Catholic ripostes in Great Britain alone, most of which were highly critical. 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.”<sup>1</sup> Among the London papers, *The Times* and the *Pall Mall Gazette* led public criticism of the pamphlet.<sup>2</sup> One correspondent for *The Times* believed Gladstone had overreacted. The practical lesson of the controversy was to view with calmness the “terrible weapons” that he had identified in the armory 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.”<sup>3</sup> Moreover, he insisted, it was delusional to suppose the commands of the clergy or the pope went unquestioned by the English laity.<sup>4</sup> Gladstone had also sparked criticism from inside his own party. Behind the scenes, leading Whig Liberals such as Halifax, Harcourt, Lowe, and Layard largely agreed with *The Times* about English Catholic loyalty.<sup>5</sup>

The most prominent British 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 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 added intellectual weight to the controversy and forced a rejoinder from Gladstone in February 1875 titled *Vaticanism: An Answer to Reproofs & Replies* wherein he largely restated his former position. Among the other Catholic reviews were two of a more favorable tone submitted to *The Times* by prominent liberal laymen, Lords Acton and Camoys.<sup>6</sup> Nonconformists were predictably supportive of Gladstone’s pamphlets. He received an address from the Nonconformist ministers of Launceston and vicinity thanking him for the pamphlet.<sup>7</sup> 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.<sup>8</sup> This was only partially true in the United States. In fact, mention of the statesman’s

<sup>1</sup> “Mr. Gladstone on the Vatican Decrees and Civil Allegiance,” *The Times*, November 7, 1874, 7.

<sup>2</sup> Parry, *Democracy and Religion*, 424.

<sup>3</sup> *The Times*, November, 14, 1874, 9.

<sup>4</sup> *The Times*, November, 14, 1874, 9.

<sup>5</sup> Parry, *Democracy and Religion*, 425.

<sup>6</sup> For Acton see *The Times*, November 24, 1874, 6; for Camoys see *The Times*, November 14, 1874, 9.

<sup>7</sup> “Mr. Gladstone and the Vatican Decrees,” *NYT*, December 22, 1874, 6.

<sup>8</sup> *NY Trib*, March 6, 1875, 6.

critics, when included at all in published articles, was generally reserved for Manning and Newman, but for the most part the focus was on Gladstone. The entry of Manning and Newman into the debate (highlighted below) doubtless created a vivid sense that eminent Victorians were engaged in an epic religious battle. Demand for Gladstone's pamphlet increased on both sides of the Atlantic.

The popularity of *Vatican Decrees* in Britain and the United States was confirmed by several contemporaneous reports in the American press. George Smalley reported on November 24, 1874, that the interest excited by the sudden appearance of Gladstone's manifesto "can hardly be exaggerated."<sup>9</sup> Smalley cited the brisk early sales of the pamphlet, which he placed at more than 3000 a day around November 14, observing that 500 a day would be thought considerable.<sup>10</sup> 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.<sup>11</sup> The *Christian Union* reported on November 25 that "its waves reach all countries in which the Church of Rome has a foothold."<sup>12</sup> A writer for the *Unitarian Review* declared: "No political pamphlet of recent times has had so wide a circulation as this."<sup>13</sup> 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 sensationalized 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."<sup>14</sup> Other major papers covered the dispute to such an extent that Gladstone wrote a letter to Phillip Schaff, the American religious historian, requesting he place a statement in the papers communicating the statesman's regret over his inability to answer the innumerable inquiries and letters he had received.<sup>15</sup> He also thanked Schaff for his recently published and expanded edition of *Vatican Decrees*, to which he added his own "History of the Vatican Council" and "The Papal Syllabus" along with Latin and English translations of *Vatican Decrees*.<sup>16</sup> Gladstone wrote the following to Schaff:

<sup>9</sup> George Washburn Smalley, "Polemics in England," *NY Trib*, November 24, 1874, 1.

<sup>10</sup> George Washburn Smalley, *NY Trib*, December 2, 1874, 6.

<sup>11</sup> Morley, *Gladstone*, vol 2, 519.

<sup>12</sup> *CU*, 25 November 25, 1874, 414.

<sup>13</sup> "Mr. Gladstone and Catholic Loyalty," *UR*, 2 (1875), 186.

<sup>14</sup> *NYH*, November 19, 1874, 4; November 28, 1874, 3; November 15, 1874, 9.

<sup>15</sup> Reported in "Editorial Notes," *NYE*, February 11, 1875, 4.

<sup>16</sup> 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;*

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.<sup>17</sup>

The controversy had exploded in the American press.

### THE VATICAN COUNCIL

The Vatican Council and the ruling on infallibility had been years in the making. The nationalist movement for a unified Italy or *Risorgimento* had an especially profound influence on Pope Pius IX, who began his pontificate in 1846. During the early years of his reign, he had endeared himself to liberals by enacting several reforms in the Papal States. However, he soon abandoned any pretense of liberalism in the aftermath of the 1848 revolution. An author in the Episcopal *American Church Review* quipped in 1874 that Pius had started as a “Protestant Pope,” but the Jesuits had since “transubstantiated” him.<sup>18</sup> The 1848 conflict forced him to flee Rome, and it precipitated the overthrow of the Papal States to popular acclaim. In 1850, Pius was restored to Rome, temporarily regaining the Papal States, but went on to lose them permanently in 1860 to Count Cavour and the nationalist movement.<sup>19</sup> Rome became Pius’ final bastion of temporal power, but his days there were numbered too. His attraction to ultramontanism thus grew, and political events in Italy doubtless contributed to his issuance, on December 8, 1864, of the encyclical *Quanta Cura*—to which was appended a catalogue or syllabus of 80 modern errors considered anathema by the church.<sup>20</sup> 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

*Together with the Latin and English text of the Papal Syllabus and the Vatican Decrees* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1875).

<sup>17</sup> “Religious Items,” *ZH*, March 4, 1875, 70.

<sup>18</sup> “Catholicism and the Vatican,” *American Church Review*, 26 (April 1874), 257.

<sup>19</sup> Christopher Duggan, *Force of Destiny: A History of Italy since 1796* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2008), 209, 210.

<sup>20</sup> Emiliana Noether, “Vatican Council I: Its Political and Religious Setting,” *The Journal of Modern History*, 40 (1968), 222.

terms with progress, liberalism, and modern civilization.”<sup>21</sup> 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.<sup>22</sup>

The Syllabus had been appalling enough for Protestants like Gladstone—and more than a few liberal Catholics—but the Vatican Council was perceived as a defiantly anti-liberal attempt to regain a hold on the temporal power lost to Italian nationalism.<sup>23</sup> Pius, however, would forfeit additional authority in 1870 with the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war. The conflict not only forced Napoleon III to remove French troops from Rome, which had been protecting the pope, it also brought the council to an abrupt end. The vacuum was quickly filled by Italian troops and the seizure of Rome was largely completed. Henceforth Pius’—and all future pontiffs’—temporal authority would be confined to the Vatican compound (“Vatican City” from 1929).<sup>24</sup>

The Vatican Council also highlighted the internal division within the Catholic Church. The greatest strain existed between the ultramontane party and the liberals or “Old Catholics” who were seeking rapprochement between the church and the modern world and, consequently, 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 the United States, Father Isaac Hecker, founder of the Paulist Fathers order and the *Catholic World*, along with Orestes Brownson, founder of *Brownson’s Journal*, comprised the leading voices of Catholic liberalism. Hecker had attended the Vatican

<sup>21</sup> Quoted in Noether, “Vatican Council I,” 224.

<sup>22</sup> “*Dogmatic Decrees of the Vatican Council*,” in Schaff, ed, *Vatican Decrees*, 160, 167, 168.

<sup>23</sup> Matthew, *Gladstone*, 248.

<sup>24</sup> Duggan, *Force of Destiny*, 255–257.

Council in an official capacity, working on behalf of the minority anti-infallibilist faction.<sup>25</sup> Henry Manning was among the principal infallibilists both prior to and during the Vatican Council. He had been an ardent defender of the Syllabus in 1864, and his 1869 pastoral, *The Oecumenical Council and the Infallibility of the Roman Pontiff*, helped to establish the framework for the ultramontane definition that would eventually prevail at the council. Shortly after the council, in 1871, his *Petri privilegium: three pastoral letters to the clergy of the diocese* was published in order to clarify the doctrine. His role at the council, however, was not chiefly that of the theologian, but rather a diplomat securing the passage of infallibility.<sup>26</sup> Largely because of his influence, the Infallibilist Party withstood a challenge from the minority when it proposed a watered-down compromise decree. The ultramontane influence had reached its zenith—a source of great consternation to Gladstone, who had hoped liberal Catholicism would prevail at the council.

The statesman's sympathy for liberal Catholics led to his friendship with Ignaz von Döllinger, whom he met in the 1840s and had visited in Munich just prior to publishing *Vatican Decrees*.<sup>27</sup> The German theologian's outspoken opposition to infallibility during the council led to his excommunication in April of 1871.<sup>28</sup> In a letter of July 21, 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.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>25</sup> William L. Portier, "Isaac Hecker and the First Vatican Council," *The Catholic Historical Review*, 71 (1985), 209–215.

<sup>26</sup> Robert Gray, *Cardinal Manning: A Biography* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985), 230–31; and E. R. Norman, *The English Catholic Church in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 263, 266–267.

<sup>27</sup> Bebbington, *Mind of Gladstone*, 224–25.

<sup>28</sup> Paul Maria Baumgarten, "Johann Joseph Ignaz von Döllinger," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol 5 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1909), accessed July 1, 2012, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05094a.htm>

<sup>29</sup> Matthew, *Gladstone Diaries*, vol 8, 11.



During the proceedings of the council, Döllinger's former pupil, Lord Acton, served as Gladstone's eyes and ears. Acton was an active anti-infallibilist in Rome during the council, albeit not in an official capacity. In one letter he referred to the assembly as "this insane enterprise" and appealed to the premier to sound an alarm before it was too late.<sup>30</sup> Like Acton and Döllinger, Gladstone believed the Syllabus and infallibility served only to strengthen the cause of secularists and materialists. "The proclamation of Infallibility," he said to Dr. Moriarty, 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."<sup>31</sup> In a letter to Acton on December 1, 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."<sup>32</sup> And on January 8, 1870, in another letter to Acton, he described ultramontanism as an "antisocial power" that had never "more undisguisedly assumed that character than in the Syllabus."<sup>33</sup> For Gladstone, ultramontanism was a threat to the true cause of Christianity. But, as the *Vatican Decrees* and *Vaticanism* would reveal, he was ostensibly concerned most about the effect infallibility would have on the loyalty of English Catholics.

Safely out of the premiership in February of 1874, Gladstone was ready to unleash his screed against Pius. The central thesis of *Vatican Decrees* was born out of Gladstone's article "Ritual and Ritualism," published in the October 1874 number of the *Contemporary Review*. He had written that piece at the height of the debate over the Public Worship Regulation Bill—an attempt to purge the Church of England of ritualistic practices that some feared would lead to ultramontanism.<sup>34</sup> In it, Gladstone had opposed the Erastian practice of suppressing ritualism, and he also interjected a single reference to Roman Catholicism that became the basis for the four major 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

<sup>30</sup> Bebbington, *Mind of Gladstone*, 224.

<sup>31</sup> WEG, quoted in Morley, *Life of Gladstone*, vol 2, 512.

<sup>32</sup> Lathbury, *Correspondence on Church and Religion*, vol 2, 50.

<sup>33</sup> Lathbury, *Correspondence on Church and Religion*, vol 2, 52.

<sup>34</sup> G. I. T. Machin, *Politics and the Churches in Great Britain, 1869–1921* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 78, 79.

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.<sup>35</sup>

He included this thinly veiled reference to the Vatican decrees to dismiss fears that a handful of ritualistic Anglican clergy might Romanize the English establishment. The language of the four propositions, however, may not have been entirely his own ideas. He had in part quoted *The Times*, which, in a recent article, reported on the conversion to Catholicism of the statesman's ex-colleague, the Marquess of Ripon. The author insisted that Ripon had "renounced his mental and moral freedom," and added that "a statesman who becomes a convert to Roman Catholicism forfeits at once the confidence of the English people."<sup>36</sup> Ripon's secession had been yet another occasion of sadness for Gladstone. 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.<sup>37</sup> Regardless of his true intentions, the statement had created enough controversy to require a much larger explanation soon forthcoming in *Vatican Decrees*.

*Vatican Decrees* began with a statement meant to frame the argument in political terms and avoid religious bigotry and theological controversy. "Indeed," Gladstone stated, "with theology, except in its civil bearing—with theology as such—I have here nothing whatever to do."<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless, he insisted Roman theology had thrust itself into the temporal domain and "necessarily comes to be a frequent theme of political discussion."<sup>39</sup> As he would write later in the follow-up *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.

<sup>35</sup> WEG, "Ritualism and Ritual," *Contemporary Review*, 24, (1874), 674.

<sup>36</sup> Machin, *Politics and the Churches*, 79.

<sup>37</sup> Machin, *Politics and the Churches*, 79.

<sup>38</sup> WEG, *Rome and the Newest Fashions*, "Vatican Decrees," xxi.

<sup>39</sup> WEG, *Rome and the Newest Fashions*, "Vatican Decrees," xxi.

- 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.<sup>40</sup>

In *Vatican Decrees*, Gladstone located the “rusty tools” in the 18 bullet points contained in the Syllabus of Errors. Among them, he chose to highlight the following as particularly egregious: 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.<sup>41</sup> But the main thrust of the pamphlet related to the second major point: the Vatican decree on infallibility jeopardized the civil loyalty of British Catholics. “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.”<sup>42</sup> The political implications were all too clear in Gladstone’s mind. He saw in the Vatican decrees a dangerous 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.”<sup>43</sup> He also quoted the January 25, 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.”<sup>44</sup> But Gladstone feared the assurances of 1826 had been undone, first by the Syllabus and the Encyclical, and finally with the decree of infallibility. Thus, he concluded:

<sup>40</sup> WEG, *Rome and the Newest Fashions*, “Vaticanism,” 18.

<sup>41</sup> WEG, “Vatican Decrees,” xxvii–xxix.

<sup>42</sup> WEG, “Vatican Decrees,” xlv.

<sup>43</sup> WEG, “Vatican Decrees,” xlii.

<sup>44</sup> WEG, “Vatican Decrees,” xlii.

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.<sup>45</sup>

Such a confirmation, he suggested, could best be satisfied by a “demonstration”—essentially a reaffirmation of the 1826 Declaration—affirming that British Catholic civil allegiance would not be impaired by the Vatican decrees.<sup>46</sup> He had quite audaciously challenged English Catholics to pledge their loyalty through a public statement.

Writing further, Gladstone expressed his intention not to cause public alarm, for he had no fear that any foe, foreign or domestic, would “at the bidding of the court of Rome, disturb these peaceful shores” by an act of treason.<sup>47</sup> Yet he was equally confident that something sinister was afoot. 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.”<sup>48</sup> “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.”<sup>49</sup> He also alluded briefly to the collapse of his government over the failed Irish University Bill of 1873. 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.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>45</sup> WEG, “Vatican Decrees,” lv.

<sup>46</sup> WEG, “Vatican Decrees,” lvi.

<sup>47</sup> WEG, “Vatican Decrees,” lvii.

<sup>48</sup> WEG, “Vatican Decrees,” lvii.

<sup>49</sup> WEG, “Vatican Decrees,” lix.

<sup>50</sup> WEG, “Vatican Decrees,” lxx.

A final statement worth noting is the statesman's passing reference to the United States. If the net of the papacy was cast much wider in Europe, he warned, then America, which was a bastion of church-state separation, would itself be 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.<sup>51</sup>

As a final plea, he implored his Roman Catholic countrymen to oppose the decree of infallibility just as their sixteenth-century co-religionists had when resisting the Spanish Armada.<sup>52</sup> Gladstone had laid out a compelling historical narrative, and Protestants and liberals on both sides of the Atlantic received it as an ominous warning about Vaticanism. Others found it a crass assault upon Roman Catholics.

### MANNING AND NEWMAN RESPOND

The reply from Archbishop (soon to be Cardinal) 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, noting: "The Vatican Council did not make the Pope infallible. He is not more infallible after it than before."<sup>53</sup> Thus, for Manning, no change had taken place at the Vatican Council respecting 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 because the world was no longer exclusively Roman Catholic. He summarized 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

<sup>51</sup> WEG, *Rome and the Newest Fashions in Religion*, liii.

<sup>52</sup> WEG, "Vatican Decrees," lxxvi.

<sup>53</sup> Edward Henry Manning, *The Vatican Decrees in Their Bearing on Civil Allegiance*, (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1875), 14.

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 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.<sup>54</sup>

The Archbishop then addressed Gladstone's demand for a demonstration from English Catholics. The Vatican decrees would not affect their civil allegiance because

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.<sup>55</sup>

On the issue of the deposing power of the popes, Manning believed 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."<sup>56</sup> It was a stern rebuke to his former friend, but it would not be his final apologetic defense of ultramontanist and the council. In 1878, he expanded upon his defense when "True Story of the Vatican Council" appeared in the *Nineteenth Century*.

Cardinal Newman's reply to Gladstone in 1875 was titled *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk*, having its origin in a personal request made by the duke to address 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 that Mr.

<sup>54</sup> Manning, *The Vatican Decrees*, 359–360.

<sup>55</sup> Manning, *The Vatican Decrees*, 41.

<sup>56</sup> Manning, *Vatican Decrees*, 51.

Gladstone has felt it his duty to speak with such extraordinary severity of our religion and of ourselves," he wrote.<sup>57</sup> Newman insisted that the defeat of the 1873 Irish Education Bill had been a motivating factor behind the politician'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?"<sup>58</sup> To Gladstone's claim that infallibility represented an innovation in Catholic theology, Newman cited the restriction of the pope's authority to 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."<sup>59</sup> Most importantly, and in sharp contrast to Manning, Newman minimized the nature of 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. But in such an unlikely event, his own 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, and revered friends. Gladstone had been roundly rebuked by the two leading voices of Catholicism in Great Britain.

Opinions about *Vatican Decrees* in the American press were sharply divided. Gladstone's central claim that intellectual freedom and civic loyalty were threatened by papal infallibility provoked two general responses: the extremely critical and the extremely favorable. A third, much smaller category fell somewhere in between. The dispute was also the catalyst for numerous articles related to the German *Kulturkampf* and the Protestant-Catholic divide in American public schools, both of which will be addressed presently.

<sup>57</sup> 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), 4.

<sup>58</sup> Newman, *Letter to Duke of Norfolk*, 13–14.

<sup>59</sup> Newman, *Letter to Duke of Norfolk*, 165–166.

## DENUNCIATIONS OF GLADSTONE

There was significant opposition to Gladstone's primary contentions that infallibility posed a threat to intellectual freedom and civic loyalty. A reporter for the *New York Times* believed he was wrong to question the loyalty of British and Irish Catholics. He recalled how Irish Catholics had acted against the dictates of the pope in the past by fomenting rebellion against England, implying 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."<sup>60</sup> Therefore, it was quite unnecessary and "highly unbecoming" to ask them what they would do if their loyalty were to be very severely tried in a manner unlikely to occur. 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.'"<sup>61</sup> Reflecting its role as a leader in the growing trend toward more independent news reporting, the *New York Times*, as will be confirmed below, published opinions that both agreed and disagreed with Gladstone.

American Roman Catholics were predictably hostile to Gladstone's condemnation of the papal decree, and they were thrust into a defensive posture. The *New York Herald* reported that many American Catholics were assembling to hear *Vatican Decrees* denounced by church leaders. According to one article, a capacity crowd had turned out at Cooper Union in New York on December 21, 1874, to hear the New York theologian and social reformer Father Edward McGlynn. There he informed his listeners about the pope's limitations. Pius could not, for example, claim as faith that which violates natural law or contradicts revealed religion or previously defined dogmas. Indeed, there was "no danger that the Church will invade the State," McGlynn insisted.<sup>62</sup> He reveled 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.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>60</sup> *NYT*, November 26, 1874, 5.

<sup>61</sup> *NYT*, November 26, 1874, 5.

<sup>62</sup> "Gladstone Answered," *NYH*, December 22, 1874, 5.

<sup>63</sup> "Gladstone Answered," *NYH*, December 22, 1874, 5.



In March of 1875, the *Herald* reported on an immense congregation 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 believed the British politician had raised the no-popery cry merely as a ruse to regain the premiership.<sup>64</sup>

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," he declared, "against Mr. Gladstone's declaration is that it is false—a shameful calumny."<sup>65</sup> Yet he did have more to say. He also insisted the 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."<sup>66</sup> 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. Bayley noted: "It left that important matter 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.'"<sup>67</sup> The *Herald* also featured several articles written by an American Catholic who wrote under the pen name "Prudentius." In one piece, he accused Gladstone of unfairly 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 merely slander, blasphemy, and every obscene abomination. "Pray think not of us here in America," he chided 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."<sup>68</sup> The *New York Herald*, sensitive to its many Catholic and Democratic readers, had provided a major platform for Catholic criticisms of Gladstone. The consensus of those replies was a full-throated denial of loyalty to the pope in civil affairs.

Writing a couple of years after the release of *Vatican Decrees*, the newly formed *American Catholic Quarterly* had as its chief editor James Corcoran. He had played an integral role as a theologian at the Vatican

<sup>64</sup> "The Gladstone Controversy," *NYH*, March 8, 1875, 6.

<sup>65</sup> J. Roosevelt Bayley, "Infallibility," *NYH*, November 22, 1874, 5.

<sup>66</sup> Bayley, "Infallibility," 5.

<sup>67</sup> Bayley, "Infallibility," 5.

<sup>68</sup> Prudentius, *NYH*, December 8, 1874, 12.

Council as author of the failed Spalding Formula (after Archbishop Spalding), which had attempted a compromise on infallibility wherein the authority would be implied but not stated.<sup>69</sup> In the inaugural issue, Corcoran published a 28-page review of Gladstone's *Vatican Decrees* authored by Father Edward McGlynn titled "The Bugbear of Vaticanism." In it he articulated the statesman's motives for writing his 1874 article "Ritual and Ritualism": Gladstone sought to dispel the claim that Anglican ritualism leads necessarily to Catholicism, but, more importantly, he was defending himself against the repeated charge of crypto-Catholicism. Hence, he "would show that he could abuse the Pope and his authority, as roundly as the loudest no-popery ranter of them all."<sup>70</sup> As for *Vatican Decrees*, McGlynn stated, "he himself has come to believe in the bugbear conjured up in his own imagination."<sup>71</sup> The politician's pamphlets were nothing more than part of the attacks of "the gates of hell" against which Christ had built His Church.<sup>72</sup> He objected further to the request for English Catholics to prove their loyalty—just as he would object to an American Roman Catholic having to do so. Gladstone, McGlynn proposed, "has entertained fears of disloyalty based upon some possible, but quite problematic contingency."<sup>73</sup> The priest then went on to clarify infallibility, noting that ex cathedra did not involve sermons or the writing of theological works, but the defining of doctrines handed down from the apostles. The amount of definable doctrine was not unlimited and might, at some point, come to an end. At this present moment, he contended, there must be but few doctrines "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."<sup>74</sup> McGlynn also noted that 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."<sup>75</sup> McGlynn ultimately concluded that Gladstone's

<sup>69</sup> James T. Hennessey, "James A. Corcoran's Mission to Rome: 1868–1869," *Catholic Historical Review*, 48, (1962), 157–181.

<sup>70</sup> Edward McGlynn, "The Bugbear of Vaticanism," ACQR, 1, (1876), 74.

<sup>71</sup> McGlynn, "Bugbear of Vaticanism," 75.

<sup>72</sup> McGlynn, "Bugbear of Vaticanism," 77.

<sup>73</sup> McGlynn, "Bugbear of Vaticanism," 91.

<sup>74</sup> McGlynn, "Bugbear of Vaticanism," 97–98.

<sup>75</sup> McGlynn, "Bugbear of Vaticanism," 99–100.

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. It was a well-reasoned critique and McGlynn avoided using 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 later came to accept the council's ruling. He would, however, continue to promote an Americanist view of Catholicism through the *Catholic World*.<sup>76</sup> All of the *Catholic World*'s articles about Gladstone's pamphlets were published anonymously, but it may be assumed Hecker either wrote them or condoned their content. In a summary of the events of 1874, one article characterized the *Vatican Decrees* 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 faith.<sup>77</sup>

In another article titled "Pius IX and Mr. Gladstone's Misrepresentations," its author attacked the inaccuracies of Gladstone's pamphlets. In describing and quoting the Vatican decrees and Syllabus, the statesman 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."<sup>78</sup> Addressing Gladstone's "rusty tool" metaphor, which he had applied to the practice of deposing princes, he insisted it was seldom used in the past, and when it was it had not been under the authority of infallibility. Additionally, it was only employed at a time when the pontiff was the acknowledged "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."<sup>79</sup> Far from "parading anew" this abstract right, he claimed, the Holy Father repudiated the allegation and believed such conditions were unlikely to be found

<sup>76</sup>William L. Portier, "Isaac Hecker and the First Vatican Council," *Catholic Historical Review*, 71 (1985), 206–227.

<sup>77</sup>"The Year of our Lord 1874," *CW*, 20 (1875), 568–569.

<sup>78</sup>"Pius IX and Mr. Gladstone's Misrepresentations," *CW*, 21 (1875), 148.

<sup>79</sup>"Pius IX and Mr. Gladstone's Misrepresentations," 158.

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 June 18, 1871, where he had stated: "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."<sup>80</sup> Gladstone, the author concluded, possessed the deplorable state of mind of a man who could find nothing in the speeches of Pius IX but ridicule, sarcasm, and invective. With the platform of the *Catholic World*, Hecker had traveled a considerable distance from his former opposition to the decree on infallibility.

Gladstone also faced withering criticism from the highly respected Catholic organ *Brownson's Journal*. A leading voice among American Catholics for decades, its editor, Orestes Brownson, became a champion of the liberal Catholic movement in the 1850s, but retreated into conservatism after the Civil War.<sup>81</sup> In one article, he derisively called the statesman "an ordinary man," insisting "he has not and never had any prestige."<sup>82</sup> For Brownson, both Manning and Newman had made Gladstone look like a small man and had "thoroughly demolished the only defence on which Protestantism in our day rely."<sup>83</sup> In another column, he described Roman Catholics as "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."<sup>84</sup> Modern society, by contrast, held to the sacred right of insurrection and pretended that disaffected people have the right to disobey their government. Concerning 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.<sup>85</sup>

<sup>80</sup> "Pius IX and Mr. Gladstone's Misrepresentations," 158.

<sup>81</sup> McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom*, 45, 89.

<sup>82</sup> "Literary Notices and Criticisms," *Brownson's Quarterly Review*, 3 (1875), 281.

<sup>83</sup> "Literary Notices and Criticisms," *Brownson's Quarterly Review*, 282.

<sup>84</sup> "Expostulation," *Brownson's Quarterly Review* 3 (1875), 245.

<sup>85</sup> "Expostulation," *Brownson's Quarterly Review* 3 (1875), 246.

Just like other Catholic publications, *Brownson's Journal* opposed Gladstone's central claims and defended the decree of infallibility. The Catholic Archbishop of Baltimore, J. Roosevelt Bayley, might have summed up the feelings of many Catholics in a letter published by the *New York Herald*: "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 under."<sup>86</sup> Catholics in America were compelled to respond to Gladstone's indictment of the pope's decrees. They had been put on the defensive and felt duty bound to explain a doctrine that many Americans, both Protestant and secular, considered a step backward to an anti-modern past. Given their status as a persecuted minority in the United States, Roman Catholics had little choice but to refute ultramontan-ism. Nevertheless, they had, for the most part, skillfully negotiated the controversy and remained loyal to Catholic dogma while also adhering to the US Constitution.

### HIGH PRAISE FOR GLADSTONE

As reasonable as the arguments of Catholics might appear, the largest body of opinion in the American press, most of it unsurprisingly from Protestants, came from those who agreed with Gladstone. *Vatican Decrees* was preaching to the choir when it came to evangelicals. Just as they had done with Irish Church disestablishment, they wrote in a tone of triumphalism peppered with martial language. In the *New York Evangelist*, Theodore Cuyler insisted Gladstone had "struck the Romish despotism right in one of its most vulnerable quarters."<sup>87</sup> He had done so, not by attacking Rome's theology as anti-Christ, but through his assault on popery over the consciences of men. The statesman's "bold, trenchant pamphlet" had demonstrated that the pope was a "moral and spiritual despot" who would once again be "a political despot, if he could regain his scepter."<sup>88</sup> Gladstone would force Romanists to "show their hand," Cuyler predicted, and either offend the Vatican by agreeing with the statesman or refute him and damage their standing in nations like Great Britain,

<sup>86</sup> Archbishop J. Roosevelt Bayley, Archbishop of Baltimore, *NYH*, November 22, 1874, 5.

<sup>87</sup> *NYE*, December 3, 1874, 1.

<sup>88</sup> *NYE*, December 3, 1874, 1.

Germany, and the United States.<sup>89</sup> The role of Gladstone as a Protestant 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.”<sup>90</sup> Readers were urged to get the pamphlet by all means as it was “the most beautiful piece of controversial writing that the century has seen.”<sup>91</sup> For one reporter in *The Independent*, the statesman did battle in the conflict between Rome and modern civilization, which had been raging so fiercely upon the continent for three years and had now begun in England. The *Vatican Decrees*, he added, was “a tremendous arraignment of modern Ultramontaniam in its principles and policy” and “the clearest statement yet made of the irreconcilable hostility which now exists between the Church of Rome and all free governments.”<sup>92</sup> Evangelicals had expressed an inherent hostility toward Catholicism in general and Pope Pius IX in particular, and Gladstone had fired a lethal shot as their champion in the war against Rome.

Other evangelical writers refrained from metaphors of warfare and overblown prose, but they were no less favorably disposed toward Gladstone’s warning about civil allegiance. The Methodist *Christian Advocate* reported: “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 insisted there were “abundant traces of its presence at the American end of the line.”<sup>93</sup> *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.”<sup>94</sup>

<sup>89</sup> *NYE*, December 3, 1874, 1.

<sup>90</sup> “Vaticanism An Answer to Reproofs and Replies,” *NYO*, March 18, 1875, 82.

<sup>91</sup> “Vaticanism An Answer to Reproofs and Replies,” *NYO*, March 18, 1875, 82.

<sup>92</sup> “Gladstone’s Manifesto,” *IND*, December 3, 1874, 14.

<sup>93</sup> *CA*, December 3, 1874, 388.

<sup>94</sup> *ZH*, April 1, 1875, 100.

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."<sup>95</sup> By issuing the infallibility decree, the pope had claimed from Roman Catholics a plenary obedience to 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."<sup>96</sup> Additionally, 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."<sup>97</sup> He warned further of possible implications for American politics, lamenting how "Romish dignitaries already boast that this country will shortly be in their power."<sup>98</sup> Gladstone's work had resonated amidst evangelical fears of papal interference in American society.

Additional evangelical opinion of a favorable and scholarly quality appeared in the *Baptist Quarterly*, where Newton Seminary Professor of Church History Heman Lincoln published a 16-page article titled "The Vatican Council and Civil Allegiance." Lincoln reasoned that by ruling for infallibility the Church of Rome had regressed with regard to civil freedom. No wise Protestant could overlook the fact that "the Romish Church is a gigantic despotism, and a relentless foe to civil and spiritual freedom."<sup>99</sup> Echoing Gladstone, Lincoln insisted the Vatican Council had "invested the Pope with absolute sovereignty over Catholic Christendom, and put every conscience in his keeping."<sup>100</sup> The statesman'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

<sup>95</sup> "The Papal Question in England," *Presbyterian Quarterly and Princeton Review*, 4 (1875), 357.

<sup>96</sup> "Papal Question in England," *Presbyterian and Princeton Review*, 4 (1875), 357–58.

<sup>97</sup> "Papal Question in England," *Presbyterian and Princeton Review*, 4 (1875), 358.

<sup>98</sup> "Papal Question in England," *Presbyterian and Princeton Review*, 4 (1875), 364.

<sup>99</sup> "The Vatican Council and Civil Allegiance," *BQR*, 1 (1875), 200.

<sup>100</sup> "Vatican Council and Civil Allegiance," *BQR*, 1 (1875), 200.

decree on infallibility, Rome had clearly given the pope the authority to rule in matters of faith without being questioned. 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.<sup>101</sup> He bolstered his case by appealing to the authority of Döllinger, who, like Gladstone, believed the new dogma covered all civil and social life. The council, the professor insisted, had overstepped 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."<sup>102</sup> He gave brief consideration to Newman's claim that Catholics were under the decree only 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.<sup>103</sup>

Lincoln had embraced Gladstone's thesis fully with regard to the threat to mental liberty and civil loyalty. Many evangelicals doubtless agreed with Theodore Cuyler when he declared: "If any deserve it, he surely deserves the name of a Christian statesman."<sup>104</sup>

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 titled "The Pope and the Bible" by the educator and Episcopal priest John McDowell Leavitt—then just months away from assuming the presidency of Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. He had also been a prior editor of the *Church*

<sup>101</sup> "Vatican Council and Civil Allegiance," *BQR*, 1 (1875), 205.

<sup>102</sup> "Vatican Council and Civil Allegiance," *BQR*, 1 (1875), 205.

<sup>103</sup> "Vatican Council and Civil Allegiance," *BQR*, 1 (1875), 209.

<sup>104</sup> *NYE*, December 3, 1874, 1.



*Review* from 1868 to 1871.<sup>105</sup> Leavitt had become disenchanted with the growing tendency toward ritualism within the Protestant Episcopal Church and was in sympathy with the more evangelical Reformed Episcopal Church founded in 1873. He would eventually join that body in 1889.<sup>106</sup> Upon his exit, he would cite his abhorrence of “ecclesiastical ritualism” along with the “rites, forms, and superstitions of the Church of Rome.”<sup>107</sup> His 1875 essay was a lengthy screed on the historical abuses of the papacy both 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”.<sup>108</sup> He discussed further how “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 explained: “There is a wide difference between the Romanist conscience and the Protestant conscience.”<sup>109</sup> While Protestants take the Bible as guide, “Romanists must submit, since the Vatican decrees, wholly to the Pope as God’s sole oracle.”<sup>110</sup>

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*. Unlike most Protestant writers on the topic, 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 was in general agreement with Gladstone about a Catholic’s inability 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

<sup>105</sup> 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), 100.

<sup>106</sup> “Rev. Dr. Leavitt Withdraws,” *NYT*, October 19, 1889.

<sup>107</sup> Quoted in “Rev. Dr. Leavitt Withdraws,” *NYT*, October 19, 1889.

<sup>108</sup> John M. Leavitt, “The Pope and the Bible,” *American Church Review*, 1 April 1875, 279.

<sup>109</sup> Leavitt, “Pope and the Bible,” 279.

<sup>110</sup> Leavitt, “Pope and the Bible,” 279.

fact.”<sup>111</sup> The Vatican decrees represented the conflict of the church with the state, which portended future conflicts like the one transpiring 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.<sup>112</sup>

For Ward, Gladstone had raised a critical issue, evidenced by almost exhaustless discussion in the outside world. Regarding the statesman’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.”<sup>113</sup> Manning’s pamphlet was too clever in that it conveniently passed over those portions “which have most plainly stated the now enlarged and concentrated powers of the Pope.”<sup>114</sup> What was demanded, Ward asserted, was truth conveyed from Manning 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.”<sup>115</sup> Ward paid tribute to Newman for his honesty and his genius, describing his *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk* as influential among the British and American public. Nevertheless, Newman was not representative of current Romanism and was unsuccessful in meeting Gladstone’s charge. The present attitude of the pope toward civil government was indeed a contradiction to the pledges made to the British public in 1826. Moreover, the wide difference between Newman and Manning made the former’s argument of little value. 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

<sup>111</sup> J. H. Ward, “Importance and Results of Mr. Gladstone’s Controversy with Rome,” *American Church Review*, April 1, 1875, 440.

<sup>112</sup> Ward, “Importance and Results,” 442.

<sup>113</sup> Ward, “Importance and Results,” 443.

<sup>114</sup> Ward, “Importance and Results,” 443.

<sup>115</sup> Ward, “Importance and Results,” 444.

government.”<sup>116</sup> Gladstone’s American co-religionists had enthusiastically endorsed his core indictment of the Vatican decrees.

Mainstream and secularist publications also endorsed *Vatican Decrees*. The free-thought *Boston Investigator* agreed heartily, accusing the Roman Church throughout history of assuming “a claim to *all* power, civil as well as religious, and she exercised it too when she was strong enough.”<sup>117</sup> As for Manning, he was either ignorant of the policy of his own church or else he had concealed it. “Romanism truly understood and practiced,” the author concluded, “is a rigid, arbitrary, absolute despotism, civil, social, and religious, and not fit to exist in this comparatively Liberal age.”<sup>118</sup> American freethinkers were predictably in Gladstone’s corner in the fight against ultramontaniam. The Republican *Chicago Tribune* also published strong opinions about the threat to civil liberties. In an article titled “A Word to American Catholics,” the author included quotes from Manning’s discourse before the Roman Catholic academia—wherein he had claimed the pontiff’s right to temporal power—to question the loyalty of American Catholics:

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?<sup>119</sup>

Since Manning had made such claims, the author insisted that every true subject of the government had the right to ask these questions. Moreover, US Roman Catholic leaders “should make a categorical expression of their intentions,” and he asked, “Where will the Catholics of the United States be found?”<sup>120</sup> 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 about civil loyalty, but took it even further than most US reviewers and directly challenged the loyalty of American Catholics. A correspondent for the *New York Times* came to the same conclusion about Catholics as Gladstone: “They can only be

<sup>116</sup> Ward, “Importance and Results,” 445.

<sup>117</sup> *Boston Investigator*, November 25, 1874, 3.

<sup>118</sup> *Boston Investigator*, November 25, 1874, 3.

<sup>119</sup> *CT*, November 24, 1874, 4.

<sup>120</sup> *CT*, November 24, 1874, 4.

loyal citizens of England by being what the Pope would consider disloyal Catholics.”<sup>121</sup> 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.<sup>122</sup>

In the *New York Tribune*, George Smalley pointed out that ultramontanes were the much stronger faction of English Catholics and asked: “How can it be denied that Mr. Gladstone’s Expostulation was material and seasonable?”<sup>123</sup> Secular American papers had embraced Gladstone’s *Vatican Decrees* with as much enthusiasm as had evangelicals.

Among all publications favorable to Gladstone, none did so with more fervency than *Harper’s Weekly*. It featured a series of articles with a blatantly anti-papist tone written by Eugene Lawrence, the magazine’s liberal editor. 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.”<sup>124</sup> 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.”<sup>125</sup> Lawrence detailed the history of persecution by the Roman Church which included the establishment of martial law by Pius IX after 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.<sup>126</sup>

<sup>121</sup> *NYT*, November 19, 1874, 1.

<sup>122</sup> “The Catholic Clergy and the German Government,” *TN*, April 1, 1875, 217.

<sup>123</sup> George Washburn Smalley, *NY Trib.* December 8, 1874, 3.

<sup>124</sup> *HW*, March 12, 1874, 26.

<sup>125</sup> *HW*, March 12, 1874, 26.

<sup>126</sup> *HW*, December 26, 1874, 1070.

In the aftermath of losing his temporal powers, Lawrence asserted, the pope was clamoring 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.”<sup>127</sup> In another article, Lawrence played up the sinister implications to the hilt. Rome, he asserted, 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.”<sup>128</sup> In a third essay, Lawrence romanticized 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.<sup>129</sup>

For the liberal readership of *Harper's Weekly*, Lawrence had depicted Gladstone as the champion of liberty and a wise herald of the reawakened forces of papal tyranny threatening 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.

There was one example of a noticeable reversal of opinion among liberal Republican papers. The *Springfield Republican* initially took a dim view of the *Vatican Decree*. “Gladstone,” a correspondent reported, “is growing wild on the religious question.” Additionally, the statesman had 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.”<sup>130</sup> A subsequent article declared *Vatican Decrees* “by far the most powerful assault upon ultramontaniam which has been made in this generation” but, its author insisted, “[t]he motive for the attack is utterly fanciful, as we apprehended.”<sup>131</sup> In December 1874, however, the *Republican* suggested Gladstone's pamphlet was “being rapidly vindicated from the charge of

<sup>127</sup> *HW*, December 26, 1874, 1070.

<sup>128</sup> *HW*, December 26, 1874, 270.

<sup>129</sup> *HW*, December 20, 1875, 231.

<sup>130</sup> *SR*, 9 November 9, 1874, 4.

<sup>131</sup> “Mr. Gladstone's Bull against the Pope,” *SR*, November 20, 1874, 4.

being a false alarm by the utterances of the English ultramontane organs and leaders.”<sup>132</sup> After the release of *Vaticanism*, the *Republican* described it as less interesting but more historical and less rhetorical than the *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 ultramontane party and put the whole English people on their guard against these.<sup>133</sup> Thus, even where there had been mild criticism of Gladstone in the liberal press, the opinion had been reversed in his favor.

There were a few articles published offering a more nuanced opinion, but they were a clear minority and they still had favorable views. A writer for the *New York Times* insisted there was no fear of the new ultramontane leading English Roman Catholics to renounce their allegiance to the Crown. The statesman’s remonstrations might instead have the opposite effect of “establishing a strong and influential body of dissenters in the midst of the Roman Catholic community.”<sup>134</sup> Still, the reporter contended, on the whole the discussions Gladstone had started would be a good thing. He described ultramontaniam 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.”<sup>135</sup>

An article in Lyman Abbott’s liberal evangelical *Christian Union* offered a similar perspective. Its 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.”<sup>136</sup> But, with respect to Catholics losing their moral and intellectual freedom, he believed Protestants practiced a similar appeal to a higher law of God as

<sup>132</sup> *SR*, December 28, 1874, 4.

<sup>133</sup> “New Books from England,” *SR*, March 16, 1875, 3.

<sup>134</sup> *NYT*, March 12, 1875, 1.

<sup>135</sup> *NYT*, March 12, 1875, 1.

<sup>136</sup> *CU*, November 25, 1874, 5.

they understand it; yet, in America, 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?"<sup>137</sup> The *Christian Union* could only agree with Gladstone in theory, affording a measure of trust in the average Roman Catholic's capacity to respect democratic principles. The former prime minister had gone too far in questioning their loyalties to the Crown. In at least a few instances, reporters agreed with Gladstone in theory but felt he had placed too little faith in the loyalty of English Catholics.

### GLADSTONE AND *KULTURKAMPF*

Some in the American press used the controversy to focus on issues ancillary to the core thesis of Gladstone's pamphlets. Several articles about Gladstone and the *Vatican Decrees* commented on related events in Germany. A crucial issue there was the struggle between Catholicism and liberalism unfolding in Bismarck's newly formed German empire. The result was the so-called *Kulturkampf*, a series of anti-Catholic laws instituted during the 1870s. Gladstone had not blatantly endorsed Bismarck's policy in *Vatican Decrees*, but he had placed a greater share of blame for the cultural struggle on Rome.<sup>138</sup> 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.<sup>139</sup> The *Kulturkampf* had grown out of a much earlier conflict between Protestant liberals and Catholics over the direction of German society. Tensions had been exacerbated by the 1864 Syllabus of Errors and the 1870 promulgation of infallibility.<sup>140</sup> The crucial elements of Prussian *Kulturkampf* legislation were contained in the 1873 and 1874 May Laws or Falk Laws—after their author Adelbert Falk, the Liberal Minister of Culture. The legislation extended state control over Catholic

<sup>137</sup> *CU*, November 25, 1874, 5.

<sup>138</sup> WEG, "Vatican Decrees," lx.

<sup>139</sup> Lynn Abrams, *Bismarck and the German Empire, 1871–1918* (London: Routledge, 2006), 25, 26–48; and Edgar Feuchtwanger, *Imperial Germany, 1850–1918* (London: Routledge, 2001), 65.

<sup>140</sup> D. G. Williamson, *Bismarck and Germany, 1862–1890* (London: Longman, 1998), 54.

education, the appointment of clergy, and provided for confiscation of parish endowments as well as the imprisonment of dissident priests and bishops. Furthermore, and most controversially, it had also led to the expulsion of Jesuits from the country.<sup>141</sup> 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*.<sup>142</sup> The German struggle against ultramontaniam was widely appreciated within the dominant Protestant culture of the United States.

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 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. Other nations were mentioned including 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."<sup>143</sup> The author stipulated, however, his belief that ultimate success by Rome was impossible. Heman Lincoln of the *Baptist Quarterly* also expressed concern over papal tyranny in Germany, romanticizing Gladstone as a new ally coming to the aid of Bismarck just as the Black Knight had succored Ivanhoe.<sup>144</sup> There is little doubt the analogy rang true for Bismarck who ensured that a German translation of *Vatican Decrees* was widely distributed.<sup>145</sup> 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 for the purpose of restoring the church to what they thought was its rightful position.<sup>146</sup> An author for *The Nation* noted that in Germany the church was allowed to hold the position of an *imperium in imperio*, that is, to retain practices and powers built up during the Middle

<sup>141</sup> Williamson, *Bismarck and Germany*, 55.

<sup>142</sup> See McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom*, 99.

<sup>143</sup> "Priestly Power Abroad and at Home," *NTE*, August 14, 1873, 4.

<sup>144</sup> "The Vatican Council and Civil Allegiance," *BQR*, 2 (1875), 201.

<sup>145</sup> Machin, *Politics and the Churches*, 79.

<sup>146</sup> "Mr. Gladstone and Catholic Loyalty," *UR*, 2 (1875), 190–191.



Ages. "Its relegation to a position of complete subordination to the state," he contended, "was, in fact, a necessary part of the revolution."<sup>147</sup> 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."<sup>148</sup> The connection between Gladstone's *Vatican Decrees* and the *Kulturkampf* in Germany demonstrates that a significant body of American opinion shared the statesman's concerns over the infallibility decree and the incursion of papal meddling into political affairs in the United States.

### AMERICAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

In addition to events in Germany, a second issue frequently cited during the controversy was the threat posed by ultramontanism to American education. A surprising number of writers in the American press seized upon the hot-button controversy of public education because of Gladstone's brief allusion to it in *Vatican Decrees*. Among evangelicals there were several instances where exploitation of the Gladstone controversy took the form of commentary on the "common school" conflict. Eugene Lawrence of *Harper's Weekly* once again weighed in, accusing the Catholic bishops of repeating the pope's language and assailing public instruction in the United States. In an article titled "The Ultramontanes in Ohio," Lawrence gives us a sense of how the conflict over education played out in Cincinnati, a major center of ultramontane Catholicism at the time. "Its Catholic vote," Lawrence warned, "is apparently held in rigid obedience by its bishop and its papal press."<sup>149</sup> 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.<sup>150</sup>

<sup>147</sup> "The Catholic Clergy and the German Government," *TN*, April 1, 1875, 217–218.

<sup>148</sup> *NYT*, March 18, 1875, 10.

<sup>149</sup> Eugene Lawrence, "The Ultramontanes in Ohio," *HW*, July 24, 1875, 603.

<sup>150</sup> Lawrence, "Ultramontanes in Ohio," 603.

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. "The immense assembly of ultramontanes inaugurated anew the war upon the common schools," Lawrence insisted.<sup>151</sup> He informed his readers further that "the American system of education is the first of our institutions which we are called upon to surrender to our European Church."<sup>152</sup> 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.

Others, however, did discuss public education directly in the context of Gladstone's *Vatican Decrees*. 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" titled "Romanism as America's Dangerous Enemy." Terry heartily concurred with Gladstone's central premise regarding civil allegiance, and he alerted his flock to the recent movements of "Romanism" within the United States. *Vatican Decrees*, he observed, had illuminated the question because Catholics had "become a very powerful political element."<sup>153</sup> "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."<sup>154</sup> *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, he added: "Certain utterances of Catholic journals about our common schools do not strengthen this confidence."<sup>155</sup> For the Baptist theologian Heman Lincoln, the Vatican decree of infallibility had forced a direct conflict between medieval and modern civilization. His essay in the *Baptist Quarterly* posed a dire warning: the papist threat had begun in Germany, was brewing in France and Spain, was approaching in England, and could

<sup>151</sup> Lawrence, "Ultramontanes in Ohio," 603.

<sup>152</sup> Lawrence, "Ultramontanes in Ohio," 603.

<sup>153</sup> "Eighteenth Street Methodist Episcopal Church," *NYH*, April 26, 1875, 4.

<sup>154</sup> "Eighteenth Street Methodist Episcopal Church," *NYH*, April 26, 1875, 4.

<sup>155</sup> "Gladstone's Manifesto," *IND*, December 3, 1874, 14.

not “be averted in the United States, where the hierarchy is in league to destroy the system of public education.”<sup>156</sup> Even the more liberal *Christian Union* expressed fear of Rome’s influence in schools, announcing a passionate defense of Protestant hegemony: “Wherever the priesthood tries to break up our common school system, we are for uncompromising hostility to their attempt.”<sup>157</sup> 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 there were similar opinions. The free-thought *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!<sup>158</sup>

A correspondent for the Republican *Chicago Tribune* believed ultramontaniam posed a grave threat because, among other things, it claimed the right of the Catholic hierarchy to control education by coming between the parent and the state. It was opposed 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.”<sup>159</sup> There were visible signs that non-Catholic Americans took seriously the threat of Rome, however real or imagined, to public schools.

### GLADSTONIAN PSYCHOANALYSIS: MORAL PURITY OR MONOMANIA?

If most authors in the press remained focused on the issues at hand, a few articles included commentary about Gladstone’s motives and moral character. Writing in the *Evangelist*, Theodore Cuyler declared: “His strength lies not only in his brain and a generous culture, but in a lofty conscien-

<sup>156</sup> Heman Lincoln, “The Vatican Council and Civil Allegiance,” *BQR*, 2 (1875), 212.

<sup>157</sup> *CU*, November 25, 1874, 414.

<sup>158</sup> *Boston Investigator*, May 12, 1875, 4.

<sup>159</sup> *CT*, November 25, 1874, 414.

tiousness of moral purity.”<sup>160</sup> Moreover, Cuyler believed the statesman 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.”<sup>161</sup> 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.”<sup>162</sup>

By contrast, the London correspondent for the *New York Times* likened Gladstone 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 whole terrestrial system.”<sup>163</sup> The politician, 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.”<sup>164</sup> 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 to 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.”<sup>165</sup> Price had also described him as plagued by a peculiar mental constitution with a marked singularity to combine “the extreme of impressionableness with the extreme of want of intuition.”<sup>166</sup> He was unmerciful in his assessment of the politician’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.<sup>167</sup>

<sup>160</sup> *NYE*, December 3, 1874, 1.

<sup>161</sup> *NYE*, December 3, 1874, 1.

<sup>162</sup> “Cases of Conscience,” *NY Trib*, November 23, 1874, 4.

<sup>163</sup> *NYT*, February 2, 1875, 5.

<sup>164</sup> *NYT*, February 2, 1875, 5.

<sup>165</sup> “A Sketch of Mr. Gladstone,” *NYH*, November 26, 1874, 5.

<sup>166</sup> “A Sketch of Mr. Gladstone,” *NYH*, November 26, 1874, 5.

<sup>167</sup> “A Sketch of Mr. Gladstone,” *NYH*, November 26, 1874, 5.

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 under."<sup>168</sup>

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."<sup>169</sup> In the Methodist *Christian Advocate* he was described simultaneously as "the champion of true citizenship in every land", and "impulsive, and sometime ill-tempered."<sup>170</sup> An article appeared in *The Nation* on February 18, 1875, titled "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.<sup>171</sup>

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

<sup>168</sup> Archbishop J. Roosevelt Bayley, Baltimore, *NTH*, November 22, 1874, 5.

<sup>169</sup> "Exit Mr. Gladstone," *CON*, January 21, 1875, 4.

<sup>170</sup> *CA*, December 3, 1874, 388.

<sup>171</sup> "Mr. Gladstone's Retirement," *Nation*, February 18, 1875, 109.

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.<sup>172</sup>

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.”<sup>173</sup> 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.”<sup>174</sup> 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-popery cry as a way to regain power.<sup>175</sup> 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.”<sup>176</sup> 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

<sup>172</sup> “Mr. Gladstone’s Retirement,” 109.

<sup>173</sup> “Mr. Gladstone’s Retirement”, *Nation*, February 18, 1875, 109.

<sup>174</sup> Prudentius, “Infallibility”, *NYH*, November 22, 1874, 5.

<sup>175</sup> “The Gladstone Controversy”, *NYH*, March 8, 1875, 6.

<sup>176</sup> “Protestantism and Popery”, *SR*, November 18, 1874, 4.

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 offered openly to Catholics had been “indignantly spurned” at the behest of Irish Catholic prelates.<sup>177</sup> 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.<sup>178</sup> 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 religion and assuming to dictate political results.”<sup>179</sup> 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 November 15, 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.”<sup>180</sup> 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.<sup>181</sup>

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

<sup>177</sup> “Mr. Gladstone’s Impeachment of the Papacy,” *NYE*, December 3, 1874, 4.

<sup>178</sup> *American Church Review*, July 1, 1875, 441.

<sup>179</sup> “Mr. Gladstone and Catholic Loyalty,” *UR*, 3 (1875), 191.

<sup>180</sup> “Dr. Döllinger,” *NYH*, December 5, 1874, 4.

<sup>181</sup> “Dr. Döllinger,” *NYH*, December 5, 1874, 4.

thought himself assured.”<sup>182</sup> 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 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.”<sup>183</sup> 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.<sup>184</sup>

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, resulting in mixed opinions. Readers of America’s leading newspapers found a wide spectrum of opinion about the state of Mr. Gladstone’s character.

## SUMMARY

Gladstone’s *Vaticanism* pamphlets became a catalyst for robust opinions related to modern developments in the separation of church and state. Both secular and evangelical publications exploited the controversy for their domestic agenda, just as they had done during the Irish Church debate. Apprehensions over American Catholics became a frequent theme of editorial content, especially in relation to public schools. However paranoid their anxieties over papist plots were, Protestants and freethinkers alike invoked the uniqueness of the American Constitution in their resistance to further Catholic intrusion into their WASPish culture. They pro-

<sup>182</sup> “Gossip from England”, *NYT*, November 19, 1874, 1.

<sup>183</sup> “Cases of Conscience”, *NY Trib*, November 23, 1874, 4.

<sup>184</sup> *NY Trib*, March 6, 1875, 6.



fessed to believe firmly in the separation of church and state, yet there was plenty of hypocrisy in this view given the influence of Protestant religion in most public schools and throughout society in general. In a related issue, non-Catholic American commentators generally approved of Bismarck's *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.

With some exceptions, commentators agreed with the statesman's central assertion of *Vatican Decrees*, in which he 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. 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 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. Men like Isaac Hecker and James Corcoran had found a way to live comfortably with the verdict of the Vatican Council despite having 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.

Numerous opinions about his motives and moral integrity as a statesman paint a picture of how he was perceived during the controversy of 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, 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 toward 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 the *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. Gladstone had championed their battle against the perceived despotism of ultramontane Catholicism.



## CHAPTER 5

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# Atheism and Politics: The Charles Bradlaugh Imbroglio

*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 Gladstone (Hansard, cclxxviii (1883), 1174–1196)

In what became one of Gladstone's most memorable speeches, the devout Christian statesman arose on April 16, 1883, and delivered a broad-minded appeal for the right of an outspoken atheist to be seated in Parliament. If passed, the proposed Affirmation Bill would allow non-believers entering Parliament to avoid swearing a religious oath. The catalyst for the bill had been the ongoing saga of Charles Bradlaugh, the infamous atheist, Republican, and birth control advocate who had been elected to the House of Commons in 1880 by the voters of Northampton, England. That national election had also witnessed the elevation of Gladstone to his second ministry, and, just like in 1868, he had pushed his archrival Disraeli back down the greasy pole. Of Gladstone's second premiership John Morley would later write: "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."<sup>1</sup> The source of

<sup>1</sup> Morley, *Gladstone*, vol 3, 11.

the disharmony was the controversy that erupted when Bradlaugh attempted to take his seat in the Commons by making a secular affirmation rather than swearing the oath in the name of God. From there events unfolded that would mire Bradlaugh in a tangled maze of legal and political affairs that remained unresolved until January 1886. Gladstone's response to the crisis became a popular topic in the American press. How would his reputation in the United States as a champion of liberty withstand the judgments he made in dealing with a duly elected atheist who had been banned from taking his seat in Parliament? In the Charles Bradlaugh controversy, we observe another significant milestone in the formation of Gladstone's reputation in America as a statesman who embodied modern values. For context, it will be useful to examine a few landmark events between Gladstone's first and second governments along with how Americans perceived them.

### GLADSTONE'S REPUTATION IN AMERICA BETWEEN HIS FIRST AND SECOND GOVERNMENTS

Upon his return to the premiership in 1880, Gladstone had never been more highly esteemed by Americans. In the intervening years since the *Vatican Decrees* controversy of 1874–1875, his popularity in America had only grown, Roman Catholics excluded. Now he was perceived as one of the world's foremost statesmen, and as a man of modern sensibilities. He had endeared himself to many Americans with his 1878 “Kin Beyond Sea” in the *North American Review*.<sup>2</sup> In it he had extolled the virtues of both the US and British constitutions and had prophesied the rise of America over 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.”<sup>3</sup> Gladstone was easily the most admired Englishman in the United States.

Americans had also followed with admiration the statesman's famous Midlothian addresses of 1879–1880, wherein he had laid out fundamental principles of Gladstonian Liberalism. The speeches were part of his Midlothian campaign in that Scottish region for a seat in the House of Commons. Among other things, he had connected with Americans by asserting the rights of oppressed individuals and nations, and he had campaigned more in the manner of an American politician or evangelist than

<sup>2</sup>WEG, “Kin beyond Sea,” *NAR*, 127 (1878), 179–212.

<sup>3</sup>“New Publications,” *NYT*, September 2, 1878, 3.

an English statesman.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, his 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, still London correspondent for the *New York Tribune*, had been an eyewitness 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 criticizing 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."<sup>5</sup> Theodore Cuyler was exuberant about Gladstone's return to the premiership in 1880. He thought the politician had never been so powerful, describing his electioneering campaign in Scotland the previous winter as the greatest oratorical feat of modern times.<sup>6</sup> 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."<sup>7</sup> The statesman's clarion call for international liberty had resonated with Americans.

Gladstone's political triumph over Beaconsfield in 1880 was met with a chorus of approval in the US press, several of which alluded to his more recent Midlothian 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."<sup>8</sup> 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."<sup>9</sup> He insisted further that "few have ever so earned the confidence

<sup>4</sup> Bebbington, *Mind of Gladstone*, 258.

<sup>5</sup> George Washburn Smalley, *NY Trib*, December 14, 1879, 1.

<sup>6</sup> Theodore L. Cuyler, "William Ewart Gladstone, and His Home," *Friends' Review*, 50 (1880), 787.

<sup>7</sup> Cuyler, "William Ewart Gladstone," 788.

<sup>8</sup> "Gladstone's Famous Victory," *HW*, April 24, 1880, 258.

<sup>9</sup> "Three English Problems," *CU*, May 5, 1880, 410.

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.”<sup>10</sup> Gladstone entered into his second ministry with a solid reputation in the United States as a champion of the modern principle of liberty.

### THE BRADLAUGH CONTROVERSY ERUPTS

If Gladstone was a household name in America, Charles Bradlaugh was less widely known, yet he was by no means obscure in 1880. His reputation as a secular activist and radical Republican had 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 he had agitated for Republicanism in Ireland, France, Germany, Italy, and Spain in the 1860s and 1870s.<sup>11</sup> Many Americans of the period had already heard of the atheist icon from his US lecture tours in 1873, '74 and '75.<sup>12</sup> 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 BRADLAUGH. The Future President of England at the Fifth Avenue Hotel.”<sup>13</sup> 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.<sup>14</sup> It was the earliest reliable guide to the taboo topics of birth control and reproductive health, and Knowlton had endured several high-profile trials for his effort, all of which aided in advancing the pamphlet’s popularity.<sup>15</sup> By 1880, the issue was still relevant in America because censorship of free-thought publications continued under the Comstock laws. Under the draconian legislation, sending birth

<sup>10</sup> “Three English Problems,” *CU*, 411.

<sup>11</sup> Walter L. Arnstein, *The Bradlaugh Case: Atheism, Sex, and Politics Among the Late Victorians* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1983), 103.

<sup>12</sup> David Tribe, *President Charles Bradlaugh. M.P.* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1971), 148–52, 160–62.

<sup>13</sup> *NYH*, September 18, 1873; quoted in Tribe, *Charles Bradlaugh*, 149.

<sup>14</sup> Tribe, *Charles Bradlaugh*, 172–84.

<sup>15</sup> Tribe, *Charles Bradlaugh*, 172–84.

control information through the US postal service became illegal by categorizing it as pornographic material. The recent imprisonment of the American atheist D.M. Bennett in 1879 had been a case in point.<sup>16</sup> 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 toward him than his unbelief.<sup>17</sup> 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.”<sup>18</sup> Amidst respectable Victorian sensibilities, Bradlaugh was viewed by many as a social pariah, especially among the middle classes. American opinion during his oath-swearing controversy was no doubt influenced by his controversial views.

Bradlaugh’s entry to the Commons began rather innocuously when, upon approaching the speaker’s table on May 3, 1880, he asked 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 he qualified, under the Parliamentary Oaths Act of 1866, to make a secular affirmation rather than to swear the oath. However, the speaker, Sir Henry Brand, was uncertain of their application to Bradlaugh and passed the matter to the House, which voted to refer the claim to a select committee for legal resolution. The matter first became a public spectacle after Bradlaugh was expelled from the Commons on June 22, 1880. The previous day his fellow Liberal Northampton MP, Henry Labouchere, had proposed a motion in the Commons to allow him 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 on the grounds that an atheist could not in good conscience swear before God, and a vote was subsequently carried demanding Bradlaugh withdraw immediately from the Commons. When he refused, he was taken into custody by the sergeant-at-arms and impris-

<sup>16</sup>Roderick Bradford, “American Inquisition”, in *D. M. Bennett: The Truth Seeker* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2006), 97–129.

<sup>17</sup>Edward Royle, *Victorian Infidels* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1974), 275–285; and Arnstein, *Bradlaugh Case*, 55.

<sup>18</sup>*NYT*, March 7, 1882, 7.

oned 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.<sup>19</sup>

The main opposition to Bradlaugh came from Lord Randolph Churchill, leader of a quartet of Tory MPs—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.<sup>20</sup> The birth of the faction was dated by one of its own, Sir Henry Drummond Wolff, to Churchill's first speech against Bradlaugh on May 24, 1880.<sup>21</sup> 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. The Irish Nationalist faction also opposed Bradlaugh. Ironically, they could find no comparison between Catholic Emancipation and an atheist's rights.<sup>22</sup> News of Tory exploitation in the Bradlaugh case penetrated the American press. *The Nation*, for example, reported in May 1883 that Tories were motivated by hostility to Gladstone and the chance to use the Bradlaugh issue against him: "He is, to use their favorite metaphor, a fox who may be hunted any number of times and give just as good sport the next time."<sup>23</sup> In December 1885, *Zion's Herald* concluded that, for Conservatives, Bradlaugh was "the one gleam of hope in the night of their misfortunes—a hope they have not failed to nurse and nourish with unremitting assiduity and care."<sup>24</sup> Unbending resistance also came from outside Parliament. His chief foe among all rivals was Cardinal Manning, while the 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.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Tribe, *Charles Bradlaugh*, 191–198.

<sup>20</sup> "London Letter," *NYH*, May 30, 1880, 11; and R. E. Quinault, "The Fourth Party and the Conservative Opposition to Bradlaugh, 1880–1888," *English Historical Review*, 91 (April 1976), 315.

<sup>21</sup> R. E. Quinault, "The Fourth Party and the Conservative Opposition to Bradlaugh, 1880–1888," *The English Historical Review*, 91 (April 1976), 315.

<sup>22</sup> Tribe, *Charles Bradlaugh*, 15.

<sup>23</sup> "Mr Bradlaugh Once More," *Nation*, May 10, 1883, 399, 400.

<sup>24</sup> *Zion's Herald*, December, 16, 1885, 0\_1.

<sup>25</sup> Arnstein, *Bradlaugh Case*, 171, 182, 183.



If Bradlaugh's enemies were energized 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 1000 and the wider movement was strengthened as well. Notable among many public demonstrations of solidarity with the embattled Radical, delegates from over a 100 towns attended a rally in Trafalgar Square on May 10, 1882, and a crowd of 80,000 assembled in Hyde Park four days later.<sup>26</sup> Bradlaugh's most ardent supporters in the Commons were his fellow Liberals, Henry Labouchere and the Radical Liberal MP John Bright. The Affirmation Bill also found support among a few British religious organizations including the Protestant Dissenting Deputies and the Congregational Union, and a majority of Unitarians and Jews also supported it.<sup>27</sup> Despite powerful and well-organized opposition, British sentiments with respect to Bradlaugh were sharply divided.

In dealing with the imbroglio, Gladstone took a cautious approach its early stages, preferring instead to focus on legal aspects rather than the emotionally charged issues it aroused. He was reticent to risk party honor 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."<sup>28</sup> By contrast, men like Gladstone's former friend Cardinal Manning foresaw England descending into "intellectual and moral anarchy."<sup>29</sup> 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 that was soon forthcoming from a private citizen—Henry Clarke at the instigation of Charles Newdegate.<sup>30</sup> In March 1881, the courts ruled against Bradlaugh's right to affirm, thus forcing him to vacate his seat after a nine-month stint.

<sup>26</sup> Royle, *Victorian Infidels*, 25–29.

<sup>27</sup> Arnstein, *Bradlaugh Case*, 159, 160.

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

<sup>29</sup> Edward (Cardinal) Manning, "Parliamentary Oaths," *Nineteenth Century*, September 1882, 474–480; cited in Arnstein, *Bradlaugh Case*, 177.

<sup>30</sup> Jenkins, *Gladstone*, 450, 451.

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. The prime minister 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 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."<sup>31</sup> 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 reelected 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. He did begin to take a personal interest in the bill, however, and the aforementioned Commons speech in its defense was by many accounts one of his finest. John Morley later 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."<sup>32</sup> The *New York Times* ranked it among "the greatest efforts of his life."<sup>33</sup> 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. The prime minister and his cabinet consented to the plan which had been broached to them in secret.<sup>34</sup> 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 the passage of an Affirmation Bill.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>31</sup> WEG to J. G. Hubbard, June 11, 1881, G.P. (B.M.) 44544, fol. 179.

<sup>32</sup> Morley, *Gladstone*, vol 3, 18.

<sup>33</sup> *NYT*, April 27, 1883, 1.

<sup>34</sup> Arnstein, *Bradlaugh Case*, 267, 277.

<sup>35</sup> Arnstein, *Bradlaugh Case*, 317.

It will be helpful at this point to differentiate Gladstone's views about atheism from his constitutional understanding of religion and politics. On a personal level, he opposed atheism and was repulsed by the 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."<sup>36</sup> Later, in his 1883 Affirmation Bill speech, he described the loss of one's faith as "the most inexpressible calamity which can fall either upon a man or upon a nation."<sup>37</sup> At the same time, he was able to balance these sentiments with his firm belief in freedom.<sup>38</sup> 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.<sup>39</sup>

The architect of Gladstonian Liberalism came to see in the Bradlaugh affair another inevitable step toward what he called the "abatement and removal of disqualifications."<sup>40</sup> Thus, two of the primary guiding forces of Gladstone's mind—faith and freedom—came together in his April 26, 1883, speech in support of the Affirmation Bill. In summing up that speech, Morley would attest: "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."<sup>41</sup> 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.<sup>42</sup>

But that was in April 1883, and Gladstone had not pressed these Liberal principles publicly on Bradlaugh's behalf. When the controversy had

<sup>36</sup> WEG to Brand, May 24, 1880, Hampton MSS. 821325 E.

<sup>37</sup> WEG, "Parliamentary Oath, Second Reading," cc 1196, 1197, in *Hansard 1805–2005*.

<sup>38</sup> Bebbington, *Mind of Gladstone*, 259.

<sup>39</sup> Parry, *Democracy and Religion*, 159.

<sup>40</sup> WEG, "Parliamentary Oath, Second Reading," cc 1186, in *Hansard*.

<sup>41</sup> Morley, *Gladstone*, vol 3, 18–19.

<sup>42</sup> WEG, "Parliamentary Oath, Second Reading," cc 1186, 1187, in *Hansard*.

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 on the Bradlaugh affair, the America press followed a general pattern. Articles were plentiful in the first few weeks of the dispute until Bradlaugh temporarily took his seat on July 2, 1880. Coverage then picked up slightly after he was forced to vacate his seat on March 31, 1880. After that, reporting was infrequent until the introduction of the 1883 Affirmation Bill. 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.

### CRITICISM OF GLADSTONE'S MANAGEMENT OF THE CONTROVERSY

During the early 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, Americans took exception to 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."<sup>43</sup> The reporter insisted that the Liberals were "left without either a rudder or a compass," and he added that despite the fact that Gladstone opposed the motion, he had "made the serious mistake of stating the Government's position was simply to give advice and to leave the decision to the House."<sup>44</sup> "Mr. Gladstone," he lamented, "still persisted in his mistaken policy of leaving the matter to the decision of the House."<sup>45</sup> The *New York Times* echoed the *Tribune* and accused Gladstone of irresolute leadership:

<sup>43</sup> *CT*, June 28, 1880, 4.

<sup>44</sup> *CT*, June 28, 1880, 4.

<sup>45</sup> *CT*, June 28, 1880, 4.

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.<sup>46</sup>

The *Springfield Republican* reported that Gladstone’s ministry was off to a severely disappointing start, particularly because of the Bradlaugh affair. The reporter believed 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.”<sup>47</sup> 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.”<sup>48</sup> A writer for *The Nation* objected to the use of select committees, insisting 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.”<sup>49</sup> 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.<sup>50</sup>

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

A similar sentiment was voiced two years later by Moncure Conway, the influential author and American expatriate. Best known as a social reformer and prolific writer, he had also served as minister of South Place Chapel in

<sup>46</sup> *NYT*, July 5, 1880, 1.

<sup>47</sup> “The Liberal Check in England,” *SR*, June 3, 1880, 4.

<sup>48</sup> George Washburn Smalley, “London and Paris News,” *NY Trib*, June 27, 1880, 1.

<sup>49</sup> *TN*, July 15, 1880, 41–42.

<sup>50</sup> *NYT*, February 23, 1882, 4.

London, where he had led the congregation out of Unitarian fellowship and much closer to free thought. Conway counted several luminaries as friends including Emerson, Whitman, Carlyle, Dickens, Darwin, and Charles Bradlaugh.<sup>51</sup> In a *North American Review* article simply titled “Gladstone,” Conway offered observations in celebration of the statesman’s jubilee year in Parliament. In reflecting upon the earliest stages of the Bradlaugh dispute, he 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,” he instructed, “entirely by the inaction of the one man who could redress it, and who had previously called it wrong.”<sup>52</sup> Clearly, doubts had been raised in the minds of some Americans about Gladstone’s commitment to the liberal ideal of separating church and state.

### ANTI-ATHEIST COMMENTARY

Viewed from the opposite end of the ideological spectrum, Gladstone faced the possibility of criticism for not taking a stronger stand against Bradlaugh. In an age when the voices of atheism and secularism were gaining strength—a source of trepidation for the Christian faithful—Gladstone did not consider infidelity to be a disqualification for public office despite his distaste for it. However, a small minority of opinion in America openly diverged from that view. There was some opposition voiced among Methodists, although the influential *Methodist Review* remained altogether silent on the Bradlaugh affair. Nevertheless, a correspondent for the Methodist *Christian Advocate* wrote that atheism was indeed a disqualification for a seat in Parliament, and “it was a reproach to any constituency to elect such a man as Bradlaugh.”<sup>53</sup> The *Western Christian Advocate* agreed, blaming the residents of Northampton and demanding that “an atheist ought never to have been elected.”<sup>54</sup> American Methodists were in all likelihood influenced by British Methodists, who held a similar

<sup>51</sup> Charles A. Howe, “Moncure Conway,” in *Dictionary of Unitarian and Universalist Biography* (website) accessed January 29, 2015, <http://www.25.uua.org/uuhs/duub/articles/moncureconway.html>

<sup>52</sup> Moncure Conway, “Gladstone,” *NAR*, 136 (1883), 223.

<sup>53</sup> *CA*, June 24, 1880, 403.

<sup>54</sup> *Western Christian Advocate*, July 7, 1880, 212.

view of Bradlaugh and were less closely allied with Gladstone's party.<sup>55</sup> Still, the criticisms by American Methodists were directed not at Gladstone personally but at the electors of Northampton.

Direct and severe criticism of Gladstone, however, came from Roman Catholics who were likely still nursing a grudge his *Vatican Decrees* pamphlet. The *American Catholic Quarterly* revealed its disapproval in an article titled "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 by statesmen exalting their politics above their God. The author insisted that 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.<sup>56</sup>

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 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."<sup>57</sup> Gladstone was perceived as an enemy of the faith by the Roman Catholic review.

The *Catholic World* also published a scathing article titled "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," he insisted, "than to politely inform Northampton that it

<sup>55</sup> Arnstein, *Bradlaugh Case*, 160, 161.

<sup>56</sup> "The New Sovereignty," *ACQR*, 8 (1883), 549.

<sup>57</sup> "The New Sovereignty," *ACQR*, 549.

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.”<sup>58</sup> With stinging criticism of Gladstone, he declared ruin not only 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.<sup>59</sup>

Allowing affirmation by an atheist was 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.”<sup>60</sup> For American Catholics, and at least some evangelicals, there appeared to be no stomach for allowing an atheist in public office, and they believed Gladstone was contributing to the decline of British civilization.

#### PRAISE FOR GLADSTONE AND SUPPORT FOR BRADLAUGH

Gladstone’s speech introducing the 1883 Affirmation Bill was a major turning point in the controversy. He was widely lauded for it in the American press. A letter to the editor in the *Boston Investigator* judged the speech his “most masterly and comprehensive.”<sup>61</sup> In the *New York Tribune*, George Smalley described it in glowing terms: “His speech in its defense was one of his masterly efforts, and easily the greatest speech of the present session.”<sup>62</sup> When the 1883 bill was defeated, the *Chicago Tribune* blamed the failure on the “dead weight” of Bradlaugh but had high praise for Gladstone’s handling of the controversy. The author believed the prime minister had “never been more consistent” than in the case of the Affirmation Bill. Moreover, Gladstone had “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 heroic than towards the close of his career.”<sup>63</sup> If liberals in the secular press had largely

<sup>58</sup> “Drawing the Line” CW, July 1883, 516.

<sup>59</sup> “Drawing the Line,” CW, July 1883, 516.

<sup>60</sup> “Drawing the Line,” CW, July 1883, 516.

<sup>61</sup> *Boston Investigator*, May 23, 1883, col A.

<sup>62</sup> George Washburn Smalley, “Foreign News,” *NY Trib*, May 6, 1883, 1.

<sup>63</sup> *CT*, May 7, 1883, 4.



been unsympathetic in their appraisal of Gladstone early on, opinions had definitely shifted with his endorsement of the Affirmation Bill.

Perhaps none in the American press were as supportive in all phases of the controversy as the two leading liberal evangelical papers, the *Christian Union* and *The Independent*. (The conservative evangelical press remained conspicuously silent throughout the affair.) Following the successful 1880 resolution allowing Bradlaugh to affirm, the *Christian Union* praised Gladstone's "marvelous exhibition of moral power" in getting the House of Commons to admit its error.<sup>64</sup> Likewise, *The Independent* concluded: "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."<sup>65</sup> In early May 1881, while others were criticizing the premier's inaction, the *Christian Union* reported: "Mr. Gladstone wisely declined to make the issue a party question." But it was also admitted that he would soon have to introduce an Affirmation Bill which, the paper overconfidently predicted, was likely to pass.<sup>66</sup> In April 1883, *The Independent* came to Gladstone's defense 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 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."<sup>67</sup>

Following the defeat of the 1883 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."<sup>68</sup> 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."<sup>69</sup> But his oratory received 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

<sup>64</sup> *CU*, July 7, 1880, 1.

<sup>65</sup> *IND*, July 8, 1880, 17.

<sup>66</sup> *CU*, May 4, 1881, 417.

<sup>67</sup> *IND*, April 5, 1883, 18.

<sup>68</sup> *IND*, May 17, 1883, 18.

<sup>69</sup> *CU*, May 17, 1883, 385.

the absurdity of the present law.”<sup>70</sup> The leading liberal evangelical papers were engaged in the story and supportive of Gladstone throughout the dispute with Lyman Abbott’s *Christian Union* leading the way. Progressive evangelicals also held views that were politically progressive.

There was a large body of opinion in favor of Bradlaugh’s right to serve his constituents, but 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. Most Americans found Bradlaugh offensive, but, like Gladstone, they believed he should not be disqualified from Parliament. Several of the leading secular publications shared 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.<sup>71</sup>

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.”<sup>72</sup> Bradlaugh, however, was “a mouthing adventurer, the writer of an obscene and filthy book, a demagogue of the worst type.”<sup>73</sup> 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

<sup>70</sup> *CU*, May 17, 1883, 385.

<sup>71</sup> George Washburn Smalley, “A Tussle with Bigotry,” *NY Trib*, July 4, 1880, 1.

<sup>72</sup> *NYT*, June 27, 1880, 6.

<sup>73</sup> *NYT*, June 27, 1880, 6.

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.<sup>74</sup>

Nevertheless, despite his distasteful qualities, the correspondent insisted that unbelief was no disqualification and that his constituents were entitled to be represented by Bradlaugh if that was their will.<sup>75</sup> 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 gaze upon; but he has his *rights* to humane treatment, whether he is pretty or not."<sup>76</sup> "Mr. Bradlaugh is not a man after our own heart," a writer for *Puck* stated in another issue, because he had "advocated 'Free Love' and other abominations."<sup>77</sup> Still, the author maintained, whatever objectionable opinions Bradlaugh holds "he has his rights as an Englishman, and, above all, as the chosen representative in the British Parliament of the electors of Northampton."<sup>78</sup> 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, the author stated, "Bradlaugh's followers have right on their side."<sup>79</sup> 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.<sup>80</sup>

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."<sup>81</sup> Although secular papers had openly criticized the

<sup>74</sup> "The Bradlaugh Case," *NYT*, June 27, 1880, 6.

<sup>75</sup> "Bradlaugh Case," *NYT*, 6.

<sup>76</sup> *Puck*, July 7, 1880, 319.

<sup>77</sup> *Puck*, June 30, 1880, 299.

<sup>78</sup> *Puck*, June 30, 1880, 299.

<sup>79</sup> *Washington Post*, February 20, 1882, 1.

<sup>80</sup> *TN*, July 15, 1880, 41, 42.

<sup>81</sup> *HW*, March 18, 1882, 162.

way Gladstone had managed the Bradlaugh affair, they were essentially in harmony with his guiding principles of faith and freedom.

Among the liberal evangelical papers, a similar point of view could be found. An author for the *Christian Union* saw a progressive historical trend at work:

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.<sup>82</sup>

*The Independent* expressed a comparable view, suggesting 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.”<sup>83</sup> The *Unitarian Review* published an article by the London 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.”<sup>84</sup> Liberal Christians also embraced Bradlaugh’s civil rights while expressing disdain for his personal views, drawing them quite close to Gladstone’s own opinion.

### AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM AGAIN

American perspectives of the Bradlaugh case are also found in frequent anti-British sentiments published during the controversy. Here an affinity of thought with respect to religious tests may be found between Gladstone and his kin beyond sea. This may be demonstrated by comparing the underlying philosophy behind American criticisms with Gladstone’s public statements in support of the 1883 Affirmation Bill. The Anglophobia took the form of contempt for Parliament over its handling of Bradlaugh. It was almost certainly rooted in the American tradition of separating church and state and, more precisely, in the expressly stated language of Article VI of the US Constitution which prohibits religious tests for office-

<sup>82</sup> *CU*, July 2, 1880, 505.

<sup>83</sup> *IND*, March 1, 1883, 18.

<sup>84</sup> John Page Hopps, *UR*, 18 (1882), p. 379.

holders. Although Gladstone's support for the monarchy and the Church of England remained in sharp contrast to the US Constitution, his understanding of freedom and liberty had evolved over the years to a position much closer to the American view.<sup>85</sup> In the context of the Bradlaugh imbroglio, it was liberty, the guiding principle of Gladstonian Liberalism, that rose to the surface. Hence the prime minister sought to protect the citizens of Northampton who had exercised their voting rights. In his speech for the 1883 Affirmation Bill, he insisted that there was "no legislative power whatever that can prevent Atheists duly elected from sitting in this House."<sup>86</sup> He had also accused Conservatives of framing the debate in a proposition that reduced the oath to "no more than a Theistic test."<sup>87</sup> This, he explained, violated an established principle that religious belief was not to be coupled with civil privilege:

In the first place, it evidently violates civil freedom to this extent ... there is to be a total divorce between the question of religious differences and the question of civil privilege and power; that there is to be no test whatever applied to a man with respect to the exercise of civil functions, except the test of civil capacity, and a fulfilment of civil conditions.<sup>88</sup>

Yet however much a democrat Gladstone was, his Christian faith remained a guiding influence on his politics. Any theistic test would prove detrimental to Christian testimony and, in the case of Bradlaugh, bring unnecessary attention to infidelity:

Great mischief has been done in many minds through the resistance offered to the man elected by the constituency of Northampton, which a portion of the community believe to be unjust. When they see the profession of religion and the interests of religion ostensibly associated with what they are deeply convinced is injustice, they are led to questions about religion itself, which they see to be associated with injustice. Unbelief attracts a sympathy which it would not otherwise enjoy; and the upshot is to impair those convictions and that religious faith.<sup>89</sup>

<sup>85</sup> Bebbington, *William Ewart Gladstone: Faith and Politics in Victorian Britain* (Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993), 198–201.

<sup>86</sup> WEG, "Parliamentary Oath, Second Reading," *HC Deb 26 April 1883, vol 278, cc1174 in Hansard, 1803–2005*, (website), accessed January 10, 2012, <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com>

<sup>87</sup> WEG, "Parliamentary Oath, Second Reading," cc 1194, in *Hansard, 1803–2005*.

<sup>88</sup> WEG, "Parliamentary Oath, Second Reading," cc 1189, 1190, in *Hansard, 1803–2005*.

<sup>89</sup> WEG, "Parliamentary Oath, Second Reading," cc 1196, 1197, in *Hansard, 1803–2005*.

Gladstone, therefore, was opposed to religious tests on constitutional grounds, but he also opposed them on the principle of doing no harm to the cause of Christianity. After the defeat of the 1883 Affirmation Bill, the *Christian Union* published an article by the English educator A.W.W. Dale. He echoed what Gladstone had referred to in his speech as the “narrow ledge of theism.” For Dale, the defeat of the bill in the Commons was conducted under the pretext of defending religion, but it had the opposite effect, inflicting “a serious injury upon the religious life of the nation.”<sup>90</sup> Oddly, the Dale article was an exception among American papers in this regard. If Americans agreed with this reasoning, and surely many did, their objections to a theistic test of Bradlaugh largely followed along US constitutional lines. Moreover, that opposition was sometimes expressed in hostility toward British politics, as the following examples bear out.

A writer for the *North American Review* insisted: “In England the case of Bradlaugh has led the majority of Parliament to exhibit feelings so conservative and narrow-minded as to cause elsewhere emotions of profound surprise.”<sup>91</sup> Following the expulsion of Bradlaugh from the Commons in 1881 the *New York Times* reported: “A more extraordinary, if not more absurd, position was never adopted by a representative assembly in a free country.”<sup>92</sup> The *Chicago Daily Tribune* made the starkest contrast in its perception of British and American politics, demanding that Bradlaugh’s constituents “were satisfied that he could do the work they wanted, what business has Parliament to interfere? That would be the American way of putting it, and is the only sensible way.”<sup>93</sup> In another article, the *Tribune* saw more evidence of a yawning gap between English and Americans views on religion and politics:

An American looker-on will regard it as “much ado about nothing,” and will vainly strive to comprehend why such an inconsequential matter should raise so great a breeze, or why the English people should so tenaciously insist upon dragging religious dogma into politics,—two things as far apart as the poles.<sup>94</sup>

<sup>90</sup> *CU*, May 24, 1883, 407.

<sup>91</sup> Edward A. Thomas, “Oaths in Legal Proceedings,” *NAR*, 135 (1882), 220.

<sup>92</sup> *NYT*, April 27, 1881, 4.

<sup>93</sup> *CT*, June 28, 1880, 4.

<sup>94</sup> *CT*, June 24, 1880, 4.

At least some American papers were using the Bradlaugh affair to draw a contrast between the British and American political traditions.

Although Gladstone's respect for English political traditions would surely have caused him to be recoil from this sort of invective, his own opinion of a religious test being forced upon Bradlaugh was analogous in political philosophy to that of most Americans. *The Nation* magazine took the position that religious tests should be eliminated altogether in Britain: "The last remaining theological test must go the way of all others. It is no longer necessary to be a member of the Church of England, a Protestant, or a Christian to have a seat in the House of Commons."<sup>95</sup> In the Bradlaugh case, Gladstone had come to realize the inevitability of this statement, although he was not committed to legislation to that effect. But anti-British sentiments in America were often painted with too broad a brush. In fact, a sizable number of Liberals in Parliament supported Bradlaugh's legal right to take his office, and Gladstone was among them. Moreover, as noted previously, the 1883 Affirmation Bill found support among a broad range of religious organizations. Despite powerful and well-organized conservative opposition, British sentiments about Bradlaugh were deeply divided, and the gulf between Britons and Americans was not as wide as critical reports in the United States seem to suggest.

### SUMMARY

The Bradlaugh controversy brought significant modern issues before the American public including atheism, the separation of church and state, and, to a lesser extent, birth control. Among those 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 an atheist, but no ill will or blame toward 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, they also censured Gladstone for undermining both Christian faith and English civilization. The statesman's perceived embrace of secularism continued to dog his reputation among Catholics. Additionally, Catholic 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

<sup>95</sup> "The Bradlaugh Incident," *Nation*, July 15, 1880, 41, 42.

Bradlaugh dispute did not improve his reputation among American Catholics in the wake of the rift over Vaticanism. The absence of conservative evangelical coverage of the controversy leaves us with no indication of how Gladstone's standing as a Christian man and statesman might have been affected among that group. However, subsequent chapters will reveal that the fallout must have been minimal at best.

The most important conclusion to be drawn here is that a unity of thought and purpose existed between most Americans and Gladstone. In the main, both secular and religious publications expressed a common disdain for Bradlaugh's atheism, as had the statesman. Yet, they were also in harmony with him in rejecting the notion that atheism was a disqualification for a duly elected politician. Discernible here, then, is a shared social and religious conservatism sufficiently tempered by democratic principles to afford civil rights even to a person deemed outside the boundaries of respectable society. Those principles, as have been explored in Chap. 2, were hammered out during and after the Civil War as liberal Americans began to expand their conception of democracy. Bradlaugh was odious to most Americans of the period, but they also believed he had the right to represent his Northampton constituents. As had been the case during Gladstone's involvement in Irish Church disestablishment and Vaticanism, Americans held views consistent with Gladstonian Liberalism. It was also true, however, that atheists and freethinkers were finding increased liberty, at least in theory, on both sides of the Atlantic.



PART III

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Gladstone and the Battle for  
Orthodox Religion



## CHAPTER 6

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# Science Versus the Bible: Debating 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 Gladstone (WEG, *Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture*  
(Philadelphia: Henry Altemus Company, 1890), 241)

Few scholars of the late nineteenth century stood more opposed to Gladstone's belief in the possibility of reconciling science and religion than Thomas Henry Huxley, the renowned evolutionary scientist, essayist, and coiner of the neologism "agnosticism." The pair would cross swords twice in the prominent British review *Nineteenth Century*, and their two debates—the first in 1885–1886 and the second in 1890–1891—rank among the most memorable Victorian battles between orthodox Christianity and modern scientific thought. Sandwiched between Gladstone's jousts with Huxley was the formation of his third administration in 1886, which was tasked with the monumental goal of establishing Home Rule in Ireland. Given the magnitude of such a radically new policy—and considering its popularity in the United States—a brief review of its American reception will be instructive prior to examining the Huxley debates.

## GLADSTONE AND IRISH HOME RULE

As referenced in the Introduction, the “Pulitzer trophy”—presented to Gladstone chiefly for his Irish Home Rule policy—represents a significant factor in the statesman’s rise to fame in America. Articles devoted to British news in late 1885 and early 1886 were quite naturally preoccupied with the return of Gladstone to the premiership and to developments relating to his Irish Home Rule bill, and his conversion to Irish Home Rule proved a capstone for a transformational period in nineteenth-century Anglo-American relations. Moreover, especially from the late 1860s onward, transatlantic liberal friendships were being forged as men such as Charles Dilke, John Morley, James Bryce, and Lord Rosebery visited and wrote favorably about the United States.<sup>1</sup> One result was that British Liberals looked increasingly to American federalism, among other models, as inspiration for solving the Irish question.<sup>2</sup> As Murney Gerlach has demonstrated, 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.<sup>3</sup> Despite stern opposition from some of his own Liberal Party members, Gladstone’s popularity in the United States was higher than ever because of his commitment to Home Rule.<sup>4</sup>

Examples of American support for Gladstone abounded in 1885 and 1886. Financial contributions for the Home Rule Parliamentary Fund began to pour in from the United States and the statesman received a flood of flattering petitions from a variety of American organizations.<sup>5</sup> American evangelicals were 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.

<sup>1</sup> Campbell, *Unlikely Allies*, 200–225.

<sup>23</sup> Hugh Tulloch, *James Bryce’s American Commonwealth: The Anglo-American Background* (Woodbridge, CT: 1988), 221. See also John Kendle, *Ireland and the Federal Solution: the Debate over the United Kingdom Constitution, 1870–1921* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University, 1989).

<sup>3</sup> Murney Gerlach, *British Liberalism and the United States*, 104, 108, 127.

<sup>4</sup> Gerlach, *British Liberalism and the United States*, 109.

<sup>5</sup> Gerlach, *British Liberalism and the United States*, 109.

Gladstone.”<sup>6</sup> Writing for the Methodist *Christian Advocate*, Isaac Lansing, the former president of Clark College in Atlanta (1874–1876), was effusive, proclaiming Gladstone “the greatest political figure of the world” and guaranteed him “immortal renown.”<sup>7</sup> Lansing also alluded to the existence in America of widespread “blind enthusiasm for the Home Rule bill,” especially among politicians seeking Irish 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.”<sup>8</sup> Roman Catholics were predictably pleased. “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.”<sup>9</sup>

Praise for Gladstone was also evident in the secular press. A writer for the *New York Times* suggested that despite the statesman’s lack of skill in managing organizational 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.”<sup>10</sup> A biographical article by Adam Badeau titled “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.<sup>11</sup> In his essay, Badeau proclaimed Gladstone the “friend of Ireland through many arduous struggles” and hailed him the “great antagonist of aristocracy in England.”<sup>12</sup> Gladstone, like all humans, had his faults, he added, 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.”<sup>13</sup> 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

<sup>6</sup> “A Historic Speech,” *CU*, April 15, 1886, 5.

<sup>7</sup> I. J. Lansing, “Gladstone in the Arena,” *CA*, June 17, 1886, 378.

<sup>8</sup> Lansing, “Gladstone in the Arena,” 378.

<sup>9</sup> “The Elections in Great Britain and Irish Home Rule,” *ACQR*, 43 (1886), 559.

<sup>10</sup> “Mr. Gladstone’s Programme,” *NYT*, December 17, 1885, 4.

<sup>11</sup> William S. McFeely, *Grant: A Biography* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001), 493–98.

<sup>12</sup> Adam Badeau, “Gladstone,” *NAR*, 355 (1886), 587.

<sup>13</sup> Badeau, “Gladstone,” 597.

than any other English statesman since Cromwell has even attempted in the way of overthrowing abuses and reforming institutions.”<sup>14</sup> The statesman’s commitment to Home Rule seems to have been met with universal approval in the United States.

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 his second ministry. In 1885 the *Springfield Republican* described his second premiership as comprising “several silent revolutions that have come to stay.”<sup>15</sup> 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.”<sup>16</sup> 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.”<sup>17</sup> 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.”<sup>18</sup> 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.”<sup>19</sup> “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.”<sup>20</sup> 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 “added a new chapter,

<sup>14</sup> Badeau, “Gladstone,” 590.

<sup>15</sup> “Gladstone’s Assurance of Fame,” *SR*, June 22, 1885, 4.

<sup>16</sup> “Gladstone’s Assurance of Fame,” *SR*, June 22, 1885, 4.

<sup>17</sup> Abel Stevens, “Letter from Europe,” *ZH*, June 10, 1885, 1.

<sup>18</sup> Abel Stevens, “Letter from Europe,” *ZH*, June 10, 1885, 1.

<sup>19</sup> “England’s Injustice to Mr. Gladstone,” *AR*, 19, (1885), 72.

<sup>20</sup> “England’s Injustice to Mr. Gladstone,” *AR*, 19, (1885), 71.

and a glorious one, to the history of modern statesmanship.”<sup>21</sup> By the winter of 1885–1886, Gladstone was clearly perceived by Americans to be a world-class statesman. For the remaining purposes of this study, however, the central question of how they perceived his effectiveness as a Christian apologist and public intellectual remains to be answered.

Prior to that first exchange, both men had been members of London’s Metaphysical Society, although Gladstone’s attendance was infrequent. The society was founded in 1869 by James Knowles, the renowned architect—and in 1877, founder of the *Nineteenth Century*. It brought together a diverse membership comprising theists, Churchmen, rationalists, scientists, critics, and philosophers. Although the statesman never presented a paper before the body, he was elected and served as its chairman in 1875.<sup>22</sup> His apologetic inclinations were no doubt stimulated by his exposure to the skeptics he encountered at the society such as Huxley and the jurist James Fitzjames Stephen.

### GLADSTONE, HUXLEY, AND THE CONFLICT OVER SCIENCE AND RELIGION

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<sup>23</sup>—it was also true that in the latter third of the century, a sometimes hostile debate raged over how they would be reconciled, if at all. Study of the period is made more complex by the fact that within religion and science there were shifting

<sup>21</sup> “Mr. Gladstone’s Second Ministry,” *CU*, June 18, 1885, 3.

<sup>22</sup> A. W. Brown, *Metaphysical Society: Victorian Minds in Crisis, 1869–1880* (New York: Octagon Books, 1973), 34, 120; for a description of the members in their various categories see 108–166.

<sup>23</sup> 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), 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).

alignments, and dual memberships were commonplace throughout the period.<sup>24</sup> The emergence of “harmonizers,” such as William Buckland and Thomas Chalmers, 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.<sup>25</sup>

By appealing to natural laws, Christian apologists believed they could blunt the sword of those who sought to reinforce infidelity through science—a threat of paramount concern for Gladstone in his battle for belief. In *The Reign of Law* (1867), the Duke of Argyll, another Huxley adversary, declared natural law the expression of God’s will and “the delight, the reward, the goal of Science.”<sup>26</sup> With such a view, Scottish Presbyterian James Orr (1844–1913) established the basis for theistic evolution by interpreting Darwinian natural selection as a principal mechanism of divine teleology.<sup>27</sup> In Gladstone’s case, it is noteworthy that prior to his acknowledgment of evolution as fact, in the mid-1890s, his earlier inclination—“it may be true”—was based on its unique ability to broaden the design argument.<sup>28</sup> 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<sup>29</sup>—both of whom came to Gladstone’s defense in the first dispute with Huxley. When assessing the period, therefore, “Genesis versus geology” should not necessarily be interpreted as code for religion versus science, but rather as a general trend toward harmonizing the Bible with discoveries in natural science.<sup>30</sup> For much of the era, such an accord was preserved through natural theology.

Gladstone doubtless placed Huxley among those he believed guilty of “first unduly narrowing the definition of Science, and then as unduly

<sup>24</sup> David C. Lindberg and Ronald L. Numbers, “Beyond War and Peace: A Reappraisal of the Encounter between Christianity and Science,” *Church History*, 55 (1986), 338–354.

<sup>25</sup> John Hedley Brooke, *Science and Religion: Some Historical Perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 226–263.

<sup>26</sup> 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), 280.

<sup>27</sup> Livingstone, *Darwin’s Forgotten Defenders*, 140–144.

<sup>28</sup> Bebbington, *Mind of Gladstone*, 236–238.

<sup>29</sup> Livingstone, *Darwin’s Forgotten Defenders*, 70.

<sup>30</sup> Mott T. Green, “Genesis and Geology Revisited,” in Lindberg and Numbers, eds, *When Science and Christianity Meet*, 150.

extending it to all the opinions which those persons think fit to hold.”<sup>31</sup> In his battle for belief, the statesman never faced a more formidable foe than Huxley. Best remembered as “Darwin’s Bulldog,” he was a highly skilled polemicist in evolutionary theory. By the 1880s, he had not only distinguished himself as a biologist, he also presided as president of the Royal Society and had previously served as president of the British Association for the Advancement of Science. His intellectual skills stretched well beyond the natural sciences, however. In 1869 he created the neologism “agnostic” and flourished in his later years as an amateur theologian and philosopher.<sup>32</sup> He was among an elite class of Victorian intellectuals who exploited Darwinism to create a new epistemology—scientific naturalism—which upset the traditional alliance between natural theology and science.<sup>33</sup>

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. Following his four-year voyage on the HMS *Rattlesnake*, during which time he had established his scientific credentials, it took him five years to find a suitable professional situation. Only by swallowing his pride and nurturing the patronage of the wealthy gentlemen of science was he able to secure a position at the Royal School of Mines.<sup>34</sup> Scientists had yet to establish their own field of study unencumbered by the influence of elite religious authority. As Frank Turner has argued, tensions in nineteenth-century Great Britain between religion and science are traceable first to differences in epistemological worldviews, but in larger part to a professional dimension.<sup>35</sup> Scientific study—more properly natural philosophy—had been the proper domain of the parson-naturalist and the academic clergyman-scientist. Typically, he was a member of the Anglican establishment and the Royal Society of London.<sup>36</sup> But the mid to latter

<sup>31</sup> Lathbury, *Correspondence on Church and Religion*, vol 2, 98.

<sup>32</sup> See Adrian Desmond, *Huxley: From Devil’s Disciple to Evolution’s High Priest* (Reading, MA: Perseus Books, 1994).

<sup>33</sup> Bernard Lightman, “Huxley and Scientific Agnosticism: The Strange History of a Failed Rhetorical Strategy,” *British Journal for the History of Science*, 35 (2002), 271–289.

<sup>34</sup> Bernard Lightman, *Evolutionary Naturalism in Victorian Britain: The “Darwinians” and Their Critics* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2009), Essay 1, 9.

<sup>35</sup> See Frank M. Turner, *Between Science and Religion: The Reaction to Scientific Naturalism in Late Victorian England* (New Haven, CT: 1974).

<sup>36</sup> Frank M. Turner, “The Victorian Conflict Between Science and Religion: A Professional Dimension,” *Isis* (69), 360–364.



half of the nineteenth century witnessed a noticeable shift toward a more professionalized class of scientists who began to challenge traditional notions about who was qualified to speak on behalf of the relationship between geology and theology. Following this trend more radically, Huxley and his fellow X Club members were passionate about purging the sciences of meddlesome theologians and metaphysicians.<sup>37</sup> The political and professional machinations of X-Clubbers were in evidence by 1873—they had acquired four council seats in the Royal Society, the secretary’s chair, and placed Joseph Hooker as president. Once ensconced, Hooker curtailed aristocratic privilege and established funding for poorer fellows.<sup>38</sup> Huxley occupied the president’s chair from 1883 to 1885. The latter half of the nineteenth century witnessed an appreciable emphasis on a professionalism divorced from theology.

As will be seen presently, Gladstone’s first dispute with Huxley was perceived by some in the United States as a throwback to the “Genesis and geology” debates of the 1830s and 1840s. By 1885, however, in the wake of Darwin, Spencer, and a wide range of social changes, the intellectual landscape had undergone a considerable transformation. The Genesis and geology debates had for the most part been an in-house dispute among Christians, and they had largely been resolved. But the later decades of the century had witnessed the emergence of a militant strain of scientific naturalism, with Huxley as one of its prime movers. Along with men like W.K. Clifford and John Tyndall, he began to insist with greater confidence that natural science and natural theology were incompatible. “The man of science,” the agnostic Leslie Stephen wrote in 1873, “refuses to see anything beyond the operation of invariable laws.”<sup>39</sup>

### GLADSTONE VERSUS HUXLEY, ROUND ONE

A dispute with Huxley had certainly not been Gladstone’s motive for publishing “[Dawn of Creation and of Worship](#): The Conflict Between Genesis and Geology” in the November issue of the *Nineteenth Century*. The catalyst had been the appearance of *Prolegomena to the History of Religions* (1884) by the renowned French theologian Albert Reville, which had been translated

<sup>37</sup> Lightman, “Huxley and Scientific Agnosticism,” 272.

<sup>38</sup> Desmond, *Huxley*, 422, 423.

<sup>39</sup> Livingston, James C., *Religious Thought in the Victorian Age: Challenges and Reconceptions* (New York: Continuum, 2007), 43.

into English by the German philologist and orientalist Max Müller. In it, Reville had not only referred to the Genesis cosmogony as myth, but, more alarmingly for Gladstone, he had attacked the theory of primitive revelation and named the statesman as one of its chief proponents.<sup>40</sup> 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.”<sup>41</sup> This was a sly reference to the statesman’s famous practice, well into his 80s, of felling trees on his Hawarden estate. 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.<sup>42</sup> Adherents of primitive revelation postulated a divine disclosure of biblical truth to Adam and Eve that was subsequently passed down to primordial humanity but gradually degenerated over many ages into superstition and myth.<sup>43</sup> For Gladstone, the model was seen most visibly in the Greeks of the Homeric age who, he reasoned, bore residual aspects of revelation in religion mixed with a mythology contaminated by falsehoods.<sup>44</sup> In “Dawn of Creation” Gladstone presented a detailed defense of degeneration contra Reville, but, as will become apparent, Huxley glossed over it and turned the debate toward paleontology.

While Gladstone was busy setting Reville straight and, more importantly, consumed with Irish political matters, Huxley had been in convalescence. In May 1885, he had been 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 as well. He remained on the governing body of a few other institutions but seldom attended meetings.<sup>45</sup> In addition to poor physical health, he was suffering a debilitating bout of depression brought on by the recent death of his daughter Mady. But, in a letter to Frederick Farrar of December 6, 1885, he revealed how his desire for intellectual battle had been restored. It had been Gladstone’s “Dawn of Creation” in the *Nineteenth Century*:

<sup>40</sup> Albert Reville, *Prolegomena of the History of Religions*, trans A.S. Squire (London: Williams and Norgate, 1884), 41–44.

<sup>41</sup> CW, December 1886, 317.

<sup>42</sup> Livingston, *Religious Thought in the Victorian Age*, 234–44.

<sup>43</sup> Livingston, *Religious Thought in the Victorian Age*, 263–64.

<sup>44</sup> Bebbington, *Mind of Gladstone*, 142–167, 201–213.

<sup>45</sup> Paul White, *Thomas Huxley: Making the “Man of Science”* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 138.

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.<sup>46</sup>

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 harmonize the fourfold order of creation found in Genesis 1 with the findings of modern paleontology. Huxley, of course, had other axes to grind with Gladstone. He was a vocal critic of the statesman’s Irish policy and blamed him for the recent death of General Gordon in Khartoum.<sup>47</sup> Roused from his melancholy, Huxley immediately penned a scathing rebuke titled “The Interpreters of Genesis and the Interpreters of Nature,” which appeared in the December number of the *Nineteenth Century*. As William Irvine wrote so colorfully: “Gladstone had administered the electric shock which finally precipitated the clouds of melancholy, setting off a splendid storm of polemical thunder and lightning.”<sup>48</sup> Two aging champions of the Victorian era were about to cross swords.

Gladstone’s critique of Reville’s *Prolegomena* not only triggered a vigorous riposte from Huxley, it 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), 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.<sup>49</sup> 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 arcane nature of the content quite possibly had a role to play in lackluster reporting on the other contributors to the symposium. The *New York Tribune* may have expressed the unwrit-

<sup>46</sup> T. H. Huxley: Letters and Diary 1885, The Huxley File (website), accessed January 10, 2013, <http://aleph0.clarku.edu/huxley/letters/85.html>

<sup>47</sup> Desmond, *Huxley*, 539.

<sup>48</sup> William Irvine, *Apes, Angels, and Victorians: The Story of Darwin, Huxley, and Evolution* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1955), 311.

<sup>49</sup> WEG and others, *The Order of Creation: The Conflict Between Genesis and Geology* (New York: The Truth Seeker Company, 1886).

ten 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."<sup>50</sup> The *Andover Review* insisted 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."<sup>51</sup> Huxley's assault upon biblical literalism was no doubt the hand stirring the pot. Gladstone's "Dawn of Creation" had initiated a larger discussion encompassing several scholarly topics, but for the American press 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 harmonizing scheme revolved around cosmology and paleontology. "It is enough for my present purpose," the apologist asserted, "to point to the cosmogony, and the fourfold succession of the living organisms as entirely harmonizing."<sup>52</sup> The lone plank in Gladstone's paleontological argument, and the source of Huxley's wrath, was his dubious assertion that the fourfold 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."<sup>53</sup> He had no doubt obtained a false sense of confidence in this model because he had sent proofs of the article to Sir Richard Owen, the venerable English biologist and paleontologist who in a reply made no challenge to Gladstone's order.<sup>54</sup> The second major exhibit in Gladstone's argument was a detailed explication of the nebular hypothesis.

The nebular hypothesis was one of the more popular schemes for harmonizing the *Genesis* Chap. 1 account about the creation of "heavenly bodies" with the 1796 nebular hypothesis of French naturalist Pierre-Simon de Laplace. It became an essential tool for explaining the puzzling *Genesis* chronology of the creation of light appearing prior to the sun. Armed with Laplace, harmonizers could illustrate that it was plausible because it was

<sup>50</sup> *NY Trib.*, 19 Jan 1886, 4.

<sup>51</sup> *AR*, March 1886, 296.

<sup>52</sup> WEG, "Dawn of Creation and of Worship," *The Order of Creation: The Conflict Between Genesis and Geology* (New York: The Truth Seeker Company, 1886), 22.

<sup>53</sup> WEG, "Dawn of Creation," 25.

<sup>54</sup> Bebbington, *Mind of Gladstone*, 239.

generated by a chemical reaction, which caused a concentration of gaseous matter to form nebulae. Laplace's theory of the solar system's formation was unique because it rested on an entirely naturalistic cosmology with no reference whatsoever to a creator. Although controversial for its godlessness, in time, harmonizers brought Laplace's nebular hypothesis comfortably within the fold of Christian teleology. Among its chief baptizers was Professor Arnold Guyot of Princeton University. From it he constructed a "great cosmogonic week" wherein each of the "days" of Genesis represented a lengthy epoch—the day-age theory.<sup>55</sup> Laplace gained general acceptance in the United States from the work of Guyot and Dana in the 1850s; thus, as Ronald Numbers has effectively demonstrated, tilling the soil of American thought in preparation for Darwin.<sup>56</sup> James McCosh, the evangelical president of Princeton University until 1888, also endorsed the nebular theory as an apologetic device.<sup>57</sup> Although it was becoming dated among many scientific elites by 1885, Gladstone's use of nebular theory would certainly not have been viewed as out of the mainstream of educated American evangelical thought. An 1884 article in the *New Englander and Yale Review* discussed how the nebular hypothesis became widely known in the United States in the latter half of the century, primarily through Dana's popular *Manual of Geology*, first published in 1863.<sup>58</sup>

In Anglo-American currents of thought, harmonizers 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.<sup>59</sup> 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 stripe or another.<sup>60</sup> The liberal *Andover Review* expressed regret for "the revival of this old discussion, and the appearance of so influential a person as Mr.

<sup>55</sup> Numbers, "Science Without God," 277.

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

<sup>57</sup> Numbers, *Creation by Natural Law*, 88–104.

<sup>58</sup> "Notices of New Books," *New Englander and Yale Review*, 43 (1884), 591–594.

<sup>59</sup> *IND*, September 15, 1887, 5.

<sup>60</sup> Livingstone, *Darwin's Forgotten Defenders*, 77; and Moore, *Post-Darwinian Controversies*, 10.

Gladstone in the character of a reconciler of the book of Genesis with science.”<sup>61</sup> Gladstone had joined a well-established, albeit fading, group of harmonizers.

With his 1885 “Dawn of Creation” essay, the statesman had confidently gone on the offensive against Reville, but would soon be knocked back on his heels in defense by the unanticipated onslaught of Huxley. The scientists reply to Gladstone was titled “The Interpreters of Genesis and the Interpreters of Nature.” In it, he traced the fossil record through several geological periods to dismiss Gladstone’s fourfold 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 fourfold 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.”<sup>62</sup> A fundamental problem was that certain species of 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.”<sup>63</sup> He pounced on Gladstone’s references 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 paleontology, Huxley insisted, was Cuvier, but, “he cannot now be called a recent authority.”<sup>64</sup> The scientist confidently believed 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.”<sup>65</sup> Gladstone had suffered a devastating blow in the first round as Huxley had easily exposed the underlying weaknesses in his essay.

<sup>61</sup> *AR*, March 1886, 296.

<sup>62</sup> Huxley, “Interpreters of Nature,” 48.

<sup>63</sup> Huxley, “Interpreters of Nature,” 57.

<sup>64</sup> Huxley, “Interpreters of Nature,” 46.

<sup>65</sup> T.H. Huxley, Letter to Herbert Spencer, 4 December 1885, The Huxley File (website) accessed January 10, 2013, <http://aleph0.clarku.edu/huxley/letters/85.html>

Gladstone followed up with a rejoinder in the January issue of the *Nineteenth Century* titled “Proem to Genesis: A Plea for a Fair Trial,” but not before spending additional study in the more up-to-date Phillips-Etheridge *Manual of Geology* among other sources.<sup>66</sup> He was especially eager to clarify his use of Cuvier, Herschel, and Whewell in support of 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.”<sup>67</sup> Gladstone also admitted that his use of the expressions water-air-land population were terms that carried no scientific meaning. Sufficiently chastised, he willingly discarded them for fishes, birds, mammals, and man.<sup>68</sup> 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 fourfold succession. Instead, he 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.”<sup>69</sup> On the question of his methodology, Gladstone insisted he was not asserting an exact accordance between science and the Mosaic writer. To bolster his case, he drew once again on the probabilistic apologetics of Bishop Butler.<sup>70</sup> The matter of the proem was “essentially one for the disciples of Bishop Butler,” he wrote.<sup>71</sup> Considered in its entirety, the contents of the Genesis creation account could demonstrate “such proofs of truth divinely imparted [to] command assent and govern practice.”<sup>72</sup> Huxley, he complained, “holds the writer [of Genesis] responsible for scientific precision ... He thinks it a lecture. I think it is a sermon.”<sup>73</sup> 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.”<sup>74</sup> In a spurious bit of reasoning, he suggested Genesis treated them in a “loose manner” because they were a “family fallen from greatness” and

<sup>66</sup> Bebbington, *Mind of Gladstone*, 239–241.

<sup>67</sup> WEG, “Proem to Genesis: A Plea for a Fair Trial,” in *Order of Creation*, 75.

<sup>68</sup> WEG, “Proem to Genesis,” 78.

<sup>69</sup> WEG, “Proem to Genesis,” 92.

<sup>70</sup> WEG, “Proem to Genesis,” 93.

<sup>71</sup> WEG, “Proem to Genesis,” 95.

<sup>72</sup> WEG, “Proem to Genesis,” 95.

<sup>73</sup> WEG, “Proem to Genesis,” 77.

<sup>74</sup> WEG, “Proem to Genesis,” 91.

lying “outside the use and the dominion of man.”<sup>75</sup> With his second essay Gladstone had bolstered his argument but had still left himself open to attack by Huxley.

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 they were included in Genesis among “everything that creepeth upon the ground.” He referenced Leviticus 11:29–31 as evidence that the same Hebrew word for “creep” was used there in reference to reptiles. Additionally, Gladstone’s revised fivefold succession was no more “affirmed in our time by natural science” than was the fourfold 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.”<sup>76</sup> He then moved on to the nebular hypothesis. His hesitancy in accepting that harmonizing 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.<sup>77</sup> 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 1000 years old or if it “existed as a series of eternal metamorphoses of which our present universe is only the last stage.”<sup>78</sup> The scientist had once again effectively rebutted the statesman point by point.

### THE AMERICAN PRESS DIVIDED

American secular papers were largely preoccupied with Irish Home Rule matters during the dispute, but the religious press was fully engaged. Judgments critical of Gladstone appeared in the pages of the liberal religious press. Their primary complaint centered on his realist, as opposed to literalist, reading of the Genesis cosmogony. One such review was featured in the recently founded *Andover Review*, the voice of progressive ortho-

<sup>75</sup> WEG, “Proem to Genesis,” 91, 92.

<sup>76</sup> Huxley, “Mr. Gladstone and Genesis,” in *Order of Creation*, 142.

<sup>77</sup> Huxley, “Mr. Gladstone and Genesis,” 152–155.

<sup>78</sup> Huxley, “Mr. Gladstone and Genesis,” 155.



doxy among Congregationalists. The author expressed his admiration for Gladstone as a statesman, but criticized “Dawn of Creation,” describing it as “the second-rate work of a first-rate man.”<sup>79</sup> The 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.”<sup>80</sup> He had damaged the cause he intended to advance. Furthermore, his 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.<sup>81</sup> 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.”<sup>82</sup> 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.”<sup>83</sup> True to its mission of keeping theology in step with modern science, the *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.”<sup>84</sup> 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 civilizations.<sup>85</sup> Appealing next to Christian tradition, the writer advised that the Genesis cosmogony

<sup>79</sup> *AR*, March 1887, 297.

<sup>80</sup> *AR*, March 1887, 298.

<sup>81</sup> *AR*, March 1887, 298.

<sup>82</sup> *AR*, March 1887, 300.

<sup>83</sup> *AR*, March 1887, 300.

<sup>84</sup> *CU*, December 31, 1885, 4.

<sup>85</sup> *CU*, December 31, 1885, 4.

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 paleontology or cosmology, however, but in the scripture's ability to enkindle a "life of reverence and love toward the creator."<sup>86</sup> 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."<sup>87</sup> The *Christian Union* rejected the scientific naturalism of Huxley, but neither was it concordist in its view of Genesis and science. Gladstone appeared out of step with progressive orthodoxy in his role as a reconciler.

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.<sup>88</sup>

Guyot and Dana had spelled out a clear rationale for reconciling Genesis and science helping to prepare Americans for Gladstone's first essay.

Among orthodox harmonizers who shared Gladstone's essential view, there were a couple of detractors who felt his mode of disputation was ineffective. "The reply is as crushing as it is civil," wrote one such author in the *New York Tribune* following Huxley's first reply. "And thus through

<sup>86</sup> *CU*, December 31, 1885, 4.

<sup>87</sup> *CU*, December 31, 1885, 4.

<sup>88</sup> James D. Dana, *Bibliotheca Sacra*, April 1885, 220.

ten pages, he lays bare Mr. Gladstone's total want of all knowledge of the literature of the subject which he rashly entered upon."<sup>89</sup> Following the publishing of Gladstone's "Proem," the *Tribune* faulted the statesman for exposing himself to destructive criticism, both for his use of the fourfold 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 definite scientific meaning, and to extend his chain of creative acts in Genesis so as to include six periods."<sup>90</sup> 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."<sup>91</sup> 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."<sup>92</sup> The *Tribune* had expressed views sympathetic to Gladstone's harmonization 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 now under the de facto editorship of A.F. Hewit, reflected the trend toward openness to the sciences. The 1870s and 1880s had witnessed a more liberal dialogue between science and Roman Catholicism. Previously, under the pontificate of Pius IX, an intellectually stultifying mindset toward 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.<sup>93</sup> 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."<sup>94</sup> On Genesis and the Proem, the *World* was openly sympathetic to the day-age theory. And while the article was largely a critique of Huxley's assault on scripture, it also faulted Gladstone for the novelty of the fourfold succession. It was difficult enough to make things

<sup>89</sup> *NY Trib.*, December 20, 1885, 12.

<sup>90</sup> *NY Trib.*, January 19, 1886, 4.

<sup>91</sup> *NY Trib.*, January 19, 1886, 4.

<sup>92</sup> *NY Trib.*, January 19, 1886, 4.

<sup>93</sup> See Barry Brundell, "Catholic Church Politics and Evolution Theory, 1894–1902," *The British Journal for the History of Science*, 34 (2001), 81–95.

<sup>94</sup> "The Cosmogony and its Critics," *CW*, 1 December 1886, 321.

coincide, genus for genus, species for species, but, the author quipped, Gladstone attempted three divisions: “the Scriptural, the scientific, and the Gladstonian.”<sup>95</sup> 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.<sup>96</sup> If the *Catholic World* was 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 fourfold 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 had enthusiastic advocates as well. This group once again comprised conservative evangelicals. Although none of them agreed with his use of the fourfold succession, they did not single it out for special rebuke. The greatest boon to Gladstone 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*. Dana acknowledged that he agreed “in all essential points with Mr. Gladstone, and believed that the first chapters of Genesis and Science are in accord.”<sup>97</sup> In an article following “Proem to Genesis,” a writer for the *New York Evangelist* observed that the statesman had “never written anything more vigorous or conclusive in his long career.”<sup>98</sup> Gladstone, he insisted, had thoroughly refuted Huxley and demonstrated the remarkable agreement between the first chapter of Genesis and the discoveries of science. Moreover, his conclusions had been 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 his harmonizing strategy. Especially with his rejoinder to Huxley, Wright believed the statesman had “brought his skillful and powerful dialectic to bear upon the subject.” And, as “a specimen of controversial literature,”

<sup>95</sup> “The Cosmogony and its Critics,” *CW*, 327.

<sup>96</sup> “The Cosmogony and its Critics,” *CW*, 327.

<sup>97</sup> James D. Dana, *Nineteenth Century*, 20: 114, (1886) August, 304.

<sup>98</sup> *NTE*, February 11, 1886, 2.

he added, “in its best aspects the last paper of Gladstone has few equals.”<sup>99</sup> Wright also concluded that the inspiration of the Bible had rarely been defended with so much force, scholarship, and eloquence combined and rated the statesman’s rejoinder “a classic upon the subject treated.”<sup>100</sup> He also supported the harmony between Genesis and the nebular hypothesis, contending that Gladstone’s rejoinder “makes Professor Huxley appear painfully narrow and puerile in his criticisms.”<sup>101</sup> Conservative evangelicals believed he had triumphed over Huxley and was a credible spokesman in the debate over Genesis and science.

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 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.”<sup>102</sup> 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.<sup>103</sup>

## GLADSTONE VERSUS HUXLEY, ROUND TWO

Between their two disputes in the *Nineteenth Century*, both Gladstone and Huxley continued to publish about religion. In 1888, Gladstone became engaged in a high-profile debate with the American agnostic Robert Ingersoll, the subject of the next chapter. For his part, Huxley wrote a spate of articles attacking Christian belief and practice. The most significant was “Agnosticism” (1889), part of a symposium on unbelief in

<sup>99</sup> *IND*, September 15, 1887, 5.

<sup>100</sup> *IND*, September 15, 1887, 5.

<sup>101</sup> *IND*, September 15, 1887, 5.

<sup>102</sup> *NY Trib*, October 19, 1897, 8.

<sup>103</sup> *IND*, January 24, 1907, 225.

the *Nineteenth Century*.<sup>104</sup> 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)—discussed in Chap. 8. Huxley's "Agnosticism" essay inadvertently became the chief catalyst for the second Gladstone-Huxley dispute because the scientist had performed a skeptical 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, in the process, could not resist attacking his former foe over the Gadarene narrative.<sup>105</sup> 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 had taken direct aim at Huxley's "Agnosticism" essay. Thus, in the second dispute, it would be the statesman who initiated the clash of arms, goading the scientist into print by referring to him as the "Achilles of the opposing army."<sup>106</sup> Huxley could not resist the taunt.

For him, the Gadarene narrative could not withstand the scrutiny of modern science. "Belief in demons and demoniacal possession," he had observed in "Agnosticism," "is a mere survival of a once universal superstition."<sup>107</sup> 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.<sup>108</sup> He also raised the legal issue of property damage relative to the destruction of the herd of swine. The gospel writers, he 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."<sup>109</sup> In his critique of Huxley in *Good Works*, Gladstone declined to address demon possession because, he stated, "a physiological judgment is not for me to discuss."<sup>110</sup> As for property damage, since the Gadarene owners of the swine

<sup>104</sup> T. H. Huxley, "Agnosticism," *Nineteenth Century*, 144 (1889), 169–194.

<sup>105</sup> Bebbington, *Mind of Gladstone*, 242, 243.

<sup>106</sup> Bebbington, *Mind of Gladstone*, 293.

<sup>107</sup> Huxley, "Agnosticism," 172.

<sup>108</sup> Huxley, "Agnosticism," 173.

<sup>109</sup> Huxley, "Agnosticism," 173.

<sup>110</sup> WEG, *Impregnable Rock*, 298.

were Jews they were in violation of the Mosaic Law. Therefore, by casting the demons into the herd of swine Jesus had performed a “vindication of the law.”<sup>111</sup> The parameters of a second Gladstone-Huxley symposium in the *Nineteenth Century* had been framed. Two of England’s most venerable public figures were about to engage in a debate over a porcine catastrophe.

Huxley seized upon the opportunity to assault his former rival a second time. And this time it required no coaxing from Knowles. Huxley wrote him the following note: “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?”<sup>112</sup> Along with the letter, Huxley attached a doodle he had drawn of Gladstone riding upon a pig. His “The Keepers of the Herd of Swine” appeared in the December 1890 number of the *Nineteenth Century*. In the opening line, he feigned reticence to engage the statesman once again: “I fondly hoped that Mr. Gladstone and I had come to an end of disputation.”<sup>113</sup> Ever eager, Gladstone answered in the February 1891 issue with “Professor Huxley and the Swine Miracle” followed by a Huxley rejoinder in March titled “Illustrations of Mr. Gladstone’s Controversial Method.” The discussion centered generally on the historical question of whether the city of Gadara was 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, thought Schürer unreliable and accused Huxley of misreading Josephus. To build his case that Gadara was under Jewish law, even if comprising of mixed ethnicity, Gladstone countered by appealing to three primary sources: third-century Alexandrian church father Origen, Henry Milman’s *History of the Jews* (1830), and Alfred Edersheim’s *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (1883). “But to suppose the swineherds to have been punished by Christ for pursuing a calling which to them was an innocent one,” he contended, “is to run counter to every law of reasonable historical interpretation.”<sup>114</sup>

<sup>111</sup>WEG, *Impregnable Rock*, 303.

<sup>112</sup>Huxley to James Knowles, November, 18, 1890, The Huxley File (website), accessed June 28, 2011, <https://mathcs.clarku.edu/huxley/letters/90.html>

<sup>113</sup>Huxley, “The Keepers of the Herd of Swine,” *Nineteenth Century*, December 1890, 967.

<sup>114</sup>WEG, “Professor Huxley and the Swine Miracle,” *Nineteenth Century*, February 1891, 358.

Huxley responded in “Illustrations” by asserting the law of Moses had nowhere prohibited raising pigs, but only restricted eating them and touching their dead carcasses. Moreover, he introduced, with some delight, his observation that Jesus had not acted 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. Jesus had been tricked, he suggested sarcastically. After detailing “seven heretical propositions” made by Gladstone, Huxley reiterated his initial point from the “Agnosticism” essay surrounding 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 instructors.”<sup>115</sup> Modern science had relegated all such stories to the realm of superstition. As always, Huxley had insisted upon and had been granted the last word by Knowles.

### THE AMERICAN PRESS RESPONDS

The second controversy provoked fewer published responses in America than had the first, but it did inspire several strong opinions. Notable criticism of Gladstone appeared in the *Chicago Daily Tribune*: “The most conspicuous feature of this discussion, however, is its folly because the two would never agree and one would never convince the other.”<sup>116</sup> Upon the release of Gladstone’s *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 the statesman in his *Christian Union*. Gladstone, he insisted, 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.”<sup>117</sup> A similar sentiment was expressed by a writer for the literary and arts review *The Critic*, who declared that “In every chapter are the patent evidences of Mr. Gladstone’s lack of equipment for the work he has undertaken.”<sup>118</sup> The statesman’s amateur status was becoming problematic in an increasingly specialized age. The

<sup>115</sup> Huxley, “Illustrations of Mr. Gladstone’s Controversial Method,” *Nineteenth Century*, March 1891, 466.

<sup>116</sup> *CT*, July 24, 1892, 24.

<sup>117</sup> *CU*, December 11, 1890, 799.

<sup>118</sup> *The Critic*, February 14, 1891, 81.



*Impregnable Rock* might be helpful for those fearful of higher criticism, it was conceded, but “the day of universal scholars is over.”<sup>119</sup> Gladstone had once again fallen short for those schooled in progressive orthodoxy.

What little favorable commentary did appear came from religious publications that no doubt felt the sting of Huxley’s direct assault upon biblical integrity and the miraculous works of Jesus. In an article on higher criticism, a writer for the Quaker organ *Friends’ Review* reported that the *Impregnable Rock* was an “exemplary” work. Gladstone, the author asserted, had utilized the tools of critical methodology—language study, antiquities, history, and science—while maintaining a proper regard for the Bible’s divine origins.<sup>120</sup> 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 proper 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*.<sup>121</sup> 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 ‘wine miracle’ our Lord did injustice to the owners of the swine, because keeping them ‘was a lawful occupation.’”<sup>122</sup> 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.”<sup>123</sup> However sparingly it appeared, some of the organs of the religious press in America perceived Gladstone to be an effective apologist and biblical exegete as a result of his second dispute with Huxley.

## SUMMARY

To his critics, Gladstone had relied on outdated scholarship and had failed to realize that the relationship between science and theology had been markedly transformed and professionalized by 1885. Leading organs of progressive orthodoxy such as the *Christian Union* and the *Andover*

<sup>119</sup> *The Critic*, February 14, 1891, 81.

<sup>120</sup> *Friends’ Review*, 26 (1891), 408.

<sup>121</sup> *Friends’ Review*, 26 (1891), 408.

<sup>122</sup> *MR*, 3 (1891), 493.

<sup>123</sup> *IND*, 26 February 26, 1891, 18.

*Review* considered his attempts at harmonizing to be unnecessary and even a setback to the cause of 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 Butlerian apologetics outdated. There was consensus among all groups that in "Dawn of Creation" he had fallen short in his grasp of scientific matters by use of the fourfold 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 conservative evangelicals. It is reasonable, therefore, to conclude that evangelicals neither saw natural science as the sole domain of trained scientists nor were they prepared to limit the Bible's ability to speak authoritatively on the matter.

The second controversy over the Gadarene swine miracle included discussion of relevant issues such as higher criticism and historical geography, but it would live in popular memory as an amusing debate about pigs. As William Irvine quipped, "people grew tired of pigs and the controversy died of its own grotesqueness."<sup>124</sup> All the same, several important observations about the state of American religion relative to modern science may be drawn from the controversy. Gladstone clearly emerged from it as a plausible lay theologian in the opinion of evangelicals and orthodox moderates. Despite the trend toward specialization and professionalism, the statesman was received as a viable and effective Christian apologist. His cautious use of higher criticism appears to have resonated with at least some in the conservative religious community. 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 the study of the relevant sources. In both controversies Gladstone had found favor 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

<sup>124</sup> Irvine, *Apes, Angels, and Victorians*, 328.

subsequent years suggests that his importance may have been overstated 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.<sup>125</sup> 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. The statesman's Proem was the "most noted among of efforts to keep geology well within Scripture."<sup>126</sup> Gladstone had designed the skeleton of the structure and decorated it with his skillful rhetoric, White insisted, but Huxley had shattered its scientific parts.<sup>127</sup> Thus, "the last great fortress, of the opponents of unfettered scientific investigation was in ruins," White declared.<sup>128</sup> 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." Based on their pronouncements, it could well be believed that religion had "recovered from her supposed defeat and assumed her ancient seat of glory."<sup>129</sup> American perceptions of the statesman's role in the historical controversies of the period had become legendary. The Gladstone-Huxley disputes took their place in lore of the modern war between science and religion.

<sup>125</sup> Henry Morton, *Bibliotheca Sacra*, April 1897, 272.

<sup>126</sup> Andrew Dickson White, *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom*, 2 volumes combined (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1896) vol 1, 243.

<sup>127</sup> White, *History of Warfare*, 244.

<sup>128</sup> White, *History of Warfare*, 246.

<sup>129</sup> *Friends' Intelligencer*, July 3, 1897, 467.



## CHAPTER 7

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# Battling Aggressive Infidelity: Debating Robert Ingersoll

[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.*

W. E. Gladstone, May 1888 (WEG, “Colonel Ingersoll on Christianity: Some Remarks on His Reply to Dr. Field”, *North American Review*, 146 (1888), p. 481)

Thus wrote the venerable British statesman to his American readers in May 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 six months prior, the popular journal of literary and cultural commentary had featured exchanges on the topic between Dr. Henry Field, editor of the evangelical Presbyterian *New York Evangelist*, and Col. Robert Ingersoll, the famous agnostic lecturer, author, and Republican politician. The inaugural entry was entitled “An Open Letter to Robert G. Ingersoll” by Dr. Henry Field. His “Letter” was politely worded but vigorous in its defense of the existence of God and doctrines of the substitutionary atonement, spiritual regeneration, eternal judgment, and the divinity of Christ—all of which Ingersoll had attacked with frequency in his popular lectures and essays. Ingersoll’s rejoinder “Reply to the Rev. Henry M. Field” appeared in the November ’87 number of the *Review*. It was laced with ad hominem attacks, but was,

nonetheless, an iconoclastic rebuttal to Field's defense of orthodoxy and included the agnostic's typical combination of skeptical sarcasm and lofty secular morality. Field fired back with a response that was then followed by another rejoinder by Ingersoll. A subscriber to the *North American Review*, Gladstone had been reading the debate with keen interest while on holiday in Florence. His own contribution soon followed, triggering a derisive riposte from Ingersoll and widespread interest in the American press. The "Gladstone-Ingersoll controversy" had begun.<sup>1</sup>

### INGERSOLL AND THE RISE OF AGNOSTICISM IN AMERICA

The combatants in the Victorian battle over unbelief often had more theological expertise than either Gladstone or Ingersoll, but none were more famous or emblematic of their age. To contextualize the published reactions to these spirited champions, it will be useful to establish first the rise of unbelief and secularism in the United States. Agnosticism was part of a larger free-thought movement that flourished in the postwar years and coincided with the expansion of evangelicalism, although it fell far short in numbers of adherents. It was by no means a unified movement, but all freethinkers held a common rejection of revealed religion and a general disregard for clerical authority. They ranged from unorthodox Christians to agnostics to outright atheists, and they were as active in the Midwest as they were on the east coast.<sup>2</sup> To be sure, there was noteworthy free-thought activity in the first half of the nineteenth century, but the post-Darwinian period of approximately 1875 to 1914 was the high-water mark for its influence in America. The period witnessed a torrent of new publications like the *Boston Investigator* and D. M. Bennett's *The Truth Seeker*. Free-thought organizations like the National Liberal League and the Rationalist Association of North America were also flourishing. The 1875 dedication of the Thomas Paine Memorial Hall in Boston stands as a powerful symbol of the movement's rise to a measure of respectability.<sup>3</sup> Politically, American freethinkers in the postwar period were often wedded to socialism, but they also included those with corporate interests like the

<sup>1</sup> See Stephen Peterson. "The Gladstone-Ingersoll Debates in the American Periodical Press." *Nineteenth-Century Prose* 39:1,2 (2012): 173–200.

<sup>2</sup> See Whitehead, Fred and Verle Muhrer, *Free-Thought on the American Frontier* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1992).

<sup>3</sup> Sydney Warren, *American Freethought, 1860–1914* (New York: Gordian Press, Inc., 1966), 19–44.

Republican Ingersoll. They were generally united around the issues of free speech, women's rights, opposition to capital punishment, and prison and asylum reform, but their cause célèbre was public education. Freethinkers characterized religious authorities as "pernicious gatekeepers" to education and therefore insisted that it be secular and publicly financed. The movement encompassed a broad range of disciplines and was strengthened in America by the expansion of public schools and libraries in the postwar decades.<sup>4</sup>

Yet if Victorians were in crisis, it was not because fewer people had faith. On the contrary, evangelicalism and church attendance continued largely unabated in the late Victorian period on both sides of the Atlantic. As Timothy Larsen's work informs us, any master narrative about the triumph of doubt over faith must be balanced against testimonies of conversions and reconversions to faith by a number of prominent secularists.<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup> However, the latter half of the nineteenth century may be considered a period of crisis for traditional Christians because many of the elites in educated culture had become openly dismissive of biblical revelation and were able to do so with relative impunity. (It was relative because in blasphemy trials and censorship of free-thought publications occurred under the Comstock laws.)<sup>7</sup> Despite continued controversy, for the first time it had become socially and intellectually possible, at least in some educated circles, for influential figures to publicly reject faith and deny the Bible as revealed truth. In Great Britain, the shifting contours of the social landscape became seared into the public mind through the works of high-profile agnostics like T.H. Huxley, Herbert Spencer, John Tyndall, Charles Bradlaugh, and George Eliot to name just a few. American secularists were inspired by their writings and their lecture tours

<sup>4</sup>Susan Jacoby, *Freethinkers: A History of American Secularism* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2004), 151–156.

<sup>5</sup>See Timothy Larsen, *Crisis of Doubt: Honest Faith in Nineteenth-Century England* (Oxford UP, 2009).

<sup>6</sup>See Edward Royle, ed., *The Infidel Tradition from Paine to Bradlaugh* (London: Macmillan Press, 1976); and Royle, *Victorian Infidels* (Manchester UP, 1974).

<sup>7</sup>Roderick Bradford, "American Inquisition," in *D. M. Bennett: The Truth Seeker* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2006), 97–129.

to the United States like those made by Bradlaugh in 1873, '74, and '75.<sup>8</sup> American infidelity had fewer original thinkers, but included renowned figures such as Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Charles Eliot Norton, Henry Adams, and its most outspoken proponent, Robert Ingersoll. Adding more weight to an already crumbling foundation, the emergence of anthropology and comparative religions as serious fields of study led numerous educated people to conclude, especially after Darwin, that revealed religions were merely relics of primitive cultures.<sup>9</sup>

However, the growth of Victorian skepticism resulted from more than the tensions between religion and science. Like their evangelical counterparts, freethinkers of the period were intensely moralistic. Many agnostics, including Ingersoll, rejected the Bible's veracity on ethical grounds quite similar to those of the deists in the previous century. That is, they believed much of the Bible itself was immoral. The traditional doctrines of hell, the substitutionary atonement, and the wrathful God of the Old Testament were subjected to particular derision. Victorian agnostics had abandoned faith, but they 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."<sup>10</sup> Ingersoll's lectures and writings were laced with diatribes against the immorality of Jehovah and his followers. In his *North American Review* response to Gladstone, he accused the Old Testament God of endorsing murder, cruelty to animals, bloodlust, slavery, genocide, polygamy, and the subjugation of women.<sup>11</sup> "That what you call unbelief," Ingersoll asserted, "is only a higher and holier faith."<sup>12</sup> As James Turner has aptly stated, for Victorian agnostics "moralism was the peak that still stood, prominent in its isolation, after other beliefs had eroded."<sup>13</sup>

<sup>8</sup>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), 30.

<sup>9</sup>James Turner, *Without God, Without Creed: The Origins of Unbelief in America* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 150-153.

<sup>10</sup>Leslie Stephen, Journal, 26 January 1865, quoted in Frederic William Maitland, *The Life of Leslie Stephen* (London, 1906), 144, cited in Turner, 203.

<sup>11</sup>Robert G. Ingersoll, "Col. Ingersoll to Mr. Gladstone", *North American Review*, 146 (1888), 609-615.

<sup>12</sup>Ingersoll, "Col. Ingersoll to Mr. Gladstone", 603-4.

<sup>13</sup>Turner, *Without God, Without Creed*, 203.

Ingersoll's rejection of Christianity and the Bible had grown out of a rigorous Calvinist childhood. His father, John, was an evangelical clergyman steeped in Presbyterian orthodoxy. The catalyst for Robert's agnosticism was the doctrine of eternal punishment. At the age of seven he had heard an itinerant evangelist present a graphic description of the tortures of hell. From that moment he told himself, "It is a lie, and I hate your religion."<sup>14</sup> John's tireless efforts to correct his erring son went unrewarded, and despite the youthful Robert's cover to cover knowledge of the Bible, in later years he claimed he could not recall a time when he had accepted orthodox religion.<sup>15</sup> In adulthood he rose to the rank of colonel in the Union Army during the Civil War. After the war, he became active in Illinois Republican politics and achieved success as a corporate trial lawyer. He rose to national prominence at the 1876 Republican National Convention, where he placed the name of James G. Blaine in nomination for the presidency.<sup>16</sup> By all accounts Ingersoll was a brilliant orator. His vivid lectures often attracted thousands and expanded to issues beyond agnosticism, including politics, civil liberties, science, marriage and parenting, education, and the arts. Known as "The Great Agnostic" to his supporters and "Robert Injuresoul" to his critics, he was unrivaled as the secular spokesman for an age of change. He also possessed a spotless reputation and was accounted a dedicated family man even by his critics.<sup>17</sup> A prolific writer, his collected works fill 12 volumes, and at the peak of his career, in the 80s and 90s, he spoke in hundreds of towns each year. It is likely that few nineteenth-century Americans spoke publicly to more people. Just prior to the release of the June 1888 number of the *North American Review*, the *New York Sun* ran a story about Ingersoll's fame, suggesting the enormous advanced demand for the publication was due largely to anticipation of reading of the agnostic's lively prose in reply to Gladstone.<sup>18</sup> Thus the pairing of America's greatest infidel with Britain's foremost Christian statesman made for great copy in the American press.

<sup>14</sup>Robert Ingersoll, quoted in Eva Ingersoll Wakefield, *The Life and Letters of Robert G. Ingersoll* (London: Watts & Co., 1952), 6.

<sup>15</sup>Wakefield, 1–6.

<sup>16</sup>Roger E. Greeley, ed., *Ingersoll: Immortal Infidel* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1977), xi.

<sup>17</sup>Jacoby, 158–164.

<sup>18</sup>"Col. Ingersoll's Popularity," *New York Sun*, June 2, 1888, 4.



## GLADSTONE VERSUS INGERSOLL

Then between his third and fourth premierships, Gladstone had been reading the Field-Ingersoll Debate with keen interest.<sup>19</sup> He was two years removed from the thorny dispute in the *Nineteenth Century* with T.H. Huxley over Genesis and geology. In that clash, he had largely held his own theologically, but was decidedly outmatched in scientific acumen. Now Gladstone was primed for a return to religious controversy, this time setting his sights upon Ingersoll. He entered boldly into the fray in the May 1888 edition of the *North American Review*. There he unleashed “Colonel Ingersoll on Christianity: Some Remarks on his Reply to Dr. Field.” It was a 27-page defense of biblical faith, with significant space devoted to a rebuke of Ingersoll’s irreverent prose.<sup>20</sup> The Colonel had employed a “tumultuous method,” and had failed to approach the subject matter with “deep reverential calm.” Ingersoll’s disrespect had violated the laws of social morality, Gladstone insisted, because “the name of Jehovah [is] encircled in the heart of every believer with the profoundest reverence and love.”<sup>21</sup> For the devout statesman, Ingersoll’s cheekily worded rejoinders to Dr. Field were no doubt seen as a breach of Bishop Joseph Butler’s rules for fair and cautious methodology in debate. By contrast, Gladstone concluded, his intemperate style was to “ride an unbroken horse, and to throw the reins upon his neck.”<sup>22</sup> His insistence upon a reverential debate, it will be seen presently, was exploited by Ingersoll and by other critical American reviewers. Like Field, Gladstone defended traditional Christian belief and the literal truth of Bible stories such as Jephthah and Jonah—which the Colonel had scornfully dismissed in his exchanges with Field.

Ingersoll’s return volley, innocuously titled “Col. Ingersoll to Mr. Gladstone,” 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.”<sup>23</sup> 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,” he demanded,

<sup>19</sup> Bebbington, *Mind of Gladstone*, 245.

<sup>20</sup> WEG, “Colonel Ingersoll on Christianity: Some Remarks on His Reply to Dr. Field,” *NAR*, 146:378 (1888): 483–85.

<sup>21</sup> WEG, “Colonel Ingersoll on Christianity,” 484.

<sup>22</sup> WEG, “Colonel Ingersoll on Christianity,” 508.

<sup>23</sup> Robert G. Ingersoll, “Col. Ingersoll to Mr. Gladstone,” *NAR*, 146:379 (1888), 601.

“you will find how Jehovah, the compassionate, whose name is enshrined in so many hearts, threatened to use his power.”<sup>24</sup> This was a reference to the many curses Jehovah promised to inflict upon the disobedient. And again, regarding the 18th 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?<sup>25</sup>

The Colonel went on to predict the eventual death of dogma because the human mind would advance 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.”<sup>26</sup> He concluded by aiming one last arrow at Gladstone:

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.<sup>27</sup>

Gladstone was not to be granted a rejoinder; however, the duty of answering Ingersoll was assigned 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.

### THE AMERICAN PRESS RESPONDS

The Field-Ingersoll dispute had attracted only modest reporting in US papers, but the heavyweight matchup between Gladstone and Ingersoll became the catalyst for a surge in editorials and printed excerpts. The

<sup>24</sup>Ingersoll, “Col. Ingersoll to Mr. Gladstone,” 610.

<sup>25</sup>Ingersoll, “Col. Ingersoll to Mr. Gladstone,” 609.

<sup>26</sup>Ingersoll, “Col. Ingersoll to Mr. Gladstone,” 639, 640.

<sup>27</sup>Ingersoll, “Col. Ingersoll to Mr. Gladstone,” 640.

debate quickly became known as the “Gladstone-Ingersoll Controversy.” The Methodist *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, while 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.”<sup>28</sup> One measurable result of Gladstone’s presence was increased sales for the *North American Review*. As of May 17, the *New York Evangelist* had reported the numbers of the review containing the Field-Ingersoll discussion had passed through 10 and 12 editions, an outcome, it was said, “nearly unexampled in the circulation of such dignified and costly reviews.”<sup>29</sup> By the end of May, the single number containing Gladstone’s article had already swollen to its 57th edition, roughly 30,000 copies by the estimate of the *Evangelist*.<sup>30</sup> The *NAR* continued to pour out edition after edition of the symposium until there were no less than 50,000 or 60,000 extra copies sold.<sup>31</sup> The *New York Tribune* reported that Ingersoll’s riposte to Gladstone was hugely popular and had pushed sales of the June issue of the *NAR* toward the 100,000 mark, well in excess of its competitors.<sup>32</sup>

Overall it proved one of *NAR*’s most successful symposiums, a feature introduced by Alan Thorndike Rice, who had purchased the review in 1876. Circulation increased markedly after he transformed the dry, scholarly journal by placing greater emphasis on current events and by featuring prominent authors. Sales eventually rivaled the monthly illustrated magazines.<sup>33</sup> Editors had adopted a similar business model in Britain, namely, James Knowles of the *Nineteenth Century*, who stage-managed symposiums and even hung pictures of current disputants in his office. Such controversies proved highly profitable as witnessed by T.H. Huxley’s

<sup>28</sup> “Gladstone and Ingersoll,” *ZH*, 2 May 1888, 140; “Gladstone’s Reply to Ingersoll,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 29, 1888, 28.

<sup>29</sup> *NYE*, May 17, 1888, 4. The *NAR* was sold for 50 cents compared with daily newspapers that generally sold for 2 cents.

<sup>30</sup> *NYE*, May 31, 1888, 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 not more than 250.

<sup>31</sup> *NYE*, November 29, 1888, 4.

<sup>32</sup> *NY Trib*, June 9, 1888, 6.

<sup>33</sup> “Death of Allen Thorndike Rice,” *CT*, May 17, 1889, 4.

“Agnosticism” piece that ran through four editions.<sup>34</sup> By drawing Gladstone into the battle, Rice had found the ideal foil for Ingersoll. He was eager to exploit the duel, as were other publications. A “battle” was just the outcome Rice had intended. Martial language was employed frequently during the dispute as the oft-used metaphor of warfare between modern scientific thinking and revealed religion was exploited in the press. Indeed, such language had been employed by the participants themselves: Gladstone had been listening to the “clash of arms.” The symposium revealed a broad spectrum of American attitudes surrounding the nineteenth-century battle for belief—Gladstone’s “most momentous of all subjects.”<sup>35</sup>

Gladstone’s entry into the debate immediately raised the profile of the NAR symposium. Both Field and Ingersoll acknowledged his lofty status. “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.”<sup>36</sup> In his rejoinder, Ingersoll expressed high regard for Gladstone’s intellect and character, paying tribute to his “exalted position in the estimation of the civilized world.” He continued, “I gladly acknowledge the inestimable services that you have rendered, not only to England, but to mankind.”<sup>37</sup> Similar views of the statesman were voiced by others. For a Chicago clergyman, the Ingersoll-Field discussion was the most important recent event in the religious world, but it was “still more notable that the Grand Old Man has been drawn into the great debate.”<sup>38</sup> In the opinion of the *Raleigh News and Observer*, “Mr. Gladstone was recognized as the greatest of English controversialists before Mr. Ingersoll reached adulthood.”<sup>39</sup> Moreover, there is evidence that the debate continued to influence American religion nearly two months after the brief exchange: the *Milwaukee Daily Journal* reported that George H. Ide would speak on “Gladstone vs. Ingersoll” at Grand Avenue Congregational Church.<sup>40</sup> The statesman had brought the weight of his celebrity and had piqued interest in the forum. His American

<sup>34</sup> Adrian Desmond, *Huxley: from Devil’s Disciple to Evolution’s High Priest* (Reading, MA: Perseus Books, 1994), 571.

<sup>35</sup> WEG, “Colonel Ingersoll on Christianity,” 481.

<sup>36</sup> Dr. Henry Field, *NTE*, May 3, 1888, 4.

<sup>37</sup> Ingersoll, “To Mr. Gladstone,” 601.

<sup>38</sup> “Gladstone and Ingersoll,” *Chicago Daily Inter Ocean*, April 29, 1888, 4.

<sup>39</sup> “Mr. Gladstone on Bob Ingersoll,” *Raleigh News and Observer*, May 1, 1888, col A.

<sup>40</sup> “Church Services Tomorrow,” *Milwaukee Daily Journal*, June 30, 1888, col D.

admirers supplied him the flattering epithets: the *Methodist Review* called him a “giant” who held Ingersoll pygmy-like in his hands.<sup>41</sup> The *Philadelphia Inquirer* also cast him as a “giant among men,” and it 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.”<sup>42</sup> Gladstone’s celebrity was clearly an important factor in transforming the symposium.

Although there was common agreement that Gladstone had heightened public interest through the sheer force of his presence, not everyone agreed that the outcome had served the cause of truth. Writing in *Zion’s Herald*, one Charles Littlefield believed Ingersoll was outargued by Gladstone, but asked whether it was sensible to honor 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 plausible and captivating statements?”<sup>43</sup> Littlefield thought the statesman had helped only to sell magazines and bring Ingersoll’s abhorrent 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?”<sup>44</sup> The *Methodist Review* 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.”<sup>45</sup> The *Independent* had similar misgivings, failing 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 radical skepticism viewed his entry into the dispute as a double-edged sword.

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,” noting, “Few

<sup>41</sup> “The Magazines and Reviews,” *MQR* 4:4 (1888), 622.

<sup>42</sup> “Gladstone on Ingersoll,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 4, 1888, 4.

<sup>43</sup> Charles A. Littlefield, “Is it Wise?” *ZH*, August 1, 1888, 242.

<sup>44</sup> Littlefield, “Is it Wise?” *ZH*, 242.

<sup>45</sup> *MQR* 4:4 (1888), 622.

things which Mr. Gladstone has written have impressed us more with his versatility and power.” The article 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.”<sup>46</sup> *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 citadel of Christian truth. Namely, Gladstone had effectively answered Ingersoll’s claims that evolution and revelation were at variance.<sup>47</sup> “There is no colorable ground,” the statesman had asserted in “Remarks,” “for assuming evolution and revelation to be at variance with one another.”<sup>48</sup> Unlike strict biblical literalists, he believed evolution presented few problems for a theistic worldview provided one could discern true religion and sound science. Lyman Abbott’s interdenominational *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.”<sup>49</sup> Gladstone had spilled much ink to correct Ingersoll’s assertion that the Bible had condoned child sacrifice through the stories of Abraham and Jephthah. The *Christian Union* was convinced Gladstone had successfully defended the faith, which among advocates of progressive orthodoxy appears as an exception. The *Methodist Review* also 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.’”<sup>50</sup> The evangelical press had embraced Gladstone’s defense of faith with few reservations.

Enthusiastic support for Gladstone was evident in at least a couple of mainstream newspapers. Writing for the *Morning Oregonian* under his “Nym Crinkle” pseudonym, Andrew C. Wheeler, the well-known critic and playwright, penned an anti-Ingersoll diatribe titled “Puncturing the Pagan.” “One reads now with calm admiration what that splendid master of critical exegesis, Mr. Gladstone, says,” Wheeler declared. He only regretted that the “captain’s spear” had not been aimed at some leader of

<sup>46</sup> Field, *NYE*, May 3, 1888, 4.

<sup>47</sup> “Gladstone and Ingersoll,” *ZH*, May 2, 1888, 140.

<sup>48</sup> WEG, “Remarks,” 491.

<sup>49</sup> “Mr. Gladstone on Mr. Ingersoll,” *CU*, May 3, 1888, 547.

<sup>50</sup> *Methodist Review*, 4:4 (1888), 622.

the conflict rather than at a “noisy camp follower” like Ingersoll.<sup>51</sup> The *Raleigh News and Observer* offered some of the most colorful, if overblown, analysis. Gladstone had delivered “sledge hammer blows” to Ingersoll and had made “one of the most noteworthy of contributions to the vindication of the Christian religion.”<sup>52</sup> Gladstone had rightly condemned Ingersoll’s mocking tone: “The aged champion deals with the rampagous Bob from the serene heights of faith, [and] impales the flip-pant infidel on the point of the spear of truth and holds him up to the scorn of all properly disciplined minds.”<sup>53</sup> Partisan supporters of Gladstone and orthodox Christian belief could be found in the mainstream newspapers as well. The statesman’s role in the controversy had provided traditional Christians with a rallying point against the growing threat of infidelity. However, there was noticeable silence from the Roman Catholic publications, the *American Catholic Quarterly* and the *Catholic World*, both of which had regularly taken issue with modern critics of the church. Gladstone’s handling of the Bradlaugh affair along with bitter memories of his Vatican Decrees pamphlets might have restrained Catholic support.

If there was unqualified support for Gladstone, the opposite was also true. Ingersoll was a hero at the free-thought *Boston Investigator*, which was highly energized by the controversy. No paper covered the debate as devotedly. Like its evangelical counterparts, the commentary took on an air of propaganda, and they used the popular dispute to extol their champion. Editorials and letters to the editor abounded for days, nearly all of which were critical of Gladstone’s “Remarks” and effusive in praise for Ingersoll. There were also free-thought lectures held on the controversy. Of note was a May 20, 1888, address delivered in Boston by popular Ingersoll acolyte W.M. Chandler—dubbed “the Young Ingersoll”—for the express purpose of answering Gladstone.<sup>54</sup> The event took place before the Ingersoll Secular Society and was staged conspicuously in Investigator Hall at the Paine Memorial. The *Investigator* printed the text in full.<sup>55</sup> Chandler cast his hero Ingersoll as the “Hercules of Free Thought” for dispatching the likes of Field and Gladstone. The British statesman, he insisted, had been enlisted solely for his greatness as a man, not for his

<sup>51</sup> Nym Crinkle, “Puncturing the Pagan,” *Morning Oregonian*, May 27, 1888, col D.

<sup>52</sup> “Mr. Gladstone on Bob Ingersoll,” *Raleigh News and Observer*, May 1, 1888, col A.

<sup>53</sup> “Mr. Gladstone on Bob Ingersoll,” *Raleigh News and Observer*, May 1, 1888, col A.

<sup>54</sup> W.M. Chandler, “He Stands Alone,” *Boston Investigator*, May 9, 1888, 6.

<sup>55</sup> W.M. Chandler, “Gladstone vs. Ingersoll: A Lecture,” *Boston Investigator*, June 13, 1888, col. A.

greatness as a theologian. Chandler's lecture was one of the most detailed, if partisan, critiques of the "Remarks" from any quarter. He viciously attacked Gladstone's defense 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.'" <sup>56</sup> 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." <sup>57</sup>

In November 1888, Lemuel K. Washburn, the influential freethinker and editor of the *Boston Investigator*, also addressed the Ingersoll Secular Society. <sup>58</sup> Chiefly a response to Cardinal Manning's recent contribution to the *North American Review* symposium, his lecture also touched on Gladstone's "Remarks." For Washburn, "the entire 'thinking world' had given the victory to Ingersoll." It had been cruel, he believed, 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." <sup>59</sup> Intoxicated with Victorian confidence in secularism and progress, Washburn declared that orthodoxy had left the field of battle to unbelief. Later, in a reply to an *Investigator* letter to the editor, Washburn conjured up his own transatlantic military metaphor. The Gladstone-Ingersoll debate reminded him of what Commodore Perry had said when he conquered the British fleet on Lake Erie: "We have met the enemy, and they are ours. Colonel Ingersoll could say with equal confidence that 'I have met the "grand old man"' in the *North American Review* and he is mine." <sup>60</sup> Freethinkers had predictably given the match to Ingersoll. For them, Gladstone's apologetics had failed to penetrate the citadel of unbelief, and Ingersoll had strengthened their cause.

<sup>56</sup> Chandler, "Gladstone vs. Ingersoll," col. A.

<sup>57</sup> Chandler, "Gladstone vs. Ingersoll," col. A.

<sup>58</sup> L.K. Washburn, "Christianity No Encouragement to Intelligence or Morality: A Lecture," *Boston Investigator*, December 12, 1888, col. A.

<sup>59</sup> Washburn, "Christianity No Encouragement to Intelligence or Morality," col. A.

<sup>60</sup> L.K. Washburn, "A Good Speech Not Reported," *Boston Investigator*, June 6, 1888, col. A.



Gladstone also received negative blowback in mainstream newspapers. The *New York Times* suggested he had wrongly attempted to establish mutual points of consent by addressing Ingersoll directly. The preferred method was that of Cardinal Manning, who in his rebuttal refused even to acknowledge Ingersoll.<sup>61</sup> The *Milwaukee Daily Journal* was even more critical, reflecting the prevailing sentiment of late Victorian secularism. "The world is rapidly outgrowing old traditions and rejecting the supernatural," a columnist stated.<sup>62</sup> Humanity, he insisted, was progressing to a place where men could be devout without adherence to the dogmas of the past, but Gladstone had attached too much importance to the reverential. And, he continued, "nothing not true is entitled to the respect of reverence."<sup>63</sup> He concluded that Gladstone's comments were "not intellectually as satisfactory a production as might have been expected from so eminent a personage."<sup>64</sup> In Kansas, the *Atchison Daily Globe* gave only these brief words in response to the forum: "The general impression is that good old Mr. Gladstone was badly used up in his controversy with Bob Ingersoll."<sup>65</sup> The *Chicago Daily Inter Ocean* observed that Gladstone's article was "disappointing" because his main object was to protest against Ingersoll's method rather than his ideas. For a clever metaphor, the reviewer referenced a recent 30-round heavyweight boxing bout between American John L. Sullivan and Englishman Charlie Mitchell, which had ended in a draw. "Sullivan and Mitchell," he quipped, "rather than Achilles and Hector, would seem to be the Gladstonian patterns for theological debate."<sup>66</sup> At least a few mainstream newspapers thought Gladstone had failed to achieve victory over Ingersoll.

The *Christian Union* notwithstanding, Christians who embraced liberal theology were more critical of Gladstone than their conservative co-religionists. Still, they were by no means supporters of Ingersoll—and they generally sympathized with Gladstone. Under the title "Aggressive Infidelity Using Its Advantage," the formerly conservative Calvinist *Andover Review* used the controversy to highlight how dogmatic theology had misrepresented Christianity and given unbelief like that espoused by Ingersoll to its principal advantage. Gladstone was commended for recog-

<sup>61</sup> "Rome or Reason," *NYT*, September 16, 1888, 4.

<sup>62</sup> "Gladstone and Ingersoll," *Milwaukee Daily Journal*, May 7, 1888, col A.

<sup>63</sup> "Gladstone and Ingersoll," *Milwaukee Daily Journal*, May 7, 1888, col A.

<sup>64</sup> "Gladstone and Ingersoll," *Milwaukee Daily Journal*, May 7, 1888, col A.

<sup>65</sup> "News," *Atchison Daily Globe*, June 30, 1888, col D.

<sup>66</sup> "Gladstone on Ingersoll," *Daily Inter Ocean*, April 29, 1888, 4.

nizing 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 he could not "undertake to defend all along the line."<sup>67</sup> The *Andover Review* largely sympathized with Gladstone but also suggested 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 done about the jury?"<sup>68</sup> The statesman'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.<sup>69</sup>

Frederic H. Hedge, the prominent Unitarian and former Harvard professor wrote an article touching upon the controversy for the *Unitarian Review*. Titled "Atheism," Hedge's article 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 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.<sup>70</sup>

Hedge wondered why Allen Thorndike Rice had not brought some approved theologian into the arena. The unspoken answer, of course, was magazine sales. Regardless of his prominent reputation, for Hedge, Gladstone's defense 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

<sup>67</sup> WEG, "Remarks," 482, 507.

<sup>68</sup> "Aggressive Infidelity Using its Advantage," *The Andover Review* 9:54 (1888), 639.

<sup>69</sup> "Aggressive Infidelity Using its Advantage," *The Andover Review* 9:54 (1888), 639, 642.

<sup>70</sup> Frederic H. Hedge, "Atheism," *UR* 30:2 (1888), 122.

to contribute to the *NAR* symposium under the title “The Combat for the Faith: The Field-Ingersoll-Gladstone Controversy.” As it turned out, none of the five endorsed Gladstone’s method, let alone declared him a winner in the debate. Novelist and social reformer Elizabeth Stuart Phelps had few direct comments on Gladstone, but acknowledged he was a “distinguished statesman whose scholarship, dignity, and repose have given value to the conflict if they have not won the day.”<sup>71</sup> 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 anachronism of creeds. Ecclesiastical creeds, she insisted, 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.”<sup>72</sup> 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?”<sup>73</sup> None of the three major participants possessed sufficient qualifications, she insisted. Lay theologians like Gladstone had little 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 lawyer famous for representing the US government in international disputes. He sympathized with the statesman, 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.”<sup>74</sup> In a lengthy critique of “Remarks,” he expressed the highest regard for the statesman as a scholar and acknowledged his previous record as a skilled debater, but he believed his defeat in the contest with Ingersoll was a foregone conclusion. 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.”<sup>75</sup> The com-

<sup>71</sup> Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, “The Real Issues,” *NAR* 147:380 (1888), 2.

<sup>72</sup> Phelps, “The Real Issues,” 4.

<sup>73</sup> Phelps, “The Real Issues,” 4.

<sup>74</sup> Frederick R. Courdert, “The Combatants,” *NAR* 147:380 (1888), 28.

<sup>75</sup> Courdert, “The Combatants,” 29.

batants were not bound by the same rules, and the statesman was handicapped by his reverence and earnestness for the cause of revealed religion. Conversely, 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.”<sup>76</sup> This was yet another reference to Gladstone’s reproof of Ingersoll for his lack of reverence. The jurist took Gladstone 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.”<sup>77</sup>

According to 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 Butlerian method. The statesman had thrown aside his armor 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.”<sup>78</sup> Courdert noted Ingersoll’s expressed pleasure in Gladstone’s disclaimer. In his rejoinder Ingersoll had declared, “This is certainly a morning star. Let me take this statement, let me hold it as a torch, and by its light I beg you to read the bible once again.”<sup>79</sup> Interpreting Ingersoll, the jurist stated: “He no doubt means that Mr. Gladstone has abandoned his case and surrendered at his adversary’s discretion.”<sup>80</sup> He surmised 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 would have better served his cause, said Courdert, 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 1800 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 impatient sufferance of whatever is, may produce.”<sup>81</sup> This, however, had not been the result of the “Remarks.” Instead, Gladstone had left Ingersoll “the master of an undis-

<sup>76</sup> Courdert, “The Combatants,” 29.

<sup>77</sup> Courdert, “The Combatants,” 31.

<sup>78</sup> WEG, “Remarks,” 496–97.

<sup>79</sup> Ingersoll, “Col. Ingersoll to Mr. Gladstone,” 623.

<sup>80</sup> Courdert, “The Combatants,” 33.

<sup>81</sup> Courdert, “The Combatants,” 36.

puted field.”<sup>82</sup> Courdert concluded by expressing remorse that for the first time in history “men’s tongues and pens are free to malign religion” and he warned that this may change the whole structure of society.<sup>83</sup> For the distinguished jurist, the method of the “Remarks” was not what was needed in the battle against the daunting challenges posed by newly liberated infidelity.

### SUMMARY

In the final analysis, the Gladstone-Huxley debate illuminated the widening gulf between traditional Christianity and atheism in the United States as well as the fissures within Christianity itself. For Gladstone’s part, by entering the American “clash of arms” in the conflict between faith and unbelief, he had stimulated greater interest in the debate and his name became part and parcel of the popular *North American Review* symposium. Moreover, there were 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 skepticism.

There was perhaps much more at stake for Gladstone than the \$1200 he reportedly received for the essay.<sup>84</sup> His reputation as author and apologist was at risk, and he was not one who sought easy praise by preaching to the choir. For him, after all, this was 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 Christians were perhaps the group he most needed to convince but having already imbibed deep drafts of the new theology they judged his attack on infidelity to be well short of the mark. 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 newspapers, conservative evangelicals had once again stood by their champion—this time nearly

<sup>82</sup> Courdert, “The Combatants,” 28.

<sup>83</sup> Courdert, “The Combatants,” 36.

<sup>84</sup> “The Reply,” *Boston Investigator*, May 9, 1886, 6.

alone—by believing he had bested Ingersoll. Some of their spiritual progeny would fight the battle of the next generation, the American fundamentalist-modernist controversy. Thus, in the end Gladstone had represented traditional Christianity well for those conservatives of like mind, which doubtless represented a majority of church-going Americans in 1888. However, in the context of elite education and culture, his apologetics were considered *passé* both in style and in substance. In his assault on Ingersoll, Gladstone the religious controversialist had not achieved the same universal acclaim as Gladstone the statesman. Elite American opinion had judged him to be a man behind modern times.



## CHAPTER 8

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# Defending Orthodoxy: Reviewing *Robert Elsmere* and Gladstone's *Works of Joseph Butler*

*A Christianity without Christ is no Christianity; and a Christ not divine is one other than the Christ on whom the souls of Christians have habitually fed.*

W.E. Gladstone (WEG, “*Robert Elsmere*” and *the Battle of Belief*,” seventh edition. *Nineteenth Century*. [May 1888]: 15)

The two Gladstonian themes of this chapter serve to illustrate American opinions about the rise of modern theological liberalism and the effectiveness of traditional Christian apologetics to address it. During the final decade of his life, Gladstone remained an important public figure on both sides of the Atlantic. In 1896, at the remarkable age of 87, he fulfilled a lifelong ambition by publishing the *Works of Joseph Butler* in two volumes. It was accompanied by Gladstone's *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, during his later years, he had spoken decisively on issues such as divorce law, trade policy, bimetallism, and copyright law.<sup>1</sup> He had retained enough energy to embark, in 1892, on a fourth term as prime minister at the unprecedented age of 82. Moreover, with his second attempt at Home Rule in 1893—the centerpiece of his fourth premiership—he

<sup>1</sup>For a larger discussion of these issues see Gerlach, *British Liberalism and the United States*, 133–152.

remained immensely popular in America despite its failure to become law on a second attempt. George Washburn Smalley provided insight into Gladstone's status as an American icon of democracy. "I take it," he observed in 1894, "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."<sup>2</sup> Gladstone remained the Grand Old Man on both sides of the Atlantic even if opinions about him as a Christian apologist remained mixed.

### THE *ROBERT ELSMERE* CONTROVERSY

Appearing in the *Nineteenth Century*, Gladstone's "'Robert Elsmere' and the Battle of Belief" was a review of the controversial 1888 novel *Robert Elsmere* by Mrs. Humphry (Mary) Ward.<sup>3</sup> It was the story of an Anglican clergyman's loss of faith and his subsequent embrace of the religion of humanity. By 1888, Americans were well acquainted with the statesman's public forays into theological disputes. A writer for *The Independent* noted fittingly that "Mr. Gladstone is by taste even more a theologian than a politician."<sup>4</sup> With his review of *Robert Elsmere*, Gladstone was confronting what he considered 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 both 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.<sup>5</sup> 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 to a greater degree.

<sup>2</sup> George Washburn Smalley, "Mr. Gladstone," *NY Trib*, March 18, 1894, 10.

<sup>3</sup> WEG, "'Robert Elsmere' and the Battle of Belief," seventh edition. *Nineteenth Century*. (May 1888).

<sup>4</sup> *IND*, May 3, 1888, 12.

<sup>5</sup> Gerald Parsons, "Biblical Criticism in Victorian Britain," in Parsons, ed, *Religion in Victorian Britain*, vol 2, 239–247; and James Turner, *Without God, Without Creed*, 141–150.



*Robert Elsmere* was the second of nearly two dozen novels written over the course of Ward's life. It reflected the influence of the Arnold family, including her father Thomas "Tom" Arnold, the literary scholar. Matthew Arnold's *Religion and Dogma* (1873) played an especially prominent role in the novel's theological themes. Reflecting upon the work 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.'" <sup>6</sup> The novel was also evocative of the "honest doubt" controversy of the previous generation, from which Ward drew 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). <sup>7</sup> The success of *Robert Elsmere* gained for Ward a reputation as the next George Eliot.

In the novel, the protagonist, Robert Elsmere, renounces his faith in orthodox Christianity after reading several classic works of higher criticism. He is made aware of such books through his association with the rationalist Squire Wendover. Following his crisis of faith, and the grievous hurt inflicted upon his devout wife, Elsmere seeks counsel from the agnostic Henry Grey, his old Oxford mentor. (Ward intentionally modeled 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 then becomes conscience-stricken over the hypocrisy of remaining an Anglican priest and thus renounces his church and his holy orders. With Grey's guidance, he eventually finds renewed spiritual vitality by dedicating himself to work among London's poor as a follower of a purely human Christ. There he ultimately finds fulfillment and founds a fellowship called the New Brotherhood of Christ. <sup>8</sup> The novel demonstrated, to the shock of many, that a life committed to works of Christian charity need not be based upon orthodox faith. <sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Mrs Humphry Ward, *A Writer's Recollections* (London: W. Collins Sons & Co. LTD., 1918), 235.

<sup>7</sup> Ward, *A Writer's Recollection*, 229.

<sup>8</sup> Gisela Argyle, "Robert Elsmere," Literary Encyclopedia (website) accessed October 30, 2012, <http://www.litencyc.com/php/sworcs.php?rec=true&UID=2330>

<sup>9</sup> For a thorough examination see Peter Erb, "Politics and Theological Liberalism: William Gladstone and Mrs Humphry Ward," *Journal of Religious History* 25:2 (June 2001): 158-172.

GLADSTONE'S REVIEW OF *ROBERT ELSMERE*

Published in February 1888, the reception of *Robert Elsmere* in the British press was relatively quiet for the first six weeks. The novel gradually gained popularity by word of mouth, largely because 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.<sup>10</sup> The statesman's entry into the controversy reveals, once again, ulterior motives. At Mary Ward's request, Robert Knowles, owner of the *Nineteenth Century*, sent Gladstone a copy of *Robert Elsmere* in hopes of enticing him into writing a review. Ward asked the statesman to "befriend" the book in hopes of increasing public awareness. He quickly became engrossed in the novel, vigorously marking its margins as was his reading habit.<sup>11</sup> In a letter to Lord Acton, he described the book as laborious, since it was nearly 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."<sup>12</sup> His great concern, however, was over the theism espoused by Ward, which, shorn of supernaturalism, was "an inadequate substitute for Christianity."<sup>13</sup> Gladstone's anxiety over the book prompted him to initiate a meeting with Ward in April at Oxford, an event she welcomed. After two lengthy sessions, she described him in a letter to her husband as "charming personally, though at times he looked stern & angry & white to a degree"; and she expressed wonderment at her own courage to continue the discussion because Gladstone's "drawn brows were so formidable."<sup>14</sup> Their meeting was followed up with the exchange of several cordial letters during April and May of 1888. The Anglo-American world would soon read the statesman's verdict on *Robert Elsmere* in the *Nineteenth Century*.

Gladstone's review was a politely worded critique. He acknowledged the novel's importance as a work of literature because of its fine 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

<sup>10</sup> John Sutherland, *Mrs Humphry Ward: Eminent Victorian Pre-eminent Edwardian* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 125, 126.

<sup>11</sup> Sutherland, *Mrs Humphry Ward*, 127.

<sup>12</sup> William S. Peterson, "Gladstone's Review of Robert Elsmere: Some Unpublished Correspondence," *Review of English Studies* 21 (1970), 444.

<sup>13</sup> Peterson, "Gladstone's Review of Robert Elsmere," 444.

<sup>14</sup> Peterson, "Gladstone's Review of Robert Elsmere," 452.

whatever sense, the deeper thoughts of the period.”<sup>15</sup> He 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.”<sup>16</sup> “It is impossible indeed,” he admitted, “to conceive a more religious life than the later life of Robert Elsmere, in his sense of the word religion.”<sup>17</sup> 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.”<sup>18</sup> Gladstone did not hesitate to criticize its modernist theology and its absence of a proper defense of orthodox Christianity. Ward, he insisted, had “ransacked” the works of negative “speculatists,” but there was no sign that she had “made herself acquainted with the Christian apologists, old or recent.”<sup>19</sup> 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.<sup>20</sup>

The chief failure of Elsmere’s Christian Brotherhood, according to the statesman, was how it had emptied Christianity of “the soul and spring-board 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.”<sup>21</sup> He also vigorously defended the necessity of belief in miracles and traced what he considered to be the “evidences derivable from Christian history.”<sup>22</sup> Detailing the contributions of Christianity to the progress of society was among his principal weapons in defense of orthodoxy.<sup>23</sup> For example, it had transformed the world by abolishing slavery and human sacrifice, and, he concluded, it

<sup>15</sup> WEG, “Robert Elsmere,” 2.

<sup>16</sup> WEG, “Robert Elsmere,” 12.

<sup>17</sup> WEG, “Robert Elsmere,” 12.

<sup>18</sup> WEG, “Robert Elsmere,” 12.

<sup>19</sup> WEG, “Robert Elsmere,” 13.

<sup>20</sup> WEG, “Robert Elsmere,” 8.

<sup>21</sup> WEG, “Robert Elsmere,” 8.

<sup>22</sup> WEG, “Robert Elsmere,” 13.

<sup>23</sup> Bebbington, *Mind of Gladstone*, 222.

had restored the position of women in society.<sup>24</sup> Gladstone had forcefully defended orthodox belief and provided the catalyst for a wider debate of *Robert Elsmere*.

### THE TRANSATLANTIC INFLUENCE OF GLADSTONE'S REVIEW

In Britain, the statesman's 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 pernicious theology behind its humanitarian themes.<sup>25</sup> 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 titled "The New Reformation."<sup>26</sup> 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.<sup>27</sup> Headlines in the *New York Herald* and *Chicago Tribune* proclaimed it the "Novel of the Year."<sup>28</sup> 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.'"<sup>29</sup> Writing in the *North American Review*—as part of a symposium on *Robert Elsmere*—Julia Ward Howe, the famous abolitionist and suffragist, 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."<sup>30</sup> 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 it was "beyond question,

<sup>24</sup> WEG, "Robert Elsmere," 18.

<sup>25</sup> Sutherland, *Mrs Humphry Ward*, 128.

<sup>26</sup> Mary A. Ward, "The New Reformation," *Nineteenth Century*, 25 (1889), 454–480.

<sup>27</sup> Sutherland, *Mrs Humphry Ward*, 128–29.

<sup>28</sup> "Novel of the Year," *CT*, October 7, 1888, 27; "Mary Augusta Ward, Author of the Novel of the Year 'Robert Elsmere,'" *NYH*, November 19, 1888, 8.

<sup>29</sup> "Mary Augusta Ward," *NYH*, 8.

<sup>30</sup> Julia Ward Howe, "IV.," *NAR*, 148 (1889), 109–116.

the most effective and popular novel we have had since Uncle Tom's Cabin."<sup>31</sup> *Robert Elsmere* had become a transatlantic phenomenon.

But how was the statesman's review received in the United States? 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." A writer for *Zion's Herald* stated definitively that the book "owes its circulation to Mr. Gladstone." A critical reviewer for the *Chicago Tribune* insisted it had made a prodigious sensation because clergymen had overreacted, believing the novel to be dangerous "because Mr. Gladstone honored the book with a review." A 1904 issue of *Harper's Weekly* later recorded: "A review by Mr. Gladstone increased its popularity in many quarters." An author for the *Unitarian Review* declared that it had become "the book of the hour in social and ecclesiastical circles" after Gladstone had found its theology dangerous. 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." However, the sentiment continued to find its way into print well into the next generation. A 1920 article in *The Outlook* (formerly *Christian Union*) declared that "Mr. Gladstone's famous article" had started the debate.<sup>32</sup> 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 meaningful role in its sales and in the debate over its meaning for religion. American reporters certainly believed it was so.

### CONSENSUS OF THE ORTHODOX

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, if often in passing references. Aside from Unitarians, American Christians were deeply troubled by its unorthodox theology, 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*

<sup>31</sup> Ward, *Recollections*, 248.

<sup>32</sup> "The Author of 'Robert Elsmere,'" *Outlook*, April 7, 1920, 583.

*Review* shared Gladstone's opinion that its more controversial portions were presented as a "one-sided argument made in favor of Rationalism and against orthodox Christianity."<sup>33</sup> 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."<sup>34</sup> He insisted it was little more than a rehash of Renan's *Life of Jesus* and Arnold's *Religion and Dogma*.<sup>35</sup> 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."<sup>36</sup> 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 Christianity, having discarded the "need of a Redeemer."<sup>37</sup> 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.<sup>38</sup> 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 novel's theism.

### VOICES OF DISSENT

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 the statesman'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 wrote, "that Mr. Gladstone's politics are better than his Christian ideals."<sup>39</sup> A contrary opinion was offered for entirely

<sup>33</sup> "Robert Elsmere' as a Controversial Novel," *ACQR*, 54 (1889), 268.

<sup>34</sup> Lyman Abbott, "Robert Elsmere," *Chautauquan*, 5 (1889), 291.

<sup>35</sup> Abbott, "Robert Elsmere," 291.

<sup>36</sup> Lyman Abbott, *CU*, October 25, 1888, 450.

<sup>37</sup> "Robert Elsmere," *AR*, 10 (1888), 306.

<sup>38</sup> B. W. Pennock, "Jesus Christ the Corner-Stone," *SR*, April 21, 1889, 6.

<sup>39</sup> "Robert Elsmere," *NTH*, November 12, 1888, 9.

different reasons by none other than 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 world-view that the statesman fiercely opposed. The theism of *Robert Elsmere*, Ingersoll complained, was simply "an effort to save and keep in repair the dungeons of the Inquisition for the sake of the beauty of the vines that have overrun them."<sup>40</sup> 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 famed author Julia Ward Howe, a Unitarian who frequently spoke in churches. She sarcastically referred to his involvement in the debate over a "women's novel" as "an instructive spectacle."<sup>41</sup> Howe took exception to the statesman's orthodox view of fallen human nature and its need for divine redemption, which she believed were incompatible with current thought, being "inhumane notions of man."<sup>42</sup> "Mr. Gladstone's criticism of *Robert Elsmere*," Howe declared, "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."<sup>43</sup> She also took issue with Gladstone's orthodox claim that faith must be founded upon the authority of alleged biblical miracles. 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.<sup>44</sup> 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 detain upon the lower level those whose minds are capable of attaining the higher one.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>40</sup> "Col. Ingersoll's Opinion of 'Robert Elsmere,'" *Boston Investigator*, December 5, 1888, 1.

<sup>41</sup> Howe, "IV," *NAR*, 110.

<sup>42</sup> Howe, "IV," *NAR*, 111.

<sup>43</sup> Howe, "IV," *NAR*, 111.

<sup>44</sup> Howe, "IV," *NAR*, 113.

<sup>45</sup> Howe, "IV," *NAR*, 113.

Howe had articulated well the theological modernism promoted by most Unitarians and Universalists of the period, and Gladstone had once again become a touchstone for the modern in America.

### GLADSTONE'S BISHOP BUTLER

As a Christian scholar, the study and use of Butler had been a lifelong passion for Gladstone as well as his *locus classicus* for proper Christian polemics and praxis. 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.<sup>46</sup>

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."<sup>47</sup> 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.<sup>48</sup> During 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.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, in the more recent battles 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

<sup>46</sup> WEG, *Studies Subsidiary to the Works of Bishop Butler* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896), 13.

<sup>47</sup> WEG, ed, *The Works of Joseph Butler, D.C.L. Sometime Lord Bishop of Durham*, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1896), vol. 1, 5

<sup>48</sup> Bebbington, *Mind of Gladstone*, 116.

<sup>49</sup> Bebbington, *Mind of Gladstone*, 117.



and righteous Governor of the universe.”<sup>50</sup> 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. In 1896, Jacob Cooper of Dartmouth College noted the storied history of the *Analogy of Religion*: “Few books on theological or philosophical subjects,” he wrote, “have passed through so many reprints or been used so widely as text-books in schools and colleges as the ‘Analogy.’”<sup>51</sup> 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.<sup>52</sup> 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, that adherents of modernist theology had largely consigned Butler to the past, as will be revealed presently.<sup>53</sup>

### THE AMERICAN RECEPTION OF GLADSTONE’S MAGNUM OPUS

Although relatively modest in number compared to previous controversies, reviews from influential American publications were visible following publication of *Works of Butler* and *Studies Subsidiary*. Favorable commentary of both appeared in the evangelical press. A writer for the *New York Evangelist* hailed Gladstone’s *Works* a “labor of love” and the “latest and best edition.”<sup>54</sup> “Modern apologists would do well to bring the same honesty of purpose, clear perception and self-restraint to the questions of the

<sup>50</sup> WEG, *Studies Subsidiary*, 14.

<sup>51</sup> Jacob Cooper, *Reformed Quarterly Review*, April, 1896, 199.

<sup>52</sup> 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), 63, 64.

<sup>53</sup> For a detailed historiographic essay, see Jane Garnett “Bishop Butler and the Zeitgeist,” 63–96.

<sup>54</sup> NTE, July 9, 1896, 9.

present day as Butler had brought to his time,” he stated.<sup>55</sup> *The Independent* listed the companion volumes among its “best books of the year” in theology.<sup>56</sup> Gladstone’s notes were judged to be far better than those of any previous edition. For Lyman Abbott’s *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.”<sup>57</sup> Moreover, Butler’s sermons on human nature had not been invalidated by evolutionary teaching as some had contended. Scarcely any work of English theological thinking, the author added, has been more serviceable to high religious life than Bishop Butler’s *Analogy*.<sup>58</sup> And, with “vigor of hand” the “venerable editor” had reclaimed for Butler his true place.<sup>59</sup> Leading evangelical papers, even those espousing progressive orthodoxy, were 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.<sup>60</sup> A Butler enthusiast, Cooper had been in frequent correspondence with the statesman. It had been Cooper who persuaded him to take up the project and he also served as his editor.<sup>61</sup> Not surprisingly, then, he wrote several glowing reviews related to the volumes. In *The Independent*, Cooper declared that “the world has been waiting for a competent editor who has at length appeared in the person of Mr. Gladstone.”<sup>62</sup> 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.”<sup>63</sup> 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 world has scarcely ever seen his equal.”<sup>64</sup> In the *Reformed Quarterly Review* Cooper wrote of his high regard for Gladstone’s scholarly acumen:

<sup>55</sup> *NYE*, July 9, 1896, 9.

<sup>56</sup> *IND*, November 19, 1896, 22.

<sup>57</sup> *Outlook*, April 4, 1896, 633–34.

<sup>58</sup> *Outlook*, April 4, 1896, 633–34.

<sup>59</sup> *Outlook*, April 4, 1896, 633–34.

<sup>60</sup> “Death List of a Day,” *NYT*, February 1, 1904.

<sup>61</sup> “Matters at Rutgers,” *NYT*, March 2, 1896, 10.

<sup>62</sup> Jacob Cooper, *IND*, March 12, 1896, 16.

<sup>63</sup> Jacob Cooper, *Bibliotheca Sacra*, July 1896, 495.

<sup>64</sup> Cooper, *Bibliotheca Sacra*, July 1896, 496.

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.<sup>65</sup>

Upon release of *Studies Subsidiary*, he praised Gladstone for the "supreme effort of his genius wrought in the maturity of his experience, and the undiminished luster of his perennial powers."<sup>66</sup> For the professor, 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 publicizing that which he had prompted.

The Unitarian *New World*—successor in 1892 to the *Unitarian Review*—published an extensive critique by Richard Armstrong, the British Unitarian 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."<sup>67</sup> As a theologian, however, he was "cautious, conservative, timid," as well as steeped in "ecclesiastical treatises, pronouncements by Rome and Lambeth."<sup>68</sup> Armstrong thought *Studies Subsidiary* 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."<sup>69</sup> 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."<sup>70</sup> Specifically, Gladstone had required the acceptance of orthodox

<sup>65</sup> Cooper, *Reformed Quarterly Review*, April, 1896, 199, 200.

<sup>66</sup> Jacob Cooper, "Gladstone's Studies in Butler," *Reformed Quarterly Review*, October 1896; 4, 441.

<sup>67</sup> Richard A. Armstrong, "Mr. Gladstone and Bishop Butler," *New World*, 5 (1898), 692.

<sup>68</sup> Armstrong, "Mr. Gladstone and Bishop Butler," 692.

<sup>69</sup> Armstrong, "Mr. Gladstone and Bishop Butler," 694.

<sup>70</sup> Armstrong, "Mr. Gladstone and Bishop Butler," 696.

dogmas in order to accept the moral teachings of Christ. "Thus in a sentence," the Unitarian insisted, "he overthrows the whole intuitive evidence of morals."<sup>71</sup> In summary, Armstrong demanded, the statesman 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."<sup>72</sup> 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."<sup>73</sup> Armstrong had not pulled any punches in his critique.

The secular press produced several interesting reviews. The *Literary World* published complimentary reviews of both. In his edition of the *Works of Butler*, one reviewer stated, Gladstone had presented them in "the best form in which they are to be had." Furthermore, "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."<sup>74</sup> *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."<sup>75</sup> The statesman's crowning intellectual 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 centered on the outdated theology of Butler, and by association, Gladstone himself. 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."<sup>76</sup> A writer for *The Critic* magazine complained that since Butler

<sup>71</sup> Armstrong, "Mr. Gladstone and Bishop Butler," 696.

<sup>72</sup> Armstrong, "Mr. Gladstone and Bishop Butler," 703.

<sup>73</sup> Armstrong, "Mr. Gladstone and Bishop Butler," 704-705.

<sup>74</sup> "Bishop Butler Edited by Mr. Gladstone," *Literary World*, March 21, 1896, 87.

<sup>75</sup> "Mr. Gladstone's Studies of Bishop Butler," *Literary World*, October 17, 1896, 345.

<sup>76</sup> "A Politician," *NY Trib*, November 18, 1896, 8.

had addressed eighteenth-century deism, what was needed, but had not been provided, was an adjustment of his argument to the present intellectual conditioning that sprang from evolutionary theory and agnosticism.<sup>77</sup> *The Critic* also reviewed *Studies Subsidiary*. Gladstone, its author suggested, 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 conditional immortality.<sup>78</sup> Moreover, Gladstone's 44 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*.<sup>79</sup>

Similar disparaging remarks were published in *The Nation*. Here the reviewer noted how 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 writer wondered what his fate would have been in the modern world where there existed many facts "undreamed of in his philosophy."<sup>80</sup> 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*.<sup>81</sup> 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.<sup>82</sup> 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 contemporary of St. Augustine more even than of Bishop Butler."<sup>83</sup> Moreover, Butler's work

<sup>77</sup> "Literature," *Critic*, March 7, 1896, XLIIA.

<sup>78</sup> "Mr. Gladstone on Bishop Butler," *Critic*, April 24, 1897, 283.

<sup>79</sup> "Mr. Gladstone on Bishop Butler," *Critic*, 284.

<sup>80</sup> *Nation*, March 19, 1896, 241.

<sup>81</sup> "Amos K. Fiske, Journalist Dead," *NYT*, September 22, 1921, 13.

<sup>82</sup> Amos Kidder Fiske, "New Publications," *NYT*, August 30, 1896, 23.

<sup>83</sup> Fiske, "New Publications," *NYT*, August 30, 1896, 23.

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.”<sup>84</sup> For Fiske and others in the mainstream press, Gladstone had once again been deemed largely a man of the past with regard to his religious views.

### SUMMARY

Gladstone’s writings on *Elsmere* and Butler provide an illuminating view of how Americans perceived his abilities as a Christian scholar. 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 scholarship. Even the liberal-leaning *Outlook*, which, under its previous title the *Christian Union*, had been critical of Gladstone’s apologetics, 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. Conversely, the secular press was largely critical of both works because he had not sufficiently dealt with his subjects in the context of modern currents of thought. As a Christian scholar, Gladstone had once again become a flashpoint in the conflict between orthodoxy and modern currents of thought being played out in American intellectual life.

<sup>84</sup> Fiske, “New Publications,” 23.

PART IV

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Epilogue



## CHAPTER 9

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# In Memoriam: America Remembers Gladstone

*He had a rare combination of accomplishments—a statesman and a scholar—and in all three those of the first grade. When we add these the gifts of serene faith, the purest home virtues and wide benevolence, we have a man whose knighthood is recorded in a choicer list than that of the British peerage. (CON, May 26, 1898, front cover)  
Ex-President Henry Harrison*

Gladstone's death in 1898 had come after a painful bout with facial cancer. He had spent his final months at Hawarden surrounded by family, and news of his poor health captured the attention of the world. When word of his death arrived in America there were public memorials, gestures of mourning, and published obituaries across the country.<sup>1</sup> This chapter will highlight many such observances and explore ways in which Americans identified with Gladstone either as a modern figure or as more traditional icon of Christian faith—or as both. The initial response to news of his death was remarkable combination of such sentiments. “Oh, Eternal God,” prayed the chaplain before the US Senate in honor of Gladstone, “with the whole English-speaking race we stand as mourners beside the

<sup>1</sup>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), 169–191.



bier of the most eminent statesman of our generation.”<sup>2</sup> In Chicago, the multitude of flags flying over the stock yards were flown at half-mast out of respect for the memory of Gladstone.<sup>3</sup> The *Chicago Tribune* reported that on the Sunday following his death, no fewer than ten local ministers had delivered sermons dedicated to remembrance of the statesman.<sup>4</sup> 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.”<sup>5</sup> A memorial service at Boston’s historic King’s Chapel featured eulogies by the mayor and other prominent citizens.<sup>6</sup> The *Los Angeles Times* reported that a memorial was held before a “large congregation” at the Los Angeles Theater.<sup>7</sup> And in response to a request signed by numerous parishioners, St. John’s Episcopal Church in Washington, DC, announced it would hold a special memorial service for Gladstone on the same day as his funeral at Westminster Abbey.<sup>8</sup>

Statements in the press read more like those expressed upon the passing of a beloved American president. Gladstone’s fellow combatant against Robert Ingersoll, Henry Field of the *New York Evangelist*, proclaimed: “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.”<sup>9</sup> 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.”<sup>10</sup> An article in the *New York Tribune* announced: “The world has lost its greatest citizen.”<sup>11</sup> At an annual alumni meeting, B.L. Whitman, President of Columbian University (George Washington University), declared Gladstone to be “the

<sup>2</sup> *NYT*, May 20, 1898, 7.

<sup>3</sup> *NYT*, May 20, 1898, 7.

<sup>4</sup> *CT*, May 23, 1898, 10.

<sup>5</sup> *NYH*, May 20, 1898, 12.

<sup>6</sup> “Boston Memorial Service,” *SR*, May 29, 1898, 9.

<sup>7</sup> “The Grand Old Man,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 23, 1898, 10.

<sup>8</sup> *Washington Post*, May 27, 1898, 10.

<sup>9</sup> Henry M. Field, “William E. Gladstone,” *NYE*, 26 May 1898, 7.

<sup>10</sup> “Current History,” *CON*, May 26, 1898, 761.

<sup>11</sup> *NY Trib*, May 19, 1898, 8.

world's uncrowned king."<sup>12</sup> Among evangelical papers there were similar sentiments. "We count him as the greatest statesman of the century, and one among England's greatest statesman of any century," *The Outlook* pronounced.<sup>13</sup> A correspondent for the *New York Observer and Chronicle* declared the nineteenth century to have "witnessed no more remarkable career."<sup>14</sup> 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!  
 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!<sup>15</sup>

Another by the poet Emma Herrick Weed appeared in the *New York Observer and Chronicle* titled "Gladstone." In it she celebrated Gladstone's faith and included the lines:

<sup>12</sup> *Washington Post*, June 1, 1898, 7.

<sup>13</sup> "Mr. Gladstone," *Outlook*, May 28, 1898, 208.

<sup>14</sup> *NYO*, June 16, 1898, 828.

<sup>15</sup> *NYT*, June 4, 1898, BR 369; and *NYT*, November 25, 1899, BR 804.

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!<sup>16</sup>

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.<sup>17</sup>

Theron Brown, the American poet and assistant editor of the *Youth's Companion* magazine, composed “When Gladstone Died,” a portion of which read<sup>18</sup>:

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.<sup>19</sup>

Gladstone's passing had inspired his American admirers to write verse extolling his life and faith.<sup>20</sup>

### GLADSTONE AS PRINCIPLED CHRISTIAN STATESMAN

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*:

<sup>16</sup> Emma Herrick Weed “Gladstone,” *NYO*, June 16, 1898, 829.

<sup>17</sup> Sam W. Small, “Gladstone,” *Washington Post*, May 22, 1898, 4.

<sup>18</sup> Charles Wells Moulton, ed, *The Magazine of Poetry: A Quarterly Review*, 3 (1891), 308.

<sup>19</sup> Theron Brown, “When Gladstone Died,” *Youth's Companion*, July 14, 1898, 336.

<sup>20</sup> For a sample of British memorial poems see Bebbington, *William Ewart Gladstone*, 240–41.

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.<sup>21</sup>

Among the prominent themes were references to the statesman's individual Christian piety and his record of statesmanship. In the former category were articles celebrating 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."<sup>22</sup> 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!'"<sup>23</sup> An article in the *Southwestern Christian Advocate* described the family kneeling at his bedside. They had "seen with wonder and reverence how the noble face had lighted up with joy which was not that of this world."<sup>24</sup> The *New York Tribune* reported that in his final moments the statesman's son Stephen, a clergyman, read prayers and hymns including his father's favorite, "Rock of Ages." When this was concluded, Gladstone was heard to murmur, "Our Father."<sup>25</sup> Americans viewed the statesman's death as a tragedy, but one that had been confronted in idyllic Christian fashion.

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*

<sup>21</sup> "Mr. Gladstone," *Outlook*, May 28, 1898, 210.

<sup>22</sup> Harold Frederic, "What Stirs London," *NYT*, May 22, 1898, 19.

<sup>23</sup> "William Ewart Gladstone," *NYO*, May 26, 1898, 742.

<sup>24</sup> "The Life of Faith: Gladstone's Last Hours," *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, December 28, 1899, 3.

<sup>25</sup> "Gladstone is Dead," *NY Trib*, May 19, 1898, 1.

*Times* published one such tribute by the distinguished Methodist clergyman S.P. Cadman of the Metropolitan Temple in New York City. 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.<sup>26</sup>

A sermon by Teunis S. Hamlin, pastor of the Presbyterian Church of the Covenant in Washington, DC, was published in the *Washington Post*. Beyond his great statesmanship, Hamlin described Gladstone as “always courteous and humble in spite of his greatness, a life-long believer in Jesus Christ and a confessor of salvation through him.”<sup>27</sup> 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.”<sup>28</sup> While the statesman’s political opinions could change, “in his religious convictions he stood on the everlasting hills of orthodox truth.”<sup>29</sup> 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 emphasize Gladstone’s faith. A writer for the *Catholic World*, although regretful that he 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.<sup>30</sup> An author for *The Independent* noted, with some 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

<sup>26</sup> *NYH*, May 23, 1898, 4.

<sup>27</sup> *Washington Post*, May 23, 1898, 10.

<sup>28</sup> “His Life as a Text,” *CT*, May 23, 1898, 10.

<sup>29</sup> “His Life as a Text,” *CT*, May 23, 1898, 10.

<sup>30</sup> “William Ewart Gladstone,” *CW*, 67 (1898), 410.

to a keenly observant world.”<sup>31</sup> A correspondent for the *New York Observer and Chronicle* declared: “In it all he has believed in his heart, confessed with his mouth, and earnestly contended for the faith once delivered to the saints.”<sup>32</sup> “Above all things, he has been simply loyal to Jesus Christ,” an author for *The Congregationalist* concluded.<sup>33</sup> As might be expected, evangelicals were eager to celebrate Gladstone’s devotion to the Christian faith.

Several insightful testimonials to the statesman’s piety came from eyewitnesses. 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 jeweled chalice was presented to Hawarden parish church as a token of appreciation for Gladstone’s support of Armenians suffering under the Turks.<sup>34</sup> During the service, Greene had taken particular notice of his 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.”<sup>35</sup> In another account, an author for the *New York Evangelist* published a firsthand 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 attendees 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,” he recalled, which resulted in “singing almost a solo to the weeping accompaniment of many.”<sup>36</sup> A third account came from personal acquaintance Theodore Cuyler, who confided in the pages of the *New York Evangelist* that “nothing has impressed me so deeply as his beautiful and devout Christian character.”<sup>37</sup> 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.”<sup>38</sup> Americans who had personal encounters with the statesman believed Christian piety to be the driving force in his life.

<sup>31</sup> *IND*, May 26, 1898, 12.

<sup>32</sup> *NYO*, June 16, 1898, 828.

<sup>33</sup> *CON*, May 26, 1898, 758.

<sup>34</sup> *IND*, April 7, 1898, 5, 6.

<sup>35</sup> *IND*, April 7, 1898, 6.

<sup>36</sup> *NYE*, September 1, 1898, 23.

<sup>37</sup> *NYE*, May 5, 1898, 4.

<sup>38</sup> *ZH*, June 22, 1898, 777.

Gladstone was revered as a man of deep faith. But to what extent was that devotion perceived to be an influence on his statesmanship? A correspondent for the *New York Times* provided his answer: “[He] will be remembered not so much for his political work as for the great example, hardly paralleled in history, of the great Christian statesman.”<sup>39</sup> Several articles made general allusions similar to one R. Heber Newton, rector of All Souls’ Church in New York, who declared: “In him we had a statesman who literally tried to administer government according to the ethics of Jesus Christ.”<sup>40</sup> For an author at *Outlook*, there was no separating his statesmanship from his faith:

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.<sup>41</sup>

The Catholic theologian John J. O’Shea, writing in the *American Catholic Quarterly Review*, observed that “religious tendencies had not been conspicuous characteristics of English ministers prior to Gladstone.”<sup>42</sup>

Within the same context, several authors placed specific emphasis on Christian “morality” as the motivation behind Gladstone’s statesmanship. Walter Littlefield of the *New York Times* considered him “perhaps the most Christian statesman of his day; [and] no hope of personal gain or profit to party, principle, or country ever succeeded in forcing him to divorce politics from morality.”<sup>43</sup> Henry Field 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.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>39</sup> “The Death of Gladstone,” *NYT*, May 21, 1898, 6.

<sup>40</sup> *NYH*, May 23, 1898, 4.

<sup>41</sup> “Mr. Gladstone,” *Outlook*, May 28, 1898, 209.

<sup>42</sup> John J. O’Shea, “England’s Second Great Commoner, Gladstone,” *ACQR*, 23 (1898), 620.

<sup>43</sup> *NYT*, April 3, 1898, SM 14.

<sup>44</sup> Henry M. Field, “William E. Gladstone,” *NYE*, May 26, 1898, 6.

A writer for *The Congregationalist* observed that with respect to moral excellence, Gladstone had been “England’s ideal [more] than any other man in this century.” He also maintained that, in all his actions, 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.”<sup>45</sup> John J. O’Shea showered high praise upon him 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 piece of advocacy.”<sup>46</sup> The American anthropologist Horatio Hale thought the distinction of Gladstone’s career was due to “the elevation of moral character” rather than great intellectual power. He saw at work in the statesman what Sir John Seeley had styled the “enthusiasm of humanity,” revealing his “desire of bringing all political and national movements into harmony with the practical precepts of Christianity.”<sup>47</sup> There seems to have been a general consensus, at least among evangelicals, that Gladstone was considered to be a man driven by passion for Christian morality rather than by the cold calculus of political expediency.

### GLADSTONE AS CHAMPION OF LIBERAL REFORM AND DEMOCRACY

Memorial articles made comparisons of Gladstone with other great democratic leaders. The *Morning Oregonian*, for example, placed Gladstone alongside Bismarck, Cavour, Lincoln, and Pope Leo III as the greatest world figures of the last half century.<sup>48</sup> Among the comparisons, Abraham Lincoln was the most frequently invoked. *The Congregationalist* reported on a memorial service honoring the statesman where a speaker was quoted to state that Lincoln and Gladstone “both represented the conscience of the English race.”<sup>49</sup> Theodore Cuyler also made the comparison: “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

<sup>45</sup> CON, May 26, 1898, 58.

<sup>46</sup> O’Shea, “England’s Second Great Commoner,” 627.

<sup>47</sup> *Critic*, February 5, 1898, 88.

<sup>48</sup> *Morning Oregonian*, August 21, 1898, 4.

<sup>49</sup> “The Conversation Corner,” CON, June 16, 1898, 881.



death is placing the diadem of the imperishable glory.”<sup>50</sup> A writer in the *Springfield Republican* esteemed Gladstone and Lincoln to be representatives of the conscience of the Anglo-Saxon people.<sup>51</sup> In a lesson on how to teach the Bible, an author in the *New York Evangelist* instructed readers that “[King] David was, however, a born statesman—not of the coldly artificial type like Tallyrand or Metternich, but of the tactful, sympathetic type like Lincoln or Gladstone.”<sup>52</sup>

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 added, “what a Webster or Clay were in America a half century ago, or to great political reforms in some sense what Abraham Lincoln was at a later and more stormy period.”<sup>53</sup> Moreover, he declared, no statesman of the nineteenth century had equaled 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.”<sup>54</sup> In ways similar to their collective memory of Lincoln, Americans perceived Gladstone as the embodiment of their core values and myths.<sup>55</sup> 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 are recurring themes in this study. “The history of Mr. Gladstone’s career,” John J. O’Shea wrote, “is the history of modern progress in England.”<sup>56</sup> Although O’Shea, as a Roman Catholic, had faulted him for being more politician than statesman, he also believed 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.”<sup>57</sup> A writer for

<sup>50</sup> *NYE*, May 5, 1898, 4.

<sup>51</sup> “Boston Memorial Service,” *SR*, May 29, 1898, 9.

<sup>52</sup> “The Sunday School,” *NYE*, May 19, 1898, 17.

<sup>53</sup> “William Ewart Gladstone,” *CT*, 19 May 1898, p. 6.

<sup>54</sup> “William Ewart Gladstone,” *CT*, 19 May 1898, p. 6.

<sup>55</sup> For a discussion on collective memory, see Eric Foner, *The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2010), xv.

<sup>56</sup> O’Shea, “England’s Second Great Commoner,” 619.

<sup>57</sup> O’Shea, “England’s Second Great Commoner,” 619.

*The Outlook* took notice of the evolution of Great Britain throughout the century, progressing steadily from an aristocracy toward greater democracy. "In this period of transition," he instructed, "Mr. Gladstone has been the most prominent representative of the spirit of change."<sup>58</sup> In the *New York Observer and Chronicle* he was dubbed the "apostle of British liberties" for his many domestic reforms.<sup>59</sup> A journalist for the *Chicago Tribune* noted that 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."<sup>60</sup> Gladstone also received high praise from a correspondent in the *New York Tribune*, who maintained that his growth in advanced Liberalism had shown through in his oratory, which over time had become "more democratic in form and spirit."<sup>61</sup> Additionally, "every landmark of English progress since the passage of the great Reform Bill has been shaped by his hand."<sup>62</sup> And if Gladstone had been overly sanguine with regard to Ireland, "the work remains, in volume and utility surpassing the achievements of any other statesman."<sup>63</sup> The statesman had undoubtedly gained a reputation in the United States for being a historic reformer. It is also worth noting, however, that authors in the press willingly overlooked his steadfast devotion to institutions they considered undemocratic and un-American such as the Church of England, the monarchy, and the aristocracy.

### GLADSTONIAN INTERNATIONALISM AND DREAMS OF AN ANGLO-AMERICAN ALLIANCE

Another common theme found in the American press relates to Gladstone's commitment to liberal internationalism. About four months before his death, a writer for the *Chicago Tribune* noted the passion he had retained for the plight of Armenia, a reference to the final speech he delivered in September 1896, at Hengler's Circus, Liverpool, regarding Turkish atrocities<sup>64</sup>:

<sup>58</sup> "Mr. Gladstone," *Outlook* May 28, 1898, 208.

<sup>59</sup> "Editorial Notes," *NYO*, July 21, 1898, 77.

<sup>60</sup> *CT*, May 19, 1898, 6.

<sup>61</sup> *NY Trib*, May 19, 1898, 8.

<sup>62</sup> *NY Trib*, May 19, 1898, 8.

<sup>63</sup> *NY Trib*, May 19, 1898, 8.

<sup>64</sup> Matthew, *Gladstone*, 629.

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.<sup>65</sup>

A correspondent for the *New York Times* saw in him a desire for England to be ethically justified in her foreign policy, which gave him "a moral power almost unique in the history of English politics."<sup>66</sup> He referenced the statesman's denunciation of oppression in Italy early in his career as an example.<sup>67</sup> The *New York Herald*, a frequent critic during his lifetime, now 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."<sup>68</sup> Gladstone's moral concern for liberty beyond his own nation was remembered and highly regarded in major papers.

Among evangelicals there were similar opinions. David Beaton, a Congregational minister in Chicago, considered Gladstone's denunciation of the Bulgarian atrocities "the crowning glory of his public service," and declared him "the greatest figure of his age and the embodiment of the modern conscience of statesmanship."<sup>69</sup> And in an allusion to Homer that Gladstone would 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."<sup>70</sup> Henry Field, his fellow combatant against Ingersoll, wrote in the *New York Evangelist* of the statesman's importance in bringing the *Alabama* case to arbitration in Geneva, insisting he had atoned for his 1862 misstatement that "Jefferson Davis had created a nation."<sup>71</sup> As Field described it, relations between the two nations had been strained as a result of the war, but Gladstone's handling of the *Alabama* controversy had been magnanimous: "An act so noble should embalm the name of the great pacificator forever in the hearts of

<sup>65</sup> "Two Grand Old Men of Europe," *CT*, January 4, 1898, 6.

<sup>66</sup> "William Ewart Gladstone," *NYT*, May 19, 1898, 8.

<sup>67</sup> "William Ewart Gladstone," *NYT*, May 19, 1898, 8.

<sup>68</sup> "The Greatest Englishman," *NYH*, May 19, 1898, 8.

<sup>69</sup> David Beaton, "William Ewart Gladstone—An Estimate of His Life," *CON*, May 26, 1898, 764.

<sup>70</sup> Beaton, "William Ewart Gladstone," 764.

<sup>71</sup> Henry M. Field, "William E. Gladstone," *NYE*, May 26, 1898, 6.

the American people.”<sup>72</sup> It was a compelling statement on Gladstone’s significance for Anglo-American relations. As they had done throughout his career, American evangelicals remained his ardent supporters.

By far the most compelling articles were those that portrayed Gladstone as an icon of Anglo-American unity. Remarkable stories about a possible transatlantic alliance abounded in American publications at the time of Gladstone’s death—they had been hastened by British expressions of solidarity with the United States in its war with Spain.<sup>73</sup> These columns frequently intersected with remembrances of the statesman as a seminal figure of transatlantic rapprochement. As has been established in Chap. 2, 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 a sharp turn for the worse in 1895 when President Cleveland, to the astonishment of Britons, invoked the Monroe Doctrine and made statements interpreted as hostile toward the British government regarding a long-standing boundary dispute between Venezuela and British Guiana.<sup>74</sup> Although a remote possibility, rumblings of war came from Washington, DC, but any potential conflict had been averted through diplomacy.<sup>75</sup> 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.<sup>76</sup>

In the immediate aftermath of this 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, James Bryce, the Liberal MP and future ambassador to the United States, attested in the *North American Review* that, because of the 1895 crisis, both nations had “awakened to a warmer love of peace

<sup>72</sup> Henry M. Field, “William E. Gladstone,” *NYE*, May 26, 1898, 6.

<sup>73</sup> See Campbell, *Unlikely Allies*, 191–194, 237–239.

<sup>74</sup> See James Bryce, “British Feelings on the Venezuelan Question,” *NAR*, 162 (1896), 145–154.

<sup>75</sup> For discussion of the Venezuelan crisis see Gerlach, *British Liberalism and the United States*, 219–235; see also Campbell, *Unlikely Allies*, 188–192; and see Butler, *Critical Americans*, 221–223.

<sup>76</sup> Henry F. Graff, *Grover Cleveland* (New York: Times Books, 2002), 123–125.

and a keener sense of kinship.”<sup>77</sup> 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.”<sup>78</sup> There had been earlier calls for an alliance such as the arbitration movement that picked up steam in the late 1880s and early 1890s.<sup>79</sup> Andrew Carnegie, the Scottish-born American industrialist, and a close acquaintance of Gladstone, was among the leading advocates of the alliance during the period, having published a June 1893 *North American Review* essay titled “A Look Ahead.”<sup>80</sup> Remarkably, Carnegie stopped only just short of calling for the formal reunification of Great Britain and the United States. Another leading promoter of an alliance throughout the 1890s was the British journalist W.T. Stead. His notion of “Americanization” culminated in *The Americanization of the World or the Trend of the Twentieth Century* (1902).<sup>81</sup> Stead drew upon Gladstone’s “Kin Beyond Sea” and the widely read *American Commonwealth* (1888) by James Bryce. He also predicted the rise of the United States as a dominant global economy in 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.”<sup>82</sup> Hopes for greater transatlantic unity were prevalent among liberals on both sides of the Atlantic.

A similar proposal for an alliance came from *Outlook* editor Lyman Abbott. In an 1898 *North American Review* article, he put forth the idea that 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

<sup>77</sup> Bryce, “British Feelings,” 152.

<sup>78</sup> Bryce, “British Feelings,” 151.

<sup>79</sup> Gerlach, *British Liberalism*, 213–217.

<sup>80</sup> Andrew Carnegie, “A Look Ahead,” *NAR*, 156 (1893), 685–711.

<sup>81</sup> Campbell, *Unlikely Allies*, 246.

<sup>82</sup> W. T. Stead, *The Americanization of the world: or, The trend of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Horace Markley, 1902).

energy.”<sup>83</sup> The American educator John C. Ridpath (publisher of an 1898 Gladstone biography) expressed, with some frustration, the ubiquitous calls for alliance: “From 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.<sup>84</sup>

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.<sup>85</sup> Nevertheless, alliance fever was spreading in both nations.

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.”<sup>86</sup> According to the conventional wisdom of the period, the Anglo-Saxon race was believed to possess unique political values and institutions related to freedom and democracy.<sup>87</sup> 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

<sup>83</sup> Lyman Abbott, “The Basis for an Anglo-American Understanding,” *NAR*, 166 (1898), 520.

<sup>84</sup> John Clark Ridpath, “The United States and the Concert of Europe,” *Arena*, 20 (1898), 145.

<sup>85</sup> Butler, *Critical Americans*, 249–61; and see Campbell, 237–38.

<sup>86</sup> 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), 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), 387–410.

<sup>87</sup> Kramer, “Empires,” 1322.

pure; his intellect unequalled; his bodily powers phenomenal.”<sup>88</sup> When combined with a common aspiration for Christian missions, referencing the Anglo-Saxon race provided a justification and a potent stimulus (Kipling’s “white man’s burden”) for imperialist adventures such as the American annexation of the Philippines in 1898.<sup>89</sup> In his *NAR* essay, Abbott laid out his 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.”<sup>90</sup> Both sides saw mutual benefits and Americans were encouraged to claim their imperial Anglo-Saxon “destiny” proclaimed by Edward Dacey in a *Nineteenth Century* article titled “The New American Imperialism.”<sup>91</sup> Lurking underneath the language of race and kinship was the reality that the United States had become an imperial power with which Britain must coexist.

Gladstone certainly sought to repair Anglo-American relations after the Civil War. As Duncan A. Campbell has suggested, the phrase “English-speaking peoples” likely had its origins with Gladstone’s “Kin Beyond Sea.”<sup>92</sup> Whoever coined the phrase, it was loaded with meaning for the statesman who wrote in 1888 an article for *Youth’s Companion* titled “The Future of the English-Speaking Races.” 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 during 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 inheritance,” which would be realized in this “new chapter of human destiny.”<sup>93</sup> “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.”<sup>94</sup> In Gladstone’s estimate, Anglo-American relations were improving steadily, and he hinted at a future alliance:

<sup>88</sup> Arnold White, “Gladstone,” *HW*, May 28, 1898, 1.

<sup>89</sup> Campbell, *Unlikely Allies*, 238–39.

<sup>90</sup> Lyman Abbott, “The Basis for an Anglo-American Understanding,” *NAR*, 166 (1898), 520.

<sup>91</sup> Edward Dacey, “The New American Imperialism,” *Nineteenth Century*, 44 (1898), 487–501.

<sup>92</sup> Campbell, *Unlikely Allies*, 3.

<sup>93</sup> WEG, “The Future of the English-Speaking Races,” *Youth’s Companion*, November 1, 1888, 557.

<sup>94</sup> WEG, “The Future of the English-Speaking Races,” 557.

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.<sup>95</sup>

He clearly understood the realities of America's rising status as a world power and actively encouraged measures aimed at rapprochement. Yet, as Colin Matthew has reminded us, in it all his overriding interest was for the expansion of free trade.<sup>96</sup> Although he would certainly have balked at acts of overt imperialism, Gladstone was inextricably linked with the move toward closer transatlantic relations.

Several examples of Gladstone being linked with talk of a transatlantic alliance appeared in the press 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 Princeton University President Francis Patton. The principal speakers were the Americans who called for stronger bonds of sympathy between Britain and America. "The greatest enthusiasm was manifested," wrote the *Times* correspondent, "whenever even a reference was made to an Anglo-Saxon alliance."<sup>97</sup> In his remarks before the gathering, 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."<sup>98</sup> A second article in the *New York Times* reported on an 1898 anti-imperialist banquet attended by numerous prominent Americans and Britons, among them its chairman, Lord Coleridge and novelist Arthur Conan Doyle. On the wall hung 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."<sup>99</sup> The correspondent observed the

<sup>95</sup> WEG, "The Future of the English-Speaking Races," 558.

<sup>96</sup> Matthew, *Gladstone*, 568–571.

<sup>97</sup> "An Anglo-Saxon Alliance," *NYT*, May 25, 1898, 7.

<sup>98</sup> "An Anglo-Saxon Alliance," *NYT*, May 25, 1898, 7.

<sup>99</sup> "Anglo-American Banquet," *NYT*, June 19, 1898, 8.



striking enthusiasm displayed for “defense and progress, rather than for land-grabbing and wars.”<sup>100</sup> 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.]”<sup>101</sup> The recently deceased statesman was being invoked by transatlantic enthusiasts for peace.

The *New York Times* published two additional articles related to alliance passions and the influence of Gladstone. In the first, readers were informed 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 generations been undergoing a steady process of Americanization. “It was the chief charge,” he added, “brought against Mr. Gladstone by his opponents that he had greatly promoted and accelerated the process,” and he even went so far as to call him the “apostle of Americanization.”<sup>102</sup> In the second article, the statesman was quoted from a previously unpublished letter to Scribner’s publishers dated March 17, 1880: “The union between the two countries is still an honor to all those who seek to corroborate the bond.”<sup>103</sup> Readers of one of America’s leading newspapers might well conclude that Gladstone was *the* seminal figure of Anglo-Americanism.

Similar accounts appeared in the *Chicago Tribune*, which reported on a British-Americans of Chicago club, which 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.<sup>104</sup>

<sup>100</sup> “Anglo-American Banquet,” *NYT*, June 19, 1898, 8.

<sup>101</sup> “Anglo-American Banquet,” *NYT*, June 19 1898, 8.

<sup>102</sup> “The Funeral of Gladstone,” *NYT*, May 29, 1898, 18.

<sup>103</sup> “The Anglo-American Feeling,” *NYT*, July 6, 1898, 1.

<sup>104</sup> “All Hail the Queen,” *CT*, May 25, 1898, 5.

Gooch then noted how 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."<sup>105</sup> A second *Tribune* article was titled "Kin Beyond Sea" and authored by Levi Wells Hart, rector of the College Grammar School in Brooklyn, New York.<sup>106</sup> 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."<sup>107</sup> As detailed below, 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."<sup>108</sup> From New York to Chicago, Gladstone was being hailed in the secular press as a leading figure of Anglo-American unity. His death was also being exploited by imperialists and anti-imperialists alike who foresaw the possibility of a formal transatlantic alliance.

Similar ideas appeared in the evangelical press. *Zion's Herald* published an address delivered June 13, 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."<sup>109</sup> Remarkably, he went on to speak of an even wider kinship than English speakers, suggesting a kinship among those possessing "old honest

<sup>105</sup> "All Hail the Queen", *CT*, May 25, 1898, 5.

<sup>106</sup> "Obituary Record of Graduates of Yale University Deceased during the Academical Year ending in June 1899," 605, Yale University Library, Manuscripts & Archives (website), accessed September 2, 2012, [http://mssa.library.yale.edu/obituary\\_record/1859\\_1924/1898-99.pdf](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.

<sup>107</sup> Levi Wells Hart, "Kin Beyond Sea," *CT*, May 29, 1898, 27.

<sup>108</sup> George Washburn Smalley, "Reminiscences, Anecdotes, and an estimate," *Harpers New Monthly Magazine*, 97 (1898), 800.

<sup>109</sup> Thomas Reuen, "An Anglo-American Alliance," *ZH*, June 15, 1898, 743.

Teutonic blood.”<sup>110</sup> It was nothing short of a celebration of white supremacy. Reuen believed an Anglo-American alliance should not merely be for war and conquest, but to oppose savagery and inhumanity in the interests of peace and progress. Referencing the liberal panacea of free trade, he insisted it would “lift off the cruel and unjust taxations on all industries.”<sup>111</sup> Such an enterprise would require Christian leaders willing to subordinate all lower allegiances to Christ. The prime example of this, Reuen noted, had been Gladstone.<sup>112</sup> *The Congregationalist* devoted a portion of its “Current News” column to “The Anglo-American Fellowship,” where, the correspondent observed: “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.”<sup>113</sup> In another article, *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 writer 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.”<sup>114</sup> 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.”<sup>115</sup> *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 parallel.”<sup>116</sup> Wild cheering by those assembled followed, he reported.<sup>117</sup> Evangelicals were no less enthusiastic about the link A between Gladstone and Anglo-American rapprochement.

### A FEW VOICES OF DISSENT

As might be expected upon the death of a famous statesman, most reporting in the wake of Gladstone’s death was extremely favorable, but there were a few notable exceptions. The presence of critical commentary at such

<sup>110</sup> Reuen, “Anglo-American Alliance,” 743.

<sup>111</sup> Reuen, “Anglo-American Alliance,” 744.

<sup>112</sup> Reuen, “Anglo-American Alliance,” 745.

<sup>113</sup> “Current History,” *CON*, May 26, 1898, 760.

<sup>114</sup> “British Congregationalists’ Sympathy for America,” *CON*, June 2, 1898, 806.

<sup>115</sup> “British Congregationalists’ Sympathy for America,” *CON*, June 2, 1898, 806.

<sup>116</sup> “The Religious World,” *Outlook*, June 4, 1898, 349.

<sup>117</sup> “The Religious World,” *Outlook*, June 4, 1898, 349.

a time is perhaps even more instructive. A theme that appeared in a few instances revolved around his well-known 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* asserted, "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."<sup>118</sup> English journalist and disaffected Liberal Arnold White described the statesman in *Harper's Weekly* as a model of inconsistency: "With a mind capable not only of splitting hairs, but of dividing them in filaments still finer."<sup>119</sup> Among the examples of "Gladstonian doublespeak," Arnold included his contradictory explanations of the death of Gordon in Khartoum and the bombardment of Alexandria.<sup>120</sup> 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 case may be. His greatness in politics merely reflected his ability to adapt to popular pressure."<sup>121</sup> 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 defense 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 wrote:

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.<sup>122</sup>

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."<sup>123</sup> He had deliberately turned aside from early associations and viewpoints

<sup>118</sup> "Mr. Gladstone as a Statesman," *CON*, May 26, 1898, 758.

<sup>119</sup> Arnold White, "Gladstone," *HW*, May 28, 1898, 522.

<sup>120</sup> Arnold White, "Gladstone," *HW*, May 28, 1898, 522.

<sup>121</sup> "William Ewart Gladstone," *CW*, 399 (1898), 410.

<sup>122</sup> *NYH*, May 23, 1898, 4.

<sup>123</sup> "Mr. Gladstone," *Outlook*, May 28, 1898, 209.

“that he might identify himself with the people and consecrate to them his talents in unselfish service.”<sup>124</sup> The reasons offered for Gladstone’s frequent evolution on vital issues was 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 became a personal acquaintance of 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. He eventually fell out of favor with the liberal *Tribune*. His conversion to conservatism is signified by his employment, beginning in 1895, as New York correspondent for *The Times* of London.<sup>125</sup> 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 sentiment 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.”<sup>126</sup> In contrast to most American opinion, Smalley also questioned Gladstone’s opinion 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.”<sup>127</sup>

<sup>124</sup> “Mr. Gladstone,” *Outlook*, May 28, 1898, 209.

<sup>125</sup> Harold E. Evans, “George Washburn Smalley,” *Biographical Dictionary of American Journalism*, 649–50.

<sup>126</sup> George Washburn Smalley, “Mr. Gladstone: Reminiscences, Anecdotes, and an Estimate,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine*, 97 (1898), 476.

<sup>127</sup> George Washburn Smalley, “Mr. Gladstone: Reminiscences, Anecdotes, and an Estimate,” *Harpers Monthly*, 648.

With respect to foreign affairs, Smalley did not share the popular view of Gladstone as a standard-bearer for liberal internationalism, but instead considered him ill-informed and uninterested in the subject. Along with blame for the tragic fate of General Gordon in Khartoum, he criticized 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."<sup>128</sup> 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.<sup>129</sup>

Under Gladstone's influence, England had lost prestige, Smalley charged, and "it will have to be said that they suffered from that influence."<sup>130</sup> The American 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. By contrast, he offered a more balanced view of his social reforms, stressing the essential conservatism that lay behind them. But if the statesman 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 argued, "in defence of the existing order. It is one of the highest eulogies that can be bestowed on him."<sup>131</sup> 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 spiritual life of

<sup>128</sup> George Wallace Smalley, "Mr. Gladstone: Reminiscences, Anecdotes, and an Estimate," *Harpers Monthly*, 478–80.

<sup>129</sup> George Washburn Smalley, "Mr. Gladstone: Reminiscences, Anecdotes, and an Estimate," *Harpers Monthly*, 798.

<sup>130</sup> George Washburn Smalley, "Mr. Gladstone: Reminiscences, Anecdotes, and an Estimate," *Harpers Monthly*, 800.

<sup>131</sup> George Washburn Smalley, "Mr. Gladstone: Reminiscences, Anecdotes, and an Estimate," *Harpers Monthly*, 800.

the church” and “increase its hold on the people.”<sup>132</sup> (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.”<sup>133</sup> “Those of his American idolaters who love to think him impeccable and infallible,” the journalist urged, “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.”<sup>134</sup> The statesman, he continued, may have wanted to be remembered as a champion of liberty, but he was in reality a political opportunist: “At no time during his great career was he the first to take up any great political or social reform.”<sup>135</sup> 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 his judgments were overstated and represented a minority opinion, he had come closer to the mark by accurately describing the statesman’s essential conservatism.

### SUMMARY

In sum, mourning and remembrances at the time of Gladstone’s death provide us a glimpse into why Americans of the period admired him and, thus, what they valued. 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. His 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 eulogized him, whether in sermons or published articles. Without doubt, the broad swathe of Americans considered him a man of sincere Christian faith. The correlation between his religious piety and his political crusades was a commonly held sentiment, whether in his

<sup>132</sup> George Washburn Smalley, “Mr. Gladstone: Reminiscences, Anecdotes, and an Estimate,” *Harpers Monthly*, 800.

<sup>133</sup> George Washburn Smalley, “Mr. Gladstone: Reminiscences, Anecdotes, and an Estimate,” *Harpers Monthly*, 800.

<sup>134</sup> George Washburn Smalley, “Mr. Gladstone: Reminiscences, Anecdotes, and an Estimate,” *Harpers Monthly*, 649.

<sup>135</sup> George Washburn Smalley, “Mr. Gladstone: Reminiscences, Anecdotes, and an Estimate,” *Harpers Monthly*, 799.

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 an icon of liberal reform and democracy. He was associated with words such as "progress," "evolution," "change," and "democratic" with respect to his influence as a political reformer. Such sentiments were expressed in secular, evangelical, and Catholic publications. At the same time, most American voices in the press chose to ignore Gladstone's essential conservatism regarding the Church of England, the monarchy, and the aristocracy. He also received substantial praise for his work in foreign affairs. His Midlothian Campaigns had been well remembered as had his more recent 1896 speech condemning Turkish atrocities. Both secular and evangelical voices remembered Gladstone favorably 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 10

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# Conclusion

William Gladstone emerges from the pages of nineteenth-century American press as a towering transatlantic figure and a statesman of remarkable popularity. Because of his celebrity, he became a flashpoint for issues related to modernity in both religion and politics. Consequently, this study has provided us a window into how nineteenth-century Americans perceived modern developments in religion and politics based upon their reactions to Gladstone. He became a catalyst for opinions in the mainstream press—populated largely by authors who were white, male, and Christian—about some of the most contentious issues of the period. Four principal conclusions may thus be drawn with regard to what opinions in the press teach about Gladstone and American society: (1) Gladstone symbolized a new Anglo-American rapprochement, the engine, many believed, for the train of modern progress; (2) liberal democracy and separation of church and state were essential to their American identity; (3) agnosticism and liberal theology were gaining increased acceptance in American intellectual life, further splintering Christians; (4) conservative Christianity was still well entrenched in American life, foreshadowing the anti-intellectualism of twentieth-century fundamentalists and conservative culture warriors.

## GLADSTONE AND TRANSATLANTIC RAPPROCHEMENT

At his passing in 1898, Gladstone was admired widely in the United States for his distinctive role in Anglo-American relations. He was remembered as a seminal figure in the movement for rapprochement between the United States and Great Britain. Both the secular and evangelical press celebrated him as a symbol of Anglo-Saxon progress and of their hopes for a more closely aligned and unified English-speaking world. The statesman had transformed himself from Civil War-era pariah into an icon of political and religious liberty. Amid such enthusiasm, some in the American press celebrated him as the personification of Anglo-Saxon supremacy, a common belief of the period that now appears embarrassingly racist. Gladstone was also eulogized as the seminal figure for a formal Anglo-American treaty of alliance that would unify the English-speaking world. In several instances those seeking such an alliance had been motivated by crass imperialism. The theme appeared in both secular and evangelical publications, and it is difficult not to interpret much of this as exploitive given the rising tensions with Spain at the time. Obviously, a deceased Gladstone could not respond to the more radical proposals for Anglo-American alliance that he would certainly not have endorsed. By 1898, Gladstone had become, for many Americans, the embodiment of their hopes for continued Anglo-Saxon supremacy in world affairs.

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American authors were largely unified in their view of Gladstone as a paragon of liberty and the advance of modern democracy. The contrarian view of George Smalley has been duly noted, but American journalists in this study largely celebrated his accomplishments and writings in the arena of public affairs. They perceived the disestablishment of the Irish Church as both providential and revolutionary in the removal of ecclesiastical injustice, and during the *Vatican Decrees* controversy, evangelical and secular papers enthusiastically agreed with his central assertions regarding the threat posed to the civil loyalty and intellectual freedom of English Catholics by papal infallibility. Moreover, evangelical and secular voices also agreed with Gladstone in denouncing what they perceived to be the ambitious political designs of ultramontanist in Europe, writing sympathetically about Bismarck's *Kulturkampf*. For obvious reasons, Catholic

writers took the opposite view, but significant numbers of journalists and authors shared the statesman's alarm over the decree of papal infallibility. Gladstone's expostulation was considered a credible and necessary alarm for lovers of liberty to beware of creeping theocracy. The Bradlaugh controversy further highlighted the American principle of political liberty as it relates to separation of church and state and the constitutional principle of rejecting religious tests for public office holders. The dispute revealed that a unity of Christian thought and democratic values existed between Gladstone and America, with Roman Catholic opinion diverging, perhaps due to a more intense disdain for atheism. Writers in the secular 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.

American admiration for Gladstone's liberal statesmanship continued to move in an upward trajectory through several other important landmarks in his career. He received acclaim in 1876 for the *Bulgarian Horrors* pamphlet and for his 1878 "Kin Beyond Sea" essay. His conversion to Irish Home Rule in 1885 found widespread approval in the United States, both in the secular and in the 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. However much it was an imprecise reading of Gladstonian principles—it was given his support of the monarchy, the aristocracy, and the Church of England—Americans came to view the statesman as a proponent of their brand of liberal democracy. The way in which American commentators celebrated Gladstone at his passing also gives important clues into their political values. Comparisons to Lincoln placed him in the pantheon of statesman-like demigods. Sentiments about his greatness as a liberal reformer were expressed in secular, evangelical, and Roman Catholic publications. Gladstone also received substantial praise as a standard-bearer for liberal internationalism and humanitarian intervention in world affairs. While it is true that most Americans of the period shared Gladstone's social and religious conservatism, like him, their political values were imbued with the modern liberal-democratic principles. It is also interesting to note that conservative evangelicals of the period seem to have held the idea of separating church and state in higher esteem than many of their progeny do in the twenty-first century.

## GROWING ACCEPTABILITY FOR SKEPTICISM AND LIBERAL THEOLOGY

The waning decades of the nineteenth century witnessed the emergence of a growing acceptance in the United States for both theological liberalism and agnosticism. In Gladstone's first debate with Huxley, leading organs of progressive orthodoxy such as the *Christian Union* and *Andover Review* regarded his attempts at harmonizing the Bible with science unnecessary—and a setback to the cause of true faith. They shared neither his scientific explanations nor his belief that Genesis contained scientific revelation. During the Ingersoll dispute, liberal evangelicals shared Gladstone's alarm over aggressive infidelity, but they considered his Butlerian apologetics outdated, while conservative evangelicals embraced his approach. Unitarians such as Frederick H. Hedge, the former Harvard theologian, viewed the statesman's theology to be out of step with modern currents of thought. That opinion had been reiterated in the final installment 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. Fissures were appearing within evangelicalism and in the wider body of American Christians.

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 novel's principal character, Robert Elsmere. Additionally, they shared Gladstone's view that both a belief in miracles and the human need for divine redemption were indispensable aspects of the faith. Among heterodox Unitarians and Universalists, however, the opposite was true. 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 theology to be the residual influence of primitive religious belief. Gladstone's 1896 *Works of Bishop Butler and Studies Subsidiary* produced a similar response. 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. 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 his role as Christian scholar, Gladstone proved to be a catalyst for opinions that highlight the divide in nineteenth-century America between traditional notions of belief and modern currents of thought—a divide that persists to the present day.

### THE PERSISTENCE OF CHRISTIAN CONSERVATISM

Nineteenth-century writers in the mainstream American press, both religious and secular, reveal the continued dominance of Christian cultural conservatism during the period. Religious journals and newspapers were, in fact, still regarded as mainstream. Both in their admiration for Gladstone as a Christian statesman and in their disdain for outspoken agnostics (most dared not use the word “atheist” yet), there is a sense that the open secularity of the latter half of the twentieth century was still some distance off. The Protestant hegemony was showing stress fractures but it was still a towering presence in American society. Roman Catholics too exhibited a tenacious conservatism in their defense of papal infallibility and in their intolerance for atheism, as exhibited during the Bradlaugh affair. The United States was nothing if not still openly “Christian” in its public discourse.

Perhaps the most salient conclusion to be drawn from this study of Gladstone and America concerns the reactionary conservatism of evangelicals. They remained loyal followers of the Gladstonian cult regardless of the controversy, even though he was not, strictly speaking, an evangelical co-religionist. The reasons for this go to the core of their worldview, which was decidedly biblical and suspicious of both modern science and the new theology. Additionally, like Gladstone, they retained a not entirely unreasonable fear of ultramontane Roman Catholicism, a reactionary movement opposed to all aspects of the modern enterprise. For American Protestants, both medieval Catholicism and Pope Pius IX had demonstrated a hostility to the principles enshrined in the First Amendment and the Bill of Rights. The *Syllabus of Errors* and the first Vatican Council had both struck directly at this raw nerve. Yet, unlike Gladstone, evangelical loathing of Roman Catholicism went well beyond the issue of papal tyranny. Their published responses during both the Irish Church Bill and the *Vatican Decrees* controversy reveal a disdain for the very existence of Catholicism and, more to the point, of the existence of Catholic immigrants in the United States. During

Irish Church disestablishment and the Vaticanism dispute, a pronounced anti-Catholic sentiment was pervasive in the primary literature of evangelicals. 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 Catholic-Protestant struggle over public education taking center stage. Gladstone's *Vatican Decrees* thus became a convenient launching point to address the period's growing religious culture war. In so doing, evangelicals and liberals alike expressed the uniquely American theme of separating church and state to attack Roman Catholic efforts at accommodation in 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 fueled 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 *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 evangelicalism throughout the period.

Conservative evangelicals also foreshadowed the fundamentalist-modernist controversy of early twentieth century and ongoing culture wars over science and education, which continue to the present day. This tendency was clearly revealed in Gladstone's debates with Huxley and Ingersoll. Conservative evangelicals also considered the statesman's edition of the *Works of Bishop Butler* to be the best to date and his *Studies Subsidiary* had demonstrated Butler's ongoing apologetic relevance for the time. Despite his mostly stellar reputation as a statesman, however, the secular press was critical of his Butlerian scholarship, primarily because he had not dealt with the bishop in the context of modern currents of thought. In sum, as a liberal statesman, Gladstone had revealed a vibrant democratic spirit among most Americans of the period. But as Christian man and apologist, he shone a spotlight on the growing divide in the United States between those holding to more traditional notions of Christian belief and those willing to embrace modern currents of thought. At the same time, it is worth remembering that Gladstone's religious faith was admired well beyond the circle of conservative evangelicalism. His principled Christian leadership and religious devotion were well regarded by people of all faiths. For many Americans, Gladstone exemplified how one should live a Christian life as a man, a statesman, and a scholar.

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