

Political Rhetoric in the Oxford and Cambridge Unions, 1830–1870

Taru Haapala

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Political Rhetoric in
the Oxford and
Cambridge Unions,
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For my parents

PREFACE

It is undeniable that the Oxford and Cambridge Unions had an important role to play in nineteenth-century British political culture. Despite that, or perhaps for that very reason, they have received very little scholarly attention from the field of political studies. It has been generally accepted that the Unions were, and to a large extent still remain, training grounds for statesmen. But what kind of training did the Unions offer? And what was the mechanism through which their members became knowledgeable of the parliamentary way of doing politics? These are the questions this study seeks to answer.

In previous literature the Unions' debates have been considered more as curiosities of parliamentary history rather than sources for political research in their own right. The book does not aim at being a work on political or associational history. Rather the innovation here is to combine the study of politics as well as the analysis of rhetorical practices to research on historical documents. The Unions are treated as models of deliberative assemblies that have adopted parliamentary rules of debate. The study uses Unions' records as primary research material in order to find new ways to make sense of their deliberative rhetoric.

The contribution of this book is twofold. First, it is a study on the debates of the Union Societies of the two oldest English universities that became considered parliamentary training grounds during the nineteenth century. The book includes the first comprehensive analysis of the debating practices in the Unions. And, second, it offers a rhetorical reading and conceptual tools to understand debate in deliberative assemblies. It creates typologies of rhetorical commonplaces in the Union debates as

well as in their internal disputes over procedure. They can be used both for comparative studies on parliamentary cultures and other deliberative assemblies as well as to understand their internal political struggles.

The original idea for the study was inspired by my interest in British political culture and its rhetorical tradition. As a postgraduate at the University of Jyväskylä I became fascinated with studies that had previously shown how indebted the political culture was to Renaissance humanism. Under the supervision of Kari Palonen I became familiar with the work of Quentin Skinner with whose rehabilitation of Renaissance rhetoric I thoroughly sympathise.

The initial steps for this study were taken when I was visiting The Centre for the Study of the History of Political Thought at Queen Mary University of London as an associate research student in 2008–2009. At the time I became increasingly interested in the nineteenth-century British political culture. After discussing my interests with Professor Skinner I became convinced that they were worth pursuing. Without his encouragement this book would probably never have been written.

While staying in London I was mostly working at the British Library whose helpful staff kindly assisted me with finding all the relevant literature I needed for my study. Above all else, however, I would like to extend my most sincere gratitude to the Oxford and Cambridge Union Societies who gave me the kind permission to use their original records for my study. I am also grateful for the help of the staff at the Cambridge University Library and the Oxfordshire History Centre in Cowley, which hold the Union archives.

Professor Palonen's Academy of Finland research project, *The Politics of Dissensus. Parliamentarism, Rhetoric and Conceptual History* (2008–2012) at the Department of Social Sciences and Philosophy, University of Jyväskylä, provided the ideal environment for conducting my study. Together with the Department's Centre of Excellence in Political Thought and Conceptual Change (2006–2011), with which I was also affiliated, it organised international conferences and workshops for PhD students that became especially valuable for further learning and testing out my ideas. The cooperation with other international research projects, especially *The Rhetorics of Democracy* (FFI2008-00039) and *The Civic Constellation* (FFI2011-23388) directed by Professor José María Rosales, University of Málaga, both funded by the Spanish National Research Plan, offered many occasions for discussions and revision of my thesis.

For helpful comments and suggestions regarding my work I would like to especially thank Alan Finlayson, Claudia Wiesner, Cornelia Ilie, Pasi Ihalainen, Jussi Kurunmäki, Rosario López, Hanna-Mari Kivistö and Evgeny Roshchin. I would also like to thank the Kone Foundation for a postdoctoral scholarship (2013–2014) and the Academy of Finland Distinguished Professorship research project Transformations of Concepts and Institutions in the European Polity (TRACE) directed by Professor Niilo Kauppi.

In the book I have used online databases and resources that have become available in recent years. They have offered me the opportunity to find digitalised sources and reference books which otherwise would have been hard or even impossible to locate in Finland. For example, the *House of Commons Parliamentary Papers* database has been crucial for the collection of sources. Likewise, the nineteenth-century alumni records of Oxford and Cambridge Universities are now available online, which have provided me relevant background information for Union members.

For me, writing this study has been a journey into British parliamentary culture and a learning process in coming to understand the connection between rhetorical strategies and the rules of debate. I have attempted to show the extent to which nineteenth-century Union training contributed to the entire culture of debate. However, it has been equally important for me to illustrate the individual performances of political agency. And, therefore, some parts of the book include detailed investigations into the politics practised in the Unions. It has also been my intention to accentuate the fact that not all Union members became professional parliamentarians. According to my view, they all became more or less exposed to the parliamentary way of acting politically as the Unions adopted House of Commons terminology and procedure. Although the Unions did not turn all their members into professionals, they certainly gave them sense of what kinds of skills were required of a politician to operate in any kind of deliberative assembly of the period.

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Introduction: The Rhetoric of Parliamentary Debate

The connection between debate and parliamentary procedure created an extraordinary affiliation between the Union Societies and the House of Commons in the mid-nineteenth century. The Unions at Oxford and Cambridge Universities are without a doubt the most famous British debating societies. Founded in the early nineteenth century, they have become known as training grounds for statesmen. Similar organisations have existed in other countries providing oratorical and rhetorical training for undergraduates (see e.g. Hollis 1965, 165; Burman 2012, 118–120; van Rijn 2010, 145–148). Many of them offer unique windows to the way political activities in their respective cultures have been perceived and practised during various periods of time.

British debating societies have been closely connected to nineteenth-century parliamentary culture and public life (cf. Bevis 2007; Meisel 2001). However, the transfers of the culture to the actual political practices in debating societies have not been rigorously studied. To address the issue, this study explores the concept of debate related to the training of political activity in the Union Societies.

Sir John Mowbray, a long-serving Conservative MP representing Oxford University from 1868 until 1899, had been a member of the Oxford Union while studying at Christ Church between 1835 and 1847. In his speech at the Union's fiftieth anniversary in 1873 he reflected on how it had contributed to the learning of politics and debating as a school of 'the combative element':

There are many persons, I know, who regard the Union as merely a debating society, but I think this to be a great mistake (hear, hear). There are imperial politics, and there are Union politics. Regarded on the side of imperial politics, it may be called a deliberative society; but regarded on the side of Union politics, I look upon it as a great school for the development of the combative element (hear, hear). (Mowbray: Oxford Union Society 1874, 6)

He suggests that, despite the fact that the minute books of the Union Societies never explicitly express the political side of their activities, the members themselves were fully aware that the debates were not merely academic in character: the debates for and against issues were not conducted merely for the sake of argument. The ‘combative element’ was part of the early training in politics that was learnt at Union debates.

I argue that the Union Societies’ debating practices are an important historical source for understanding political activity in nineteenth-century British parliamentary culture. The training the Unions offer is often referred to in terms of the preservation of a political elite: not everyone can access it as it is only available for students of the two most prestigious English universities. It is, however, questionable whether focusing on elites is helpful in determining the political value and importance of these debating societies in the formation of British parliamentary culture overall.

First, it seems that various elites are ubiquitous in politics. Whenever politics is practised exclusions are bound to happen, which creates small groups in privileged positions. For that reason alone, it seems rather futile to dismiss the Unions as elitist if we want to make sense of their role in a political culture. Second, the rules of debate of the House of Commons have been adopted and used in hundreds of societies and associations. The Westminster model of debate has been readily available for and applied in various deliberative assemblies worldwide. Handbooks on how to form debating societies have been written and circulated in Britain and overseas since the late nineteenth century.¹

The common idea of debate, as well as one of its most important educative and political aspects, is to consider issues from opposing points of view.² A key feature of parliamentary government, in more general terms, is that it functions through resolutions that are made after careful deliberation on both sides of an issue based on established rules of debate. It is characteristic to parliamentary assemblies to deal with motions as potential ‘opinions of the House’ and to treat proposals taken into deliberation as no longer belonging to the individuals behind their formulation but to

the ‘house’ itself. That is why the person responsible for the motion has to ask a permission of the house to remove it from the agenda (cf. Hansard 1857, 32). As I shall elaborate in this study, these features became part of the overall practice adopted in the Cambridge and Oxford Unions as well, which made them, formally, a part of British parliamentary culture and, therefore, an important source for understanding the politics involved.

Challenging the view that the procedural formalisation of debate is only a tool for the political management of a state,³ this study focuses on examining the ways in which the Union Societies at Cambridge and Oxford adopted and used parliamentary procedure for political purposes of their own. It interprets the Unions as being part of nineteenth-century parliamentary political culture by drawing from their original minute books and rule compilations. Further, the aim of this study is to explore the phenomenon of the politicisation of debate in Britain that occurred through the interchange of parliamentary ideas between Parliament and the debating societies, especially the Unions.⁴

The approach applied here accentuates political activity based on procedures and rules of debate. The connection between parliamentary procedure and debate is essential in order to better understand political activity in parliaments. First of all, a parliamentary bill takes shape through a series of motions. The motions are proposed and debated according to a certain procedure. Political activity in a parliamentary assembly centres, firstly, on influencing what kinds of motions are put on the political agenda and, secondly, on taking part in debates on those motions that have reached the agenda. In the British constitutional literature the role of debate is accentuated as the control of state finances was originally considered the main function of Parliament, especially since 1689. It has even been said that, in the British context, a ‘parliamentary body’ is an assembly of which the primary function is not to legislate, but to debate according to certain rules (see e.g. Redlich 1908, vol. 2, 215).⁵ ‘Parliamentary bodies’ are commonly perceived as representative institutions in the context of a state. Redlich’s definition, however, encourages us to theorise on the idea of a deliberative assembly without the constraints and burdens of representation on a national scale. In fact, debating procedure—the backbone of British parliamentary politics—was already established at a time before democratic representation had even been conceptualised.⁶

The British House of Commons is well known for its ancient traditions and rules which for centuries remained unwritten. John Hatsell’s *Precedents of Proceedings in the House of Commons* (1779–1796) was the

first attempt to provide a comprehensive account of parliamentary procedure. Previously there had been a few compilations⁷ of established rules, but they did not attempt to cover the proceedings as a whole. Hatsell's (1733–1820) volume remained the authority on parliamentary procedure well into the 1800s. He was followed by Thomas Erskine May (1815–1886) with the first treatise on parliamentary procedure, *A Treatise upon the Law, Privileges, Proceedings and Usage of Parliament*, in 1844. May's work was reworked and reprinted eight times during his lifetime, and after his death it continued to be considered the most authoritative work on parliamentary procedure. Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832) and Josef Redlich (1869–1936) also contributed to the genre of procedural tracts. Bentham's *Essay on Political Tactics* (1791), which addressed the question of the proper workings of a legislative assembly and was to be a guide for the establishment of the French National Assembly, is considered a classic. He had a more theoretical approach to the procedure of a deliberative assembly, whereas Redlich's work provides a historical reading of British parliamentary procedure.

The traditions and precedents of British parliamentary procedure have remained largely unchanged for centuries. Lord Champion's (1929) manual for members of Parliament starts with an excursion into the history of the procedure, which offers invaluable information about the contexts in which the procedure was formed and revised. Champion (1929/1958, 3) described procedure as a settled parliamentary practice that is only modified over time. It is adjusted according to constitutional arrangements. Revision of procedure also implies a redefinition of the power relations between the constitutive parts of Parliament (i.e. the House of Commons, the House of Lords and the Crown) (*ibid.*, 1). Awareness of the traditions, learning what is permitted, prohibited or addressed by the rules, opens up new horizons for how to act in the way that is most beneficial for one's own political ends. For example, the idea of protection of the minority had for centuries been the main purpose of parliamentary procedure (Redlich 1908, vol. 1, 56). As Erskine May noted, it had a long-lasting effect on the debates in the House of Commons. According to him, debate is the only way to ensure that 'a minority can hope to compete with a majority' as the procedure can be used to its protection (May 1851, 221). May argued that the forms of proceedings do not favour any party as such, as they are available equally for all who are involved in a debate. Also, he implies that the procedure is a tool to be used for political purposes; that is, the rules of debate do not specify to what end they *should* be used. What May seems

to be suggesting is that debate is the occasion where procedure could be freely used for one's own benefit. In other words, the rules of debate have a rhetorical dimension as well (cf. Gronbeck 1982). It is the skilful use of the rules that creates the rhetorical space for acting politically.

In a majority of studies on British parliamentary politics, the role of procedure has been largely overlooked. Only a few scholarly studies have emphasised its importance. Gronbeck (1982) has paid particular attention to British parliamentary procedure of the eighteenth century. He has contributed to Foord's (1964) work on the tactics and techniques that the opposition members used in the period. Lord Norton's (2001) treatment of parliamentary procedure, in turn, concentrates on procedure as a constraining force on government policies. In the field of policy studies, procedure has also been considered in connection with the agenda-setting of governments, and it is perceived as a set of rules instrumental for the formation of political agendas (Schwartz 2008, 353).

In her study on British parliamentary reform in the twentieth century, Kelso (2009) recognises procedure as an important part of the political system. Her starting point is that institutionally established norms and values shape reforms. From the perspective of historical institutionalism, she acknowledges the value of procedure. However, procedure is not treated as a vital parliamentary condition of acting politically.

Norton connects the lack of research on procedure to the early twentieth-century perceptions of the decline of Parliament. The focus of studies on parliamentary procedure, he writes, has been guided by perceptions of a Parliament that is confronted by external pressures (Norton 2001, 14–15). That perspective led to the abandonment of focus on procedure and its political aspects. Instead, it seems that most of the studies conducted on nineteenth-century British parliamentary politics have an emphasis on the representative or party-political aspects.⁸ This is unsurprising given that this was the century when the first extensions of suffrage were enacted. However, the bulk of the literature seems to lack discussion on the effects these major pieces of legislation had on parliamentary politics. Steinmetz, however, stands apart by focusing on the conceptual changes that took place in the political language inside British Parliament. He has noted that there is an indirect way to study parliamentary speech in England, namely, by using a variety of sources, including procedural tracts and rhetoric manuals (Steinmetz 2013, 51).

The overwhelming majority of studies on parliamentary history or politics concentrate on parliaments as legislators or resting places for political

power and elites instead of arenas of debate and controversy. It is only recently that interest on the topic has increased and parliaments have started to be evaluated as deliberative assemblies (e.g. de Galember et al., eds. 2013; Palonen et al., eds. 2014; Proksch and Slapin 2015). Historical research on parliamentary cultures, especially by German scholars, focusing on communication theories and studies on party political activity, has been particularly valuable in investigating the conceptual changes that occur in parliamentary politics over long periods of time (see e.g. Steinmetz 1993; Schulz and Wirsching, eds. 2012; Feuchter and Helmrath, eds. 2013). The procedural point of view, for its part, complements the study of the conceptual changes by allowing closer examination of the parliamentary political conflicts behind them. The study of parliamentary procedure gives the chance to focus on the activity of politics itself (cf. Ihalainen and Palonen 2009, 21), directing attention to the formalised rhetorical struggles on which parliamentary politics is constituted instead of concentrating on the end products.

In recent years rhetorical analysis has become rehabilitated in British political studies. Interest in rhetoric has produced a number of scholarly articles, textbooks and monographs (e.g. Finlayson 2014; Atkins et al., eds. 2014; Martin 2014; Toye 2014; Reid 2012). For example, Reid (2012) has studied the eighteenth-century rhetorical culture of the House of Commons, while Toye (2014) has focused on the period after the 1918 extension of suffrage. They both have also remarked that public speaking skills were honed in university debating societies (Reid 2013; Toye 2014, 278). Meisel's (2001) study of nineteenth-century public-speaking culture takes MPs' debating society backgrounds into account, and it remains a valuable piece of scholarship. However, it does not take on the rhetorical culture of the House of Commons and its transfer to Union Societies.

The distinctive rhetoric of debate, as characteristic of the procedural style of parliamentary politics (cf. Palonen 2014), is only fragmentarily thematised in linguistic or discourse analysis studies.⁹ For the bulk of public discourse studies, the basic unit of rhetorical analysis seems to be speech or discourse (cf. e.g. Charteris-Black 2014). In contrast, the approach focusing on rules of procedure includes the treatment of issues put on the agenda from opposing views. This fundamental setting of parliamentary debate has its roots in the deliberative model of classical rhetoric (see e.g. Palonen 2008). Classical rhetoric is embedded in British parliamentary practices and has been since the Renaissance (see e.g. Mack 2002; Skinner 2008). I suggest that the political importance of deliberation and its role

in the parliamentary culture of debate was only realised in the course of the nineteenth century, even though the adversarial character of parliamentary deliberation was already acknowledged in Renaissance political culture. Based on rhetorical and historical literature, however, it seems that British conceptions of parliamentary oratory from the late eighteenth to the early nineteenth century largely ignored parliamentary debate as a form of deliberative rhetoric.¹⁰ As the British Parliament attained a paradigmatic status as a deliberative assembly during the nineteenth century, it also became the model for other assemblies and associations.

In Chapter 2 I will, first, discuss the role of the Union Societies in the formation of the British parliamentary culture of debate. The histories of the Union Societies¹¹ have been written mainly by former presidents (e.g. Cradock 1953; Hollis 1965; Walter 1984; Parkinson 2009). In numerous political memoirs and biographies the Oxford and Cambridge Unions are typically referred to as the ‘training grounds’ for parliamentarians, Gladstone being the most eminent example (e.g. Reid 1899; also cf. Cradock 1953, 1). Given all the parliamentary connections, it is curious that the Union Societies have not previously been studied from the parliamentary perspective in relation to their debating activities. In more recent research the activities of the Cambridge Union Society have been studied in connection with the Irish question (see Martin 2000). The Oxford Union Society, in turn, has inspired an ethnographical study (see Graham 2005).

By far the most interesting study to treat the Unions as part of a unique culture of public speech is Meisel’s *Public Speech and the Culture of Public Life in the Age of Gladstone* (2001), in which they are considered oratorical training grounds for career advancement. In Meisel’s view (2001, 42), the Unions provided systematised oratorical training for students, as this was lacking in the university curricula. He emphasises the changes in political oratory, considering the Unions as the embodiment of ‘the new connection between public life and oratory’ that was just emerging at the time (ibid., 41–42). His study places them in a more general framework of the Victorian culture of public speech. However, his approach pays more attention to the ‘oratorical’ than the ‘parliamentary’ tradition. There is a difference between ideas of oratory and debate that often seems to get overlooked. Whereas oratory can be defined as public speaking without the imminent presence of adversaries, debate is constituted with two or more (opposite) parties (De Mille 1878/1882, 471).

Bevis (2007) has also written about the effects of oratory on nineteenth-century literary culture from romanticism to modernism. He argues that prose was permeated by a growing fascination with parliamentary politics. It seems that both Bevis and Meisel, even though they acknowledge the relevance of Parliament to the political culture from the perspective of oratory, concentrate more on what was happening outside Parliament than on parliamentary politics itself and its influence on the debating culture through adoption of procedure.

Prior to the emergence of the Cambridge and Oxford Unions, there had already existed several student debating clubs in the English universities whose origins have partly been attributed to the inspiration provided by still earlier academic debating societies such as the Speculative Society of Edinburgh (see Martin 2000, chap. 1). Many of the Union Societies' members had also participated in the activities of the Eton Society or other public school debating societies before entering university (Hollis 1965, 12). This was the case with the most famous nineteenth-century Union member, William Ewart Gladstone.

In his autobiography Charles Wordsworth (1806–1892), a classical scholar and later bishop of St Andrews, described the excitement of the early nineteenth century and how it had turned him into a 'keen politician' eager to attend the debates at the House of Commons (Wordsworth 1891, 82). Wordsworth was Gladstone's private tutor at Oxford, and they were both active members of the Union. At Cambridge, their contemporaries Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800–1859) and Winthrop Mackworth Praed (1802–1839) were both elected to Parliament. Praed was described by Lord Lytton as 'the readiest and most pungent speaker at the Union Debating Society' (Bulwer-Lytton 1883, 227).

It would be easy to assume that the Unions had a direct role to play in national politics.¹² However, success in a Union Society did not always lead to a political career. Especially in the early years of their existence, a vast majority of members did not become involved in parliamentary politics after graduation (cf. Meisel 2001, 37), and Macaulay and Praed, despite being called the most effective speakers in the Union, never attained its presidency (Hudson 1939, 87). Despite the fact that many Union members did not pursue political careers, they offered a much-needed training platform for the most enthusiastic politicians.

By the end of the nineteenth century the Unions were considered 'training grounds' for statesmen. Indeed, a considerable number of their former members went on to enter Parliament, which is more or less still

the case. By that time Parliament represented the main debating forum in Britain. Macaulay, for instance, described parliamentary government as ‘government by speaking’ (Macaulay 1859), and Bagehot (1872) spoke of ‘government by discussion’. Debates and the skills needed to participate in them were highly regarded in Britain as contributing to the fair transaction of public business. A whole new range of political issues was introduced before Parliament at that time. Politicians became increasingly aware of the conditions of people living in their constituencies, whereas previously they had little or no knowledge of what was actually happening (Howarth 1956, 73). Such high regard for debate was unprecedented, and it had further political implications: it shaped the way politics itself was understood. It became important for parliamentarians to show that they participated in House of Commons’ debates and they took more opportunities to speak (Grainger 1969, 15). However, this put the parliamentary forms and practices of proceedings under strain, leading to a situation where solutions, ultimately, were sought through revising the rules of debate.

Chapter 3 will consider the idea of debate in British parliamentary politics, especially from the point of view of procedure and how its role was increased due to reforms and wider publicity during the nineteenth century. The focus on debate made it increasingly important for parliamentarians to know the rules and traditions of parliamentary work. Since 1837 the British Parliament had appointed numerous select committees to investigate possibilities to change the rules in order to make the proceedings more efficient. This practice was adopted also in the Union Societies. By the end of the 1840s the Union Societies had set up their own ‘select committees’ to revise their rules. The transfer of parliamentary ideas and procedure was enabled by the increased publicity of parliamentary politics. In the nineteenth century the general public also became informed about House of Commons procedures. The publication of parliamentary proceedings, which had occurred only unofficially in the eighteenth century (see Reid 2000), played a key role in spreading parliamentary ideas and terminology. The growth of the newspaper press allowed a more firm connection between constituencies and parliamentary life (Cox 1987, 55).

The Union Societies were not directly involved in party politics on a national scale. They debated on a number of issues which, occasionally, had partisan political overtones, but clearly no single political theme. Compared to such institutions as the Pitt Club, the Reform Club or the Carlton Club,¹³ the Unions had a quite different purpose. Whereas the

others aimed at strengthening contacts among like minds with a shared political agenda, the Union Societies were simply founded on the idea of acquiring debating skills.

In the latter part of the century the debates of Union Societies increasingly drew the attention of the press. Members themselves started to inform the papers about their debate topics. References to Unions also sometimes appeared in the House of Commons debates. For instance, in the second reading of the Parliamentary Reform Bill in 1866, Disraeli referred to Gladstone's past in the Oxford Union Society, after having just acquainted himself with the Society's records (House of Commons, 27 April 1866, cols 94–95). Earlier that year the Union Societies had been mentioned in a second reading of a bill proposed by George Göschen, a former member of the Oxford Union, regarding the religious restrictions in English university education (House of Commons, 21 March 1866, cols 659–715).

The primary sources of this study have been selected for the purpose of investigating the interpretations of parliamentary-styled debate and the use of procedure in the Union Societies between the parliamentary reforms of 1832 and 1867. It is during this period that the concept of 'parliamentary government' was introduced. The political situation after the Reform Act of 1832 required the members of Parliament to reorient their approach to public speaking. This important shift in the conception of debate is taken here as the contextual background for analysing the parliamentary culture of debate during the period. It is noteworthy that there has not been any previous research that combines parliamentary procedure tracts and rhetorical literature in a manner informative of this conceptual shift. For that reason I have had to construct interpretations of my own of House of Commons debate practices and procedural revisions after the 1832 Reform Act and, from non-parliamentary types of sources, of the British culture of debate more generally.

The Unions' records offer first-hand information on how parliamentary procedure and vocabulary were adopted and practised outside Westminster. Furthermore, compared to debates in the House of Commons the ones conducted in the Unions are more approachable in terms of analysing the connection between debate and procedure. It is more difficult to study this link in parliamentary debates for a variety of reasons. First of all, there are very different expectations related to debates performed in parliaments than to those conducted in debating societies as they often affect the lives of millions and can even serve as justifications for the employment of mili-

tary forces. However, the similarity between the House of Commons' and Unions' debates lies precisely in the use of procedure to control debates.

As I am not writing a history of the Union Societies as associations, I have been unable to rely on previous studies and had to construct my own research design. This is the first time that a comprehensive corpus of the debating topics of the Unions has been compiled. There are some advantages and disadvantages related to being the first to pursue an enterprise such as this. I have collected all relevant sources for my research from the original records. For the purposes of this study, I needed to reorganise the sources related to the Union Societies debates as they remained largely unindexed and fragmentary.

The Unions are private organisations, and until the 1860s they rarely allowed any information about their activities to be published without their permission. Their minute books contain records of both private and public business meetings. The public business meetings did not refer to debates that were necessarily open to the public. 'Public' refers to meetings in which debate topics relate to matters outside the Union; 'private' refers to meetings on topics internal to the society, such as maintenance of the premises, the collections of the Union Society library and revision of the rules.¹⁴ There is also a vast amount of material related to the Union Societies that does not relate to its debates or proceedings, which I have decided to leave out of the corpus. The records of the Oxford Union, for example, also include documents related to elections, legal papers and private minute books of the standing committee.

The proceedings in the minute books are handwritten in chronological order. The debate topics are rarely indexed, and the volumes usually do not have any page numbers. At some point the Union Societies started to print records of their public business meetings, which has helped me to go through them more systematically. The private business meetings containing issues regarding organisation of the societies had to be transcribed from the original minute books to an electronic form in their order of appearance. I then highlighted my notes mainly for meetings in which the revision of rules was discussed.¹⁵

The minute books are not verbatim accounts of what was actually said in the meetings.¹⁶ They do not reveal the argumentation for and against the motions. The public business meetings were usually documented as follows: first, the date of the meeting as well as the name of the chairman were given; then, the motion and its proposer, and the speakers for and against; and last, the final vote (or 'division') showing the majority for or

against. The ‘division’ represents the act of making a resolution based on the motion. The motions followed the parliamentary form such as ‘That in the opinion of this House’ or ‘That this House do now adjourn’.¹⁷

Occasionally amendments to the original motions and motions of adjournment were proposed as well. In the British Parliament there is no practice of proposing counter-motions to the original motion, which is the case in many continental parliaments. Amendment is the most important instrument to present political alternatives, as it more or less alters the intent of the original motion. For May ‘[t]he object of all amendment is to effect such an alteration in a question as will enable certain members to vote in favour of it, who, without such alteration, must either have voted against it, or have abstained from voting’ (May 1844, 180).

The debating records of Union meetings are analysed from a point of view as to what kinds of rhetorical strategies were available and employed in their particular procedural settings. My rhetorical analysis focuses on finding out the common deliberative aspects that were present in the mid-nineteenth-century British parliamentary culture of debate. The aim is to identify transfers of the rhetoric of procedure to debating societies. The rhetorical patterns of debating in the Union meetings provide information about the way political action was understood based on the information available at the time about debates in the Westminster Parliament. Answers will be sought from showing how rhetorical commonplaces were used for political ends. For that purpose, I use rhetorical genre and *topos* analysis.

In classical rhetoric *loci communes* or *topoi* refer to conventions that are learnt and used in appropriate circumstances in order to win favour with an audience. I have named the rhetorical conventions used in the Union debates as *topoi* but not in terms of generally applied commonplaces as they were meant by the ancients or Renaissance humanists. My use of the term also differs from the new rhetoric approach presented by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969). Perelman’s ‘new rhetoric’ is ‘mostly related to the concerns of the Renaissance’ and ‘of certain Greek and Latin authors’ who studied persuasion and deliberation. In his treatise *topoi*, or *loci*, are mainly understood in the Aristotelian way as the art of reasoning from ‘generally accepted opinions’ (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969/1971, 5). Perelman’s approach, however, differs from ancient rhetoric in that it does not confine itself to spoken rhetoric. His motivation is similar to ‘logicians desirous of understanding the mechanisms of thought than those of masters of eloquence desirous of making people practice their teaching’ (ibid., 6). For him, *loci* are ‘premises of a general nature that can serve as the bases

for values and hierarchies' (ibid., 84). They are used in all argumentation of which the aim is 'to create or increase the adherence of minds to the theses presented for their assent' (ibid., 45).

For Perelman, the 'ideal' form of dialogue is discussion rather than debate (Setälä 2009, 71). He argues that discussion is for testing opinions, whereas debate aims at putting forward theses that are self-interested and politically motivated. He claims that dialogue is not 'supposed to be a *debate*' that involves 'partisans of opposed settled convictions' taking a stand for their own beliefs, 'but rather a discussion, in which the interlocutors search honestly and without bias for the best solution to a controversial problem' (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969/1971, 37; emphasis in the original text). In 'discussion' the 'interlocutors' put forward and test 'all arguments, for and against' which 'should lead to an inevitable and unanimously accepted conclusion'. Whereas in debate, the interlocutors are only concerned with arguing for their own views and putting down or 'limiting' the 'impact' of unfavourable arguments (ibid., 38).

As he rejects debate, Perelman's rhetorical theory is fundamentally opposed to what I am investigating here. His conception of debate seems to follow what De Mille called 'controversial debate'. It points to controversies that are established from disputes between two *settled* sides of opinion (cf. De Mille 1878/1882, 471–472). Instead, in parliamentary debates, the treatment of issues is intended to promote, even increase, a plurality of opinions, or alternatives, to the original motion. It is also fundamentally political and motivated by power struggles.

My understanding of rhetorical *topoi* has taken shape through the subject matter of my study and the primary sources I have used. The Unions are seen as deliberative assemblies with proceedings showing motions formulated and proposed in debates that indicate repetitive use of certain themes, arguments or expressions. In other words, the *topoi* I present in this study have emerged from my own interpretation of the research corpus. It is assumed that speakers participating in a debate can identify the conventions and apply them to further their own agendas. Through conducting a genre analysis on the basis of the *topoi* I have identified the deliberative elements involved. I have also highlighted some tropes and figures in the process of getting a clearer, overall grasp of the corpus. However, I have not tried to go through all of the rhetorical tropes and figures in a systematic manner.

In Chapter 4 I put forward a typology of the most used expressions under four interrelated *topoi*: 'principle', 'expediency', 'character' and

‘vote of confidence’. The *topos* of ‘character’ corresponds to the notion of *ethos* in classical rhetoric. It focuses attention on certain political conduct as justified or commendable, or their opposites. On that note, it is related to ‘principle’ that bears close resemblance to *honestas*, the rhetorical commonplace of moral value. But, in contrast to ‘character’, ‘principle’ takes a distance from the conduct itself and focuses the argumentation on what is or is not a desirable course of action. The *topos* of expediency refers to *utilitas* that emphasises action concerned with the solving of a practical problem. Finally, ‘vote of confidence’ is a modern axiom, specifically related to parliamentary practice that does not have an equivalent in classical or Renaissance rhetoric. It directs attention to whether or not some policy or political action merits approval. Even though the *topoi* may seem to overlap, they do indicate starting points for further genre analysis of how political agency was rhetorically conceived in the Union Societies.

I argue that the proposing of motions in a parliamentary manner instead of simply raising questions for discussion is what defined the Unions as *political* deliberative assemblies. This becomes especially apparent in the records of the private business meetings. The rules and regulations of the Cambridge Union were written down almost every year, sometimes even twice a year in cases where additional amendments were made during private business meetings. The records of the society’s regulations between the 1830s and 1870s, unfortunately, are incomplete as the minutes for 1835 through 1840 are missing. However, as they were frequently altered, we may find traces of what was changed in the private business meetings from the minute books. The oldest surviving records of the rules and regulations of the Oxford Union date from 1837. Several years between then and 1867 are missing from the archives. As in the case of the Cambridge Union, however, we can trace some changes in the rules from the proceedings of the private business meetings. In some cases the rules were also handled in special private business meetings (at Oxford they were also called ‘extraordinary meetings’). The decision to arrange such a meeting was made by the president of the society, who had the discretionary power to call a general meeting on any matter that required special attention (CUS laws 1828, 4; OUS rules 1837, 5).

In Chapter 5 I argue that the politics of debate in the Unions was about interpretation of the rules. Since Hatsell’s tract on parliamentary procedure, all major treatises on the subject, including those of Bentham and May, have highlighted the politics related to the rules of parliamen-

tary debate (see Palonen 2014, 59–60). They based their view on the controversies that resulted from different versions of rule interpretation. In my analysis I continue tracing the political interpretation of procedure in the Union debates as well as the use of the rhetorical *topoi* identified in Chapter 4 in instances where there was contention over defining the wording and content of the eventual resolutions.

The majority of the cases of politics of debate involved challenging the role of the president. Presidents of Union Societies had considerable powers. They were at the same time heads of the societies as well as chairs of the debates. The procedure of the society meetings gave the presidents the ultimate authority to interpret the rules. In the early years of the Unions this created much disorder. However, along with the establishment of codified rules and more liberal membership policies by the 1850s, the Unions became better organised and more widely attended by university students. At the same time the role of the president became even more significant as the officers of the Societies formed standing committees and adopted some of the characteristics of parliamentary government. However, the presidency remained a political office, even with respect to the duties of the chair. This is one of the differences which shows most clearly that the Unions did not always follow the example of the House of Commons. Whereas the Speaker of the House of Commons did not participate in the debates of committees of the whole House since the 1850s, a Union president was allowed to participate in the politics.

In the concluding chapter I will address the issue of rhetoric of procedure in the Union Societies. I contend that the phenomenon I have chosen to describe here merits further historical and rhetorical study. The Union Societies are just one example of deliberative assemblies that have adopted parliamentary procedure. It will be pointed out that the parliamentary forms of proceeding adopted in the Unions preserved some of the rhetorical elements of the past. However, procedure is an essential part of parliamentary politics and a parliamentary culture of debate is not immune to change. The findings of my study can be used to make sense of deliberative rhetoric in other political assemblies and associations. In other words, this study is not aiming at being an exhaustive analysis of the rhetoric of procedure. What I aim to achieve, rather, is to encourage further studies on politics of debate with a special emphasis on rules and procedure.

NOTES

1. Consider, for example, Adele M. Fielde's *Parliamentary Procedure. A compendium of its rules compiled from the latest and highest authorities, for the use of students, and for the guidance of officers and members of clubs, societies, boards, committees, and all deliberative bodies* (1899) that begins with the words, 'Parliamentary Law sets forth the proper mode of Procedure in deliberative bodies' (Fielde 1899/1914, 5). See also Palgrave's *The Chairman's Handbook. The House of Commons: Illustrations of its history and practice* (1869), Gray's *A Hand-Book of Procedure of the House of Commons* (1896) and Robert's *Rules of Order for deliberative assemblies* (1876).
2. This paradigm derives from classical rhetoric and was the basis of humanist education in the Renaissance (see e.g. Skinner 1996).
3. My line of approach follows the one put forward by Peltonen (2013, 130) in prioritising rhetoric instead of management as the key procedural element of parliamentary debates.
4. This challenges the view Habermas (1962) has put forward of the emergence of debating societies in eighteenth-century England as exemplars of the competition between a bourgeois public sphere and the established political institutions.
5. This idea does not exist in the background of many other European parliaments. In France, for example, the role of parliamentary opposition has been weak in comparison (cf. Rozenberg and Thiers, eds. 2013; see also Ilbert 1901, 208).
6. However, in its conflict with the government of Charles I the Parliament claimed to 'virtually' represent the nation (see Skinner 2005).
7. For example, Sir Thomas Smith's *Common-wealth of England and the Manner of Gouvernement Thereof* (1612), Scobell's *Memorials of the Method and Manner of Proceedings in Parliament in Passing Bills* (1656), and Hakewill's *Modus tenendi Parliamentum* (1659).
8. For British parliamentary history, see e.g. Michael Brock, *The Great Reform Act* (1973); Norman Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel: A Study in the Technique of Parliamentary Representation, 1830–1850* (1953); Angus Hawkins, *Parliament, Party, and the Art of Politics in Britain, 1855–59* (1987). For the history of political thought, see e.g. Stefan Collini, Donald Winch and John

Burrow, *That Noble Science of Politics: A Study in Nineteenth-Century Intellectual History* (1983); John W. Burrow, *Whigs and Liberals: Continuity and Change in English Political Thought* (1988).

9. The rhetorical viewpoint in parliamentary studies has been studied as part of discourse analysis. It provides knowledge of parliamentary rules and practices. However, rhetoric is used as a tool to explore parliamentarians' linguistic strategies and to reveal inherent bias rather than as a way to understand the activity of politics, cf. Ilie (2010).
10. I will discuss this point at more length in Chapter 3.
11. The Cambridge and Oxford Union Societies should not be conflated with the student unions or other student organs connected with the universities. Students founded the Union Societies, but universities did not initially approve or support their activities.
12. The two ancient English universities had representation in Parliament until 1950. For a discussion on the history of university representation, see Meisel (2011).
13. After the death of William Pitt the Younger in 1806 numerous clubs named after him were founded all over the country. The purpose of Pitt Clubs was to preserve the great leader's fame and remember his legacy through annual dinners and other commemorative events (Fletcher 1935, 2–3). The Reform and Carlton Clubs were founded for the promotion of pro- or anti-Reform Act policies, respectively.
14. The House of Commons did not hold 'public' meetings separately from 'private' meetings, and the meanings of 'public' and 'private' are different there: 'public' relates to bills affecting the general public, 'private' to bills affecting localities or smaller groups of individuals (Thomas 1971, 46).
15. The almost complete list of public debates and a rough directory of rule changes between 1830 and 1870 can be found in Haapala (2012, 158–238).
16. Reports of the proceedings of Parliament for this period were not written verbatim either. In fact, that was not the intention of most of the contemporaries (for further details, see Section 'Publicity, Press and Parliamentary Journalism' in Chapter 3). Until well into the 1800s the reconstructions of parliamentary debates were

mainly compiled from newspaper reports (see e.g. Wahrman 1992, 90; also Jordan 1931).

17. The Oxford Union Society started using this parliamentary style before the Cambridge Union Society. The issue is discussed in Chapter 4.

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The Union Societies' Role in the Formation of a Parliamentary Culture of Debate

The concept of debate has not been in the foreground of parliamentary studies. The main focus of previous research has been on extra-parliamentary forms of political speech which are considered an important 'new medium of communication' of the nineteenth century (Matthew 1987, 39). From this perspective, it has been suggested that the Union Societies played a key role in the formation of Victorian public life and oratory (see Meisel 2001). By focusing on the idea of public debate, rather than of oratory, it is possible to find new interpretations of the culture in which the Union Societies became later known as training grounds for statesmen.

In the late nineteenth century British debating societies became more explicitly parliamentary in character. This was greatly aided by interest among MPs to promote awareness on parliamentary practice. The proceedings of the House of Commons became widely circulated even though their publication remained officially unauthorised. As the demand for debating grew in the political culture (Cox 1987, 52), the attentiveness to parliamentary rules of debate and the need to employ them increased as well. County boards and local assemblies were encouraged to follow the parliamentary procedure. Due to increasing demand, Reginald Palgrave, the successor of Thomas Erskine May as the Clerk of the House of Commons, compiled a chairman's handbook, first published in 1869. The book was aimed at helping public assemblies to imitate 'the parliamentary method of deliberation' (Palgrave 1869/1878, v).

The Oxford and Cambridge Unions were the forerunners in relation to their adoption and application of the procedure used in the House of Commons (van Rijn 2007, 54). Before discussing how changes in the nineteenth-century political and constitutional context contributed to the Unions' acquired position, I will here elaborate on the tradition of British debating societies as well as the politicisation of debate. I will begin by exploring the debating practices of clubs and societies, especially from the mid-eighteenth century onwards. This will set the background for explaining the difference between previously founded debating societies in Britain and the Union Societies.

The debates in the Unions gradually began taking the form and following the terminology and conventions of the House of Commons. They inevitably affected the Union members' views on political conduct. In the last section of this chapter I will discuss the impact of the Union Societies on wider parliamentary culture from the point of view of political careers and training provided, for which I will use former members' biographies and memoirs to show their views on the perceived benefits of Union debating. It will be shown that there was not only demand for Union debate training but also for the professionalisation of politics.

THE TRADITION OF DEBATING SOCIETIES IN BRITAIN

In 1882 *The Times* reported a national conference of parliamentary debating societies held in Liverpool. It was the first of its kind ever taking place in Britain. The president on the occasion, Thomas Cope, a tobacco manufacturer, Justice of the Peace and one of the founders of the Liverpool Parliamentary Debating Society, described the aims of the societies as follows:

Debating societies [...] did not follow the lines of the House of Commons in a spirit of burlesque imitation, but the House of Commons' model was followed because it gave precisely what they required. The desirability of members of societies assuming the names of constituencies was shown in the fact that it enabled people of every social position to meet on one common platform and take part in any debate as members for particular places, though one might be a barrister and another a shoemaker. (*The Times* 1882, 4)

One year later journalist Blanchard Jerrold wrote in *The Nineteenth Century* an article about the Liverpool meeting where he referred to the societies as a new phenomenon.

It will surprise even many students of contemporary politics to learn that at the present moment there are upwards of one hundred Houses of Commons flourishing in various parts of the empire, the majority of which are modelled on the House of Commons at Westminster, have their speakers, prime ministers, and chancellors of exchequer, and observe with solemnity the forms of the parent assembly. (Jerrold 1883, 1085–1086)

Jerrold had himself read the minutes of the proceedings and interviewed the ‘prime minister’ of the national conference, Mr Mead Corner, a ship-owner and broker, who was an MP for Midlothian in the Sydenham and Forest Hill in the mock House of Commons. He was particularly impressed by the educational value provided by the parliamentary debating societies for their 35,000 members (Jerrold 1883, 1089). The societies had a civic purpose, giving a sense of equal opportunity to act in a political community as they taught the procedural forms by which the House of Commons worked. But the societies had several predecessors that had offered civic and political education.

Political clubs and societies have a long history in Britain. It has been suggested that politics was introduced to English club life already in the mid-seventeenth century (Timbs 1872/1899, 4). In the eighteenth century there were numerous literary and dialectic as well as debating societies that dealt with topics ranging from political to religious issues. Debating societies were different compared to other clubs and meetings of the time as they distinguished themselves by conducting formal debates. The formality of debating societies was shown in their careful manner of choosing topics, to which they kept while speaking, adhered to rules of procedure, and dealt with such subjects as morality, religion, politics and aesthetics (Fawcett 1980, 216).

Until the nineteenth century debating societies were largely unaware of parliamentary procedures due to the reluctance of Westminster to make its proceedings public. Eighteenth-century debating societies mostly had their own procedures and rules, usually with the aim of providing opportunities to practise oratorical skills. By the 1770s, the number of debating societies in Britain had increased (Clark 2000, 119) due to political tensions. The increased interest was also partly related to the gradual

publication of the proceedings of the House of Commons in the newspapers, which, ultimately, made possible the imitation and adoption of parliamentary practices by the debating societies.

The so-called popular debating societies were originally an English phenomenon (see Andrew 1996). They had become fashionable by 1780 when commercial oratorical platforms had started to advertise debates in newspapers. The oldest-known popular debating society was a London debating club called the Robin Hood Society (1742), which had been founded in a tavern by a schoolmaster, Peter Annet (McCalman 1987, 310). Its meetings were attended by 100–300 debaters. As the debates at the Robin Hood Society were relatively public, the speakers tended to acquire a more dramatic style in their oratory than was customary in the parliamentary context: ‘Some of those who acquired their oratorical graces at the Robin Hood displeased Members of the House of Commons by a theatrical and declamatory manner, which seemed absurd and vulgar when compared with the nobler action and the genuine inspiration of Pitt’ (Macknight 1858, 71–72). The theatrical style was, however, common in public speaking practices of the time. Indeed, one of the most reputable elocutionists of the eighteenth century, Thomas Sheridan, was an actor. Another actor, Charles Macklin, established a debating chamber in London after becoming convinced of the endurance of popularity of the Robin Hood Society. It was called The British Inquisition (Fawcett 1980, 217). The role of London debating clubs in promoting radical political ideas, up until the Chartist movement in the late 1830s, was significant. By the turn of the nineteenth century they had gained a reputation for having connections to revolutionary activities (McCalman 1987, 311). William Hamilton Reid, a provocateur and a journalist, wrote a pamphlet entitled *The Rise and Dissolution of the Infidel Societies in This Metropolis* (1800), in which he accused the Robin Hood Society of being the source of radical uprisings in the capital (McCalman 1987, 309). Reid himself had been a member of the famous London Corresponding Society which was founded in a tavern in 1791.

The London Corresponding Society was a radical association established by artisans and shopkeepers advocating parliamentary reform. It was, contrary to what Reid had suggested, the main reason London clubs in general were held in such suspicion because it aimed at changing Parliament (Thale 1989, 62). The Society was feared for its revolutionary ideas and demagoguery, which were similar to those of the popular societies of Paris in 1791. They were a gathering point for anti-parliamentary

forces and demanded reforms that would entail popular ratification for all lawmaking (ibid., 63). Clubs such as the London Corresponding Society represented the political radicalism of the 1790s and served as a substitute for Parliament by representing those who were disenfranchised (Parssinen 1973, 532). According to Thale (1989, 59), they were commonly advertised as 'rational entertainment'. The London Corresponding Society did not hold formalised debates, but its meetings had the marks of other debating clubs in the capital, such as entrance fees and weekly meetings where current politics were discussed (ibid., 63).

Popular debating societies were open to all who paid for admission. The payment was usually affordable for the lower and middle classes, and accessible even for women. The Robin Hood Society remained a prototype for public forums until the 1790s, after which they started to convene in more genteel places than taverns and pubs. Westminster Forum was one of the imitators of the Robin Hood Society in the 1770s: 'According to its constitution the Westminster Forum was intended for the benefit and instruction of the public at large and as an oratorical training ground for would-be preachers, barristers, and members of Parliament' (Fawcett 1980, 218). The topics under debate were sometimes clearly opposed to parliamentary principles. As an example, the Forum debated on questions such as whether parliamentary candidates should be obliged to pledge themselves to attempts to reform Parliament (Andrew 1996, 415).

In popular debating societies politics and religious issues were freely discussed. Debates were usually conducted as 'harangues', referring more to declamations rather than to deliberation *pro et contra*. In the latter part of the eighteenth century, popular debating societies spread outside London. They were established, for example, in Manchester, Birmingham, Norwich, Edinburgh and Glasgow. Following the French Revolution the atmosphere in the country was tense, not least of all due to extra-parliamentary movements advocating radical parliamentary reform. John Thelwall (1764–1834), a renowned orator, was considered by the authorities to be one of the most dangerous people in Britain and was accused of treason in 1794. The Tory government at the time introduced before Parliament the Suspension of Habeas Corpus Act,¹ which came into force in May 1794. The state of exception lasted until July 1795. The government also set up parliamentary inquiries into popular movements and societies. It was known that the Whigs had connections with clubs and societies that advocated parliamentary reform. Already in 1784 Fox argued that forming a coalition with extra-parliamentary movements

was necessary for the Whigs to carry on their opposition politics and keep the steady support of the public (Foord 1964, 422).² In short, the Whigs realised the potential of making alliances across a wide political field.

The Seditious Meetings Act, along with the Treason Act (both introduced in 1795), was passed at a time when free discussion in debating societies on political and religious issues was suspect due to the French Revolution. Tighter control was enacted and popular debating societies had problems in getting licenses for their activities, which resulted in their disappearance by the turn of the century (Clark 2000, 120). Thereafter, debating societies continued to operate in a more private capacity, also becoming more exclusive. However, there were some ‘transitional’ societies, such as the Select Society of Edinburgh (Fawcett 1980, 220). As the name suggests, the Select Society was judicious in choosing its members, though its membership was quite large. Established in 1754, it eventually attracted 100 members, of which the majority were lawyers. It folded, however, ten years later. It was succeeded by another famous academic debating society, the Speculative Society of Edinburgh (1764). Its membership was restricted to twenty-five members at a time. In 1780 the number rose to thirty, where it stayed until the early twentieth century.

The Speculative Society was founded by university students ‘for improvement in Literary Composition and Public Speaking’ (The Speculative Society of Edinburgh 1905, 2). Its activities attracted students as well as those with well-established credentials in such fields as law, literature and politics. Its more distinguished members included Lord Lansdowne, who became Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1806, and Henry Brougham, one of the founders of the *Edinburgh Review* and who was to become one of the most influential Whig leaders. The activities of the Speculative were related not so much to parliamentary conventions as to literary and oratorical pursuits, as was common during the eighteenth century. Although topics such as ‘What is the best duration of parliaments?’ were debated, the normal procedure was for a selected member to read a paper, on which the Society then debated.

The title for the oldest student debating society in the United Kingdom is accorded to the College Historical Society of Trinity College in Dublin (cf. Samuels 1923). First established as ‘The Club’, also called the ‘Academy of Belles Lettres’, it has been suggested that the foundation of the Club in 1747 marks the origin of the British debating tradition (e.g. Stewart 1991, 5; Cooke 1898, 273).³ One of its founders was the young Edmund Burke. The aims were, as written down in the first minutes, ‘the improvement of

its members in the more refin'd, elegant, and usefull parts of Litterature' so that they would be better able to engage their 'minds and manners for the functions of Civil Society' (quoted in Samuels 1923, 204). The founders of The Club considered that the benefits of practice included 'enriching our judgement, brightening our wit, and enlarging our knowledge and of being serviceable to others in the same things' (ibid.).

Some of the debate topics at the Club were on current political events, but historical and literary subjects were also introduced. Members were not only required to create orations for delivery but also to engage in debates on assigned topics. Sometimes debates were performed as role play in which historical figures appeared. On at least one occasion The Club 'resolved itself into a mimic Parliament' (Cooke 1898, 282). A bill was introduced in the meeting, and all argumentation for and against was recorded. On some occasions whole orations delivered before the assembly were written down in the minutes.

The Club did not remain active for very long, as it only met 35 times. It was re-established as the 'Historical Club' in 1753. From 1770 onwards it was known as the 'College Historical Society' (Burtchaell 1888, 391), which still exists today.⁴ The Society's primary purposes were 'the cultivation of historical knowledge and the practice of the members in oratory and composition' (quoted in Miller 1997, 133). By 1780 it had approximately 700 members. The Society then resembled more a popular debating society than a private literary society as its meetings could draw some 150 members at a time (Miller 1997, 132).

In 1783 the College Historical Society established a 'mutual membership agreement' with the Speculative Society of Edinburgh. However, the Speculative Society dissociated itself from the College Historical Society in 1806, and relations were not re-established until 1863. This break probably had something to do with the fact that the College Historical Society had become dissociated from Trinity College and, as a result, more open to outsiders.

From 1797 until 1805 the Speculative Society had enjoyed exceptionally lively discussions due to the political situation after the French Revolution, but it retained its exclusivity. In 1799 Francis Horner, a member of the Speculative Society and Member of Parliament between 1806–1817, devoted much of his energy to attending the meetings. He was a law student seeking to improve his style and manner for career advancement in the public field. In his journal Horner wrote how he practised oratory through observing other speakers at the Society and reading speeches

delivered in Parliament (Horner 1843, 78–79). He reported having spoken twice at a debate of the Society, ‘both times without any premeditation’ (ibid., 93). The way to improve his performance was to study the styles and manners of his opponents. For example, he took notes of their arguments and made references to them while speaking.

Horner’s main method was to imitate ‘models of eloquence’, especially such as presented in poetry, ‘to store my imagination with the elegancies of expression’ (Horner 1843, 95–97). The connection between poetics and rhetoric had already been made by classical writers, such as Aristotle, Cicero and Quintilian, and remained influential in English public life until well into the nineteenth century (Bevis 2007/2010, 27).⁵

The idea of founding academic debating societies seems to have travelled down to England due to the movement of students from Scottish universities during the Napoleonic wars. While it was common for young aristocrats to make a Grand Tour as part of their education, the war with France, as it continued into the early nineteenth century, led to education being sought from universities in Scotland, especially Edinburgh, instead of the tour. As an example, it has been recorded that students from Oxford were sent up to Scotland to continue their studies (The Speculative Society of Edinburgh 1905, 16). Since the eighteenth century, especially English medical students were attracted to Scottish universities for their quality of teaching, and while there, they participated in various student debating societies and, after coming back to England, were involved in founding their own (Fawcett 1980, 223).

Compared to popular debating societies, academic associations, such as the Speculative Society and the College Historical Society, were less about entertainment and more aimed at the improvement of oratorical skills for the purposes of career advancement. However, neither type of debating society represented the kind of adoption of parliamentary-style debating as the Union Societies later did. Horner’s depiction of the exercises at the Speculative Society suggests that the training provided was more focused on eloquence and impromptu public speech-making than following the parliamentary procedure and rules. In 1801, when Irish MPs entered Westminster after the abolition of the Dublin Parliament, the publication of parliamentary proceedings increased (Innes 2003, 15). The availability of parliamentary material made it easier for clubs and societies to have knowledge of or imitate Westminster politics. This affected the public speaking culture by introducing the parliamentary-style of rules to debating societies eager to offer training.

THE FOUNDATION OF THE CAMBRIDGE AND OXFORD UNIONS IN THE EARLY 1800s

The Cambridge Union Society was founded in 1815 as three debating societies from separate colleges joined together. Henry Bickersteth⁶ (1783–1851), later known as Lord Langdale, briefly studied medicine at Edinburgh and, after coming back to England, was one of the founders of the Cambridge Union Society. Charles Fox Townshend (1795–1817) has also been named as one of the founders (see Martin 2000, chap. 5). Townshend was previously involved in the founding of the Eton Society, or the ‘Pop’, in 1811, which was later attended by Edward Stanley, John Evelyn Denison⁷ and William Gladstone.

Prior to the foundation of the Union Societies, there had existed several smaller, private student debating societies in the old English universities. As an example, there was a debating club at Oxford founded by George Canning, who later became prime minister (see Fawcett 1980, 227). Also, according to George Pryme (1781–1868), a lecturer of political economy at Cambridge, a club called The Speculative had been established before the Cambridge Union (quoted in Cradock 1953, fn. 3). The name shows that the Speculative Society of Edinburgh had, in one way or another, been a predecessor of the Union Society.

In terms of oratorical training, the old English universities had the disputations, or oral examinations, in classical languages that were a historical part of the academic culture. While at Cambridge these rhetorical declamations became increasingly supplanted by written examinations in the early nineteenth century, at Oxford the examination was still done *viva voce* (Clarke 1945, 36). But in both universities studies still relied heavily upon classical Latin and Greek, and students were required to master selected classical texts in the original language (Miller 1997, 157–158). Cambridge students with the most privileged and prestigious backgrounds, who were lined up for public careers and inspired by the increasing flow of reports from Westminster, were inclined to continue college declamations as practice for public contests (Reid 2013, 633). Outside their official curricula the undergraduates formed clubs and societies, which has been partly explained by the rise of Romanticism that encouraged ‘revolt against the austerities of academic discipline’ (Clarke 1945, 38).

In order to further explain the inspiration to establish student clubs it is useful to remind ourselves that many associations of the period were considered suspicious and had to meet privately. Furthermore, it has been

argued that between the 1780s and 1830s there was a change in political discourse around the concept of ‘public opinion’ (see Steinmetz 1993). When discussing the activities of extra-parliamentary movements, parliamentarians tended to describe them as uncontrollable, whereas previously their language had suggested the opposite. This change was also reflected in the language used by movements and associations (*ibid.*, 93–94).

In the early years of the Cambridge Union the political atmosphere in England was tense. The years following the Napoleonic wars (1793–1815) were hit by a financial depression, which affected the poor in particular and created disorder. Demands for parliamentary reform were also rekindled in many large cities. Debating societies were considered suspect of radical anti-government activities. In 1817 the British government appointed a secret commission to address rumours of revolutionary activities in London. In its report the commission informed the House of Lords that they had identified suspicious meetings and societies that they believed were inciting revolutionary action among workers in the capital (House of Lords, 18 February 1817, 40). It was suspected that radical groups were trying to manipulate the uneducated by taking over society meetings and involving discontented workers in illegal activities. The commission took a particular interest in the ‘Union Clubs’ they saw as advocating for universal suffrage and annual parliaments and, inevitably, ‘a total Subversion of the British Constitution’ (*ibid.*, 41).

As a consequence of the report, the Act of Seditious Meetings, of which one of the objectives was to restrict free association, was passed in Parliament in March 1817. In the political context, the Union Society was prevented from acting as a debating society at Cambridge⁸ and existed only as a reading club from 1817 to 1821. Debates did resume later, however, under the provision that only political subjects before 1800 could be discussed. The rule remained unchallenged until 1830. But the debates of the Cambridge Union were not at all unpolitical.

The so-called Hooper’s declamation contests of late eighteenth-century Trinity College show that Cambridge undergraduates had interest in and trained for political careers already before the Union Societies were established. Reid (2013) has noted a marked change in the way the declamations were presented from the 1780s onwards. At first the speeches were delivered ‘in character’, as if the speaker was an MP from the historical past, but later the students started to speak as themselves in an imaginary House of Commons.

It was not unusual for nineteenth-century political language to refer to past events (e.g. Collini et al. 1983; see also Anderson 1967). Commentaries from former Union members hold that the undergraduates had the tendency to resort to historical subjects to discuss current political topics. In his ceremonial speech on the inauguration of the new Cambridge Union Society building, Edward Herbert, by then the Earl of Powis,⁹ spoke about the debates at the Union of his time. In his view, the speakers put careful effort into the debates by studying the questions:

You must not content yourselves with repeating the well-worn platitudes of the Revolution of 1688, or of the Repeal of the Union; or when you treat the subjects of the day, as for instance, in discussing the comparative merits of a Liberal or of a Conservative Government (cheers and laughter), you must not content yourselves with merely reproducing the articles in the daily newspapers (hear, hear). (Powis: Cambridge Union Society 1866, 5–6)

He confirmed that historical topics discussed in Union debates had political undertones. But he also remarked that the purpose was to study the styles of leading politicians: 'A little practice in debate will enable you to study with effect, and to contrast the ornate, diffuse, didactic rhetoric of Lord Brougham, full of epithet and amplification, with the severe simplicity of Lord Lyndhurst' (Cambridge Union Society 1866, 6).

Lord Powis portrays the debates as a leisurely activity, putting more emphasis on the training of oratorical skills than party politics. This is in direct contrast to Gladstone's assertion put forward in his 1838 essay on parliamentary speaking that held that the consideration of parties marked the 'peculiar character of British debating' (in Reid 1953, 270). But it has been acknowledged that discussion of past events usually arose from political conflicts in the Parliament as well (Thomas 1971, 9).

The use of historical examples was also emphasised in Roman and Renaissance rhetorical manuals. It was named one of the most powerful forms of argument in deliberative rhetoric, and had important consequences to the formation of the pre-revolutionary English political culture (Peltonen 2013, 81). Based on the records of public business meetings, it seems that Union debates, especially in the 1830s and 1840s, often made references to historical events, for example, to the Glorious Revolution or to the dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII.¹⁰

The Unions' deliberations were seen to have possessed a wider, educational purpose. They offered students something that was lacking in the university curricula and trained them for public careers. In terms of university education, the civic purpose of rhetorical declamation was gradually lost during the eighteenth century and was part of the decline of the popularity of neo-classical rhetoric since the late seventeenth century (cf. Skinner 2002, 122). Despite the fact that classics were still learned in the early nineteenth-century universities, the studies did not include substantial ways to practise disputation even though it was considered useful by those aspiring to a public career. The Union Societies enabled students not only to practise their debating skills, but also to get acquainted and train in political topics they otherwise might miss.

Union debates included many themes that were discussed by the public at large and found in newspapers but were lacking in university teaching. At Cambridge, mathematics was emphasised in the curriculum. In the early nineteenth century, the universities introduced the honours system. Mathematics degrees were the only degrees offered by Cambridge until the 1850s, the classics being regarded only as of secondary importance. At Oxford, students were expected to prepare for an honours degree by learning ancient texts in the original language. Examinations in classics became available in Cambridge in 1824.¹¹

The Oxford Union Debating Society was established in 1823. But two years later the society was dissolved and renamed. The disruption was not directly due to restrictions by the authorities, as had been the case at Cambridge. Hollis (1965) has interpreted the incident as a political manoeuvre of the president of the Union, Wrangham of Brasenose College.¹² President Wrangham proposed a motion to dissolve the old society. After a vote the motion was carried and the 'Oxford Union Society' was instantly founded. With the re-establishment of the society, the rules could also be renewed. It was now decided that any decision of the society would only require the support of a simple majority, not two-thirds, as had been the case. Disputes between members had prompted Wrangham's motion. With the majority rule in place, the president was now able to pass further rules to maintain order (Hollis 1965, 28). This description of the establishment of the Oxford Union shows already the significance of procedure and its skilful use compared to other academic debating societies.

The Union Societies gradually became models for other academic debating societies in England. John Stuart Mill, for instance, founded

the London Debating Society in 1825 on the model of the Speculative Society, but was also inspired by the activities of the Cambridge Union Society (Mill 1873/1955, 106), which he considered an impressive arena for political debate where what was 'then thought extreme opinions, in politics [...] were weekly asserted, face to face with their opposites, before audiences consisting of the elite of the Cambridge youth' (ibid., 76–77).

The Scottish academic debating societies also remained influential but they, too, started to take their example from Union Societies. At the University of St Andrews a debating society was formed in 1794 called the 'Literary Society', which was later renamed the St Andrews Union Debating Society. Although no connection to the Oxford and Cambridge Unions is evident based on their proceedings, it seems probable that they inspired the society to change its name. That is indirectly confirmed by the fact that, in the official history, the St Andrews Society places itself in the tradition of 'union debating societies' starting from Cambridge and Oxford (see Stewart 1991, 5). However, the St Andrews Society had some peculiar differences regarding its activities compared to the Unions. For instance, in its rules of 1832, membership was restricted to twenty-five, similar to the limitation used at the Speculative Society. Until 1841, prospective members were required to have attended classes of logic or moral philosophy to be eligible for the society (ibid., 7). Membership was, therefore, possible only for a certain group of students. By the end of nineteenth century, however, membership was gradually opened to all students of the arts and sciences. Another feature specific to the society was that it did not elect a president for the first 116 years of its existence (ibid.). Instead, any member of the society could serve as chair in a meeting.

Along with Cambridge, Oxford and St Andrews, other Union Societies also appeared. Durham Union Society organised an intervarsity debate to celebrate its jubilee on 16 March 1912. Among delegates from the Cambridge and Oxford Unions as well as College Historical Society of Dublin there was a group of speakers joining the debate from the Edinburgh University Union Society (see *Durham University Journal* 1912). Durham Union Society's forerunner, Durham University Debating Society, was established as early as 1835. The University of Durham had been established only a few years earlier, in 1832, based on just one college.¹³

Durham University Debating Society only existed for a short period of time and was financially aided by the university. The surviving records of the society cover the period between 1835 and 1839. There does not seem to be any other surviving records for meetings earlier than 1885.

However, the university journal mentions a Durham University Union Society that was established in 1842. The records of the Oxford Union also suggest that a Durham Union Society was operating in 1856. Additionally the president of Durham Union attended the jubilee celebration of the Oxford Union Society in 1873. The Durham Union had been revived as ‘Durham University Union’ a year earlier, when three debating societies merged together (*Durham University Journal* 1912, 204).

Based on the few extant records of their meetings, the Durham Union seems to have followed the parliamentary procedure of proposing motions from very early on. In the minute-book entry of 28 October 1835, the society debated on George Hills’s proposal ‘That the present state of Cathedral Establishments is of decided advantage to the country’ (*Durham University Debating Society minute book* 1835). From the formulation it appears that Durham had adopted the parliamentary way of putting motions. It seems likely that the Society kept in contact with the Oxford Union at the time, although there is no factual evidence of this in the records.

In the University College London, established in 1826, students founded literary and debating societies that did not seem to follow the example of the Unions. The University College London Debating Society was formed in 1828, first as the ‘Literary and Philosophical Society’. Its debates did not follow parliamentary procedure. The minutes of the society show that most of their debate topics were delivered in the form of ordinary questions: ‘Does a monarchical form of government tend more than a republican to the prosperity of the people?’ (UCL Debating Society, 16 December 1858). The proceedings do not show on which side the speakers were while delivering their speeches. This practice is also different from the Unions that always carefully recorded who spoke for and against an issue. However, the Society did adopt parliamentary procedure in other respects. Since 1858, its members only used the parliamentary form (e.g. ‘That no gentleman shall hold the office of president or vice president for more than two consecutive sessions’) when the Society discussed issues related to its organisation or rules (so-called private business).

The main difference between debating on ordinary questions and in conducting the debates in the parliamentary form has to do with the cultural and institutional connection. So-called ordinary questions could be presented in any place or circumstance, whereas the parliamentary form

of presenting motions traces debating practices to a political institution that was at the core of British national politics in the nineteenth century. As Redlich (1908, vol. 2, 215) put it, 'motion and resolution are the two fundamental forms of parliamentary deliberation'. The Unions were becoming part of a parliamentary culture of debate as they began adopting the procedure and practices of debate in the House of Commons.

UNION DEBATES AND THEIR REGULATION

In both Union Societies, parliamentary procedure was directly or indirectly referred to as an authoritative source of conduct. For instance, at Oxford Union one of the members sought precedent in a House of Commons practice (OUS minute book vol. 8, 4 February 1858). Also, in 1844, a member of the Cambridge Union Society insisted that the president should 'regulate his conduct as nearly as possible by the precedents of the "House of Commons"' (CUS minute book vol. 13, 26 February 1844). But already in 1839 the Cambridge Union Society, in a special committee formed to recommend amendments to its rules, mentioned parliamentary procedure. In the committee's report, there was a suggestion that the president of the society, while performing the functions of a chairman in a debate, 'should keep to the behavior [*sic*] of the House of Commons' (CUS minute book vol. 10, 130–132).

The term 'house' was adopted to denote meetings with legitimate powers to make resolutions. From 1845 onwards 'house' was mentioned in the Cambridge Union laws in a connection with the parliamentary formulation 'a motion put to the house' (see CUS laws 1845 Lent and Easter, 9). At Oxford Union the minute books could be referred to as 'Journals of the House' (OUS rules 1837, 33). In the rules of the Union, questions under debate were to be called 'motions' in 1837: 'The question shall be put in form of a motion; when it shall be competent for any Member to move an amendment' (OUS rules 1837, 6). They became also treated in the parliamentary manner. As was customary in the House of Commons, the issue proposed for debate, once accepted for deliberation, was considered thenceforth the possession of the house. Once the motion has been moved it ceases to belong to its proposer, and becomes the possession of the house instead (Redlich 1908, vol. 2, 220). Members of the House of Commons do, however, have the liberty to withdraw motions they have proposed by asking leave of the House. Permission is granted only if the

House is unanimous (Hansard 1857, 32). A similar rule was applied in the Oxford Union:

No Member shall alter or withdraw any Motion or Amendment which he shall have brought forward, or placed on the boards, without permission of the President; nor (if such Motion or Amendment have been seconded) without the consent of the seconder. (OUS rules 1858, 36)

At Cambridge putting motions was not begun until 1842, and the rule that forbade motions that had been put for debate to be withdrawn ‘without leave of the House’ was added to its laws in 1853.

At first the Union Societies only met for weekly debates for the academic term and had not yet institutionalised their activities at the universities, which was partly due to the restrictions on membership. At first, Unions only admitted new members through secret elections, more specifically, by ballot. The candidates had a chance to become elected if they already knew some of the members. At Cambridge, however, this co-optation ended in 1834. From then on, any student or alumnus of Cambridge University was entitled to become a member of the Union Society by payment of a simple membership fee. This meant that the Cambridge Union was not strictly a private club anymore; the election of members was not limited to a small circle of students, but was now open to a larger group of academics. Anyone within the university who wished to join the society only had to state his intention to the treasurer (CUS laws 1834, 3).¹⁴ In Oxford Union the restrictions remained tighter at least until the 1860s. New members were co-opted and, before becoming eligible for membership, a candidate had to have resided at the university for at least one term (OUS rules 1839, 13). All the members of the society were responsible for the admission of new members, so the elections were carried out by balloting, and it was the first business transacted at the society’s meetings (OUS rules 1839, 14).¹⁵

The elected members were entitled not just to take part in the debates, but to use the libraries and other facilities, such as the reading and writing rooms provided by both Union Societies. The libraries included books, magazines and newspapers representing a variety of interests. The selection of the articles ordered for the library was itself a matter of debate. For a period, the Cambridge Union’s private business meetings were dominated by debates on which journals or magazines should be admitted to its library and which should be banned. In the 1840s and 1850s the ordering

of magazines with overtly provocative theological content, in particular, was frequently debated. This was probably due to the fact that a Library Committee existed for the Cambridge Union prior to the constitution of the standing committee (established in 1841) and had considerable powers. At Oxford, the library questions were rather limited to debates on the authority of the librarian to make recommendations what books would be included in the collections. Sometimes this meant that the society had to cancel its public business meetings because of the great amount of private business to discuss. In Cambridge Union the situation was different: sometimes the society had to cancel its private business meetings because it did not have any issues to discuss.

Along with regular members (also referred to as 'contributing members') there were so-called honorary members¹⁶ in both Union Societies. At Cambridge they were not required to pay for membership, although they were subject to fines were they to break any rules (CUS laws 1824, 13). Usually this meant that, while honorary members were allowed to take part in debates, they had to follow the rules and pay the fine if they failed to do so. In the event that any regular member neglected to pay for membership, he was subjected to a fine and could not become elected to any office or vote in elections (CUS laws 1850, 2, 14). If the member in question did not pay his arrears by the end of the term he was 'posted'¹⁷ and expelled. However, he could be readmitted as a member without need to be renominated by paying the fine (*ibid.*, 2). Permanent expulsion of a member was also possible, not just by the president of the society,¹⁸ but also through motion of any other member. However, the motion had to be concurred by a majority of three-fourths of the members present (CUS laws 1827, 5). At Cambridge a law was adopted in 1830 that stated a member could also be expelled by a simple majority if he had personally insulted the president (CUS laws 1830).

Unlike Cambridge, in the Oxford Union rules the non-payment of membership fees or fines were not mentioned as grounds for barring members from voting or from eligibility for office. In the case of newly elected members, the fine for such omissions had to be paid by the next meeting, failing which the member's name would be removed from the society's list by the president (OUS rules 1851, 19). Existing members had to pay their membership fee for the term by the second meeting; otherwise, they were subjected to fines which increased daily. Once the amount of fines reached a certain level, the treasurer posted the offender within three days and, if the amount was still not paid within the space of the next two meetings,

the president announced ‘to the House that he has struck off such member’s name from the list of the Society’ (ibid., 20). The expelled member had to pay his debts before he could be re-elected. In 1853 the rule was amended and it stood that if a member was re-elected he was required to pay the entrance fee again (OUS rules 1853, 17).

The honorary members of the Oxford Union Society were also exempted from membership fees as long as they did not reside in Oxford. By paying a one-time payment, a contributing member was allowed to become an honorary member after leaving the society (OUS rules 1839, 16). Cambridge Union Society eventually allowed anyone to become an honorary member by a simple payment without even having been a member in the first place. The rate was different for undergraduates and others (CUS laws 1848 October, 6). This rule indicates that Cambridge Union had already gained a reputation outside the university and was making use of it by allowing outsiders to become members for a fee.

Oxford Union permitted university graduates (who were also given the chance to attend its debates) to become honorary members by a single payment. Before they could be considered honorary members, however, graduates were subject to election by ballot in the same manner as new members (OUS rules 1839, 15). In 1853 the rule changed so that any member who had paid for at least nine membership subscriptions was entitled to become an honorary member without going through the election process. Furthermore, the appointed trustees of the Society were given the power to nominate any graduate of Oxford University as an honorary member (OUS rules 1853, 14).

All in all, it seems that the Oxford Union kept more restrictions of membership than Cambridge. However, both Unions considered the members of its sister society eligible to become honorary members. At Cambridge honorary membership was also extended to all the members of the College Historical Society of Dublin (referred to as the Dublin Literary and Historical Society in the Union’s laws). At Oxford, honorary membership could be granted to members of Durham Union Society from 1856 onwards. Members of London Union Society only had the right to participate in the debates if resident in the city of Oxford (OUS rules 1851, 18). They could also take part in Cambridge Union Society debates after 1853, but were not entitled to use other facilities unless they paid the membership subscription (CUS laws 1853, 7).

The Oxford and Cambridge Union Societies kept in close contact over the years. In 1825 Oxford granted all Cambridge Union members

honorary membership (Skipper 1878, 12). At some point, some of the rules and regulations of the Oxford society distinctly resembled those of Cambridge. For example, the rules for 1839 gave the president of Oxford Union the role of 'sole interpreter of the laws' (OUS rules 1839, 27). Rules were distinctly referred to as 'laws' in the Cambridge Union. The similar formulation adopted in Oxford was not a coincidence, as one Cambridge Union minute books explicitly mentions that the secretaries of both societies had sent copies of their proceedings for that year (CUS minute book vol. 10, 116). However, the term 'rules' was soon afterwards adopted again at Oxford (see OUS rules 1843).

The use of parliamentary-style motions first began in Oxford Union where it was common practice since 1824. At Cambridge, it was first proposed on 16 May 1836 that the Union Society should put questions of debate in the form of resolutions. The proposal was renewed in December the same year, but the form of making motions was adopted as late as May 1842 (cf. CUS minute book vol. 12, 17 May 1842). The transfer shows that parliamentary procedure became the main reference point in the practice of debate in the Unions, although it took more time to accomplish in Cambridge.

A debate begins after a motion has been put to the House in the form of a question by the Speaker of the House (Hansard 1857, 31). A similar procedure was used at Union Societies. On 6 May 1852, Göschen¹⁹ of Oriel College proposed an amendment that the president of the Oxford Union should not have the power of 'closing the debate either in public or private business, at his discretion' (OUS minute book vol. VII, 6 May 1852). Göschen proposed that the phrase 'closing the debate' should be stricken and replaced 'putting the Question'. The amendment was voted on and passed. In this way Göschen's amendment ensured that the Union rules would follow the parliamentary model: 'In putting any [...] Question, no argument or opinion is to be offered' (Hansard 1857, 38). A parliamentary question is formulated in a way that expresses a decision even before the deliberation, for example, 'That the House do now adjourn' (Campion 1929/1958, 20). Debate is then conducted for and against the motion. Unlike in some other parliamentary cultures, no counter-motion is then needed or even possible.²⁰ In the course of the debate members may propose additional or substitutive motions, also known as riders or amendments. These do not require any prior notice, and thus, may be moved at any time.

In the House of Commons a member who has given notice of a motion is considered the opener of the debate, although in some cases the member is allowed to use a proxy (Redlich 1908, vol. 2, 217). The reason for providing notices relates to setting the agenda of the House. By receiving notice of what motions will be proposed and in what order, the House is adequately informed of upcoming business beforehand. Related to this, the Union Societies also applied the rule of giving notice.²¹

Union members did not have the right to speak twice during a debate (CUS laws 1824, 8; OUS laws 1837, 7), except in the case of private business meetings and ‘committees of the whole house’. The rule concerning speech in committees was also adopted from parliamentary procedure:

It is a rule strictly observed in both houses, that no member shall speak twice to the same question, except, 1st, to explain some part of his speech which has been misunderstood; 2dly, in certain cases, to reply at the end of a debate; and, 3dly, in committee. (May 1844, 195)

Debates in committees are governed by slightly different rules than in plenary sessions. In the nineteenth century, parliamentary bills that reached committee stage were usually discussed in the form of the committee of the whole house. At Cambridge, Union meetings called to deal with appeals against the president’s decisions were named ‘committees of the whole house’ in 1849 (CUS laws 1849, 8). However, private business meetings of both Union Societies already resembled a committee of the whole house in that members could speak multiple times. A difference was, of course, that the private business meetings were not part of any stage in a legislative process, other than being occasions for the revision of Union rules.

Polls were a peculiar characteristic of the Union Societies’ private business meetings.²² In the Cambridge Union any member was allowed to request of the president that a poll be taken concerning any motion presented in a private business meeting. This had been written into the laws at Cambridge since 1848. A rule concerning polls was also in force at Oxford from 1856 onward. The use of the polls suggested that divisions²³ were not considered as final but, in principle, could be contested. They, in effect, delay the final vote and give the chance for a minority to persuade others to vote in their favour. Such polls did not take place in the House of Commons. But parliaments usually have multiple readings of bill proposals. For Union debates, polls gave the opportunity to continue the handling of an issue that a majority had already voted on.

The Union Societies allowed the opener or proposer of a motion to make a final reply at the end of debate, before the division. Similarly to the practices of the British Parliament, no house decision on the basis of a question could become a resolution without a vote. The division of votes determines which side of the question enjoys the majority. In some instances the size of the majority is of crucial importance, for example, when a rule applies requiring a motion to receive a two-thirds majority to be carried. If the proponents of a motion expect that it will lose a division, they can have recourse to this procedure in order to ensure attendance of those members who will support them.

The rules of the Union Societies show that they were adjusted to the needs and circumstances of the times. The minute books show that the proceedings of public business meetings became separated from the private ones in Cambridge in 1848. In the rules of the Oxford Union the separation of two types of meetings was shown in its rules in 1856. This division of functions reflected the institutionalisation of the Unions and the gradual opening up of their public meetings to a wider audience. In 1858 Oxford Union permitted the publication of speeches delivered in its public meetings. At Cambridge the costs of renovation of the Society's rooms made it necessary to attract more paying members in the 1840s. Charles Bristed, a contemporary Union member, recalls having been part of a scheme to 'keep up an interest in the debates' by inviting 'men of reputation' to apply for Cambridge Union offices (Bristed 1851/1873, 169). The efforts to legitimise their debating activities is one of the reasons why the Unions eventually adopted parliamentary procedure and became well known as training grounds for statesmen.

TRAINING OF DEBATERS IN THE UNION SOCIETIES

As the laws of the Cambridge Union were rewritten in 1845, the first priority of the Society was named as 'the promotion of debate' (see CUS laws 1845). By that time both Unions had acquired many parliamentary characteristics. The usefulness of the training for their members' later political careers was noted in later reports. It was, for example, declared that 'nearly a fifth of the present House of Commons, and a very considerable number of the House of Lords, have aired their early efforts in the great debating hall [of the Oxford Union]' (Harris-Burland 1894, 502). This was, indeed, a significant number. In 1878 sixty former Cambridge Union

members were reported to be included in the House of Commons (see Skipper 1878, 6).

The most interesting commentators, however, are former members who had entered Parliament, as their testimonies can shed light on our understanding of the extent to which the Union debates affected the learning of political activity. For example, in 1866, while Lord Powis opened the new Union building's inaugural proceedings at Cambridge, he presented his view of the society's contribution to the nation. According to him, practising debating was important due to all the 'representative assemblies of every sort and size' that guided decision-making on all levels, from Home Office to the Poor-Law Board:

The initiative is given to the rate-payers, the parish vestries, the town councils, the improvement commissioners, the magistrates assembled in quarter sessions, and in our great commercial enterprises to the directors and the shareholders themselves. Now these are bodies whom, to influence, you must persuade by discussion. (Powis: Cambridge Union Society 1866, 4)

In other words, debating societies such as Cambridge Union provided its members an invaluable advantage of training to meet the current requirements of national politics.

In one of his letters to his sister, young Lord Houghton wrote in 1828 that he had been called 'the most *Parliamentary* speaker in the [Cambridge] Union' (Reid 1891, 57; emphasis in the original text). His achievements were communicated to young Gladstone by their mutual friend Arthur Hallam who himself gave his 'maiden speech against the decapitation of Charles' in the Union in 1829. Houghton opposed him by taking 'the question on simple constitutional principles', although considered himself having been 'too flashy' (*ibid.*, 62). This kind of training clearly took the classical form of debate for and against.

It is well recorded that Gladstone participated in Oxford Union debates during his years as an undergraduate. Although he had already participated in debating societies at Eton, the Union turned out to be a turning point in his career in giving him a concrete opportunity to become an MP. Roundell Palmer, a contemporary Union member and president of Easter term 1832, described Gladstone as a frequent speaker since the beginning of 1830 when he attained the presidency, being 'always on the Tory side, but attached to the memory of Canning, and opposed to the

Duke of Wellington and his government' (Palmer 1896, 129). In 1831 Gladstone famously spoke against the Reform Act in a Union debate that lasted for three nights. He managed to receive the attention of a Tory magnate, the Duke of Newcastle, who decided to offer him a chance to stand for Newark and become elected in the House of Commons (Russell 1910, 28).

John Cornish,²⁴ later known as Sir John Mowbray, attended his first Oxford Union debate even before he was eligible to apply for membership. His Union experiences can be found in a series of articles published in *Blackwood's Magazine* before being assembled together as a biography, *Seventy Years at Westminster* (1900), edited by his daughter after his death. In 1834 he wrote in a letter to his mother that he had presented his 'motion' in the previous Union meeting 'and the world says I am a promising speaker' (Mowbray 1900, 40). In 1873 Mowbray spoke on the Union's fiftieth anniversary describing it as a training arena of the 'combative element'.

Some of the later commentaries show that the training became more and more focused on obtaining debating skills for the needs of a political career. The Cambridge Union had survived from its financial difficulties and grown in membership by the time William Vernon Harcourt²⁵ was elected president in 1849. Harcourt has been characterised as having been in 'the front rank of the young debaters of that time' (Skipper 1878, 14). Almost immediately after having entered the House of Commons he impressed his contemporaries by his debating skills (McCarthy 1903, 262; Raymond 1921, 146). He was less declamatory in his style and, as a debater, was characterised in combative terms, as 'a hard hitter' whose blows were fair and delivered in good humour, 'even in his severest attacks on his Parliamentary opponents' (McCarthy 1903, 263). After he became elected, Harcourt's adversarial style became noticed in the Liberal party. He was given a ministerial position in Gladstone's second government. After Gladstone's retirement from party leadership in 1874, Harcourt became the Liberal Party leader.

In the early 1850s George Göschen also received fame for his eloquence at Oxford Union. In a letter to his father he writes of his early successes as a Union debater:

I attempted no flight of eloquence, or rhapsodical peroration, but kept to my argument hardly and pointedly on purpose, but creating great amusement by smashing an adversary or so. [...] As I now speak with very little

preparation, it is capital practice, without being a tie upon my time. [...] I am sure I have greatly improved my whole style by these rhetorical exercises. (in Elliot 1911, 29–30)

Göschel describes the delivery of his ‘debating speech’ as having to keep to the subject matter with political purpose and aiming at victory. His account corresponds with the parliamentary principle of speaking in accordance with the proposed motion. It shows that, by this time, the Union provided its members useful knowledge on procedure and rules of debate.

Herbert Henry Asquith’s ‘youthful combats’ in Oxford Union took place between 1870 and 1871. In his biography on Asquith, Harold Spender²⁶ noted that the Union debates provided Asquith a ‘training ground’ that best suited his talents. According to him, however, he was not the only experienced parliamentarian to have declared ‘that the Oxford Union Society was to them a more difficult place of debate than the House of Commons’ where every speaker was challenged to such an extent that ‘[t]hose who survive such an ordeal by fire have little to fear in after life from the ribaldry of mobs or the insolence of elected persons’ (Spender 1915, 27–28). As the accounts of Union debates show, they were important debating arenas that provided their members a chance to practise their talents that became useful in the parliamentary setting. They also tell us that political activity practised became more and more recognised in terms of debate and the following of procedure. As debating societies, the Unions were special in the sense that they were the first ones to highlight and put into practice the debating character of parliamentary activity. And this was confirmed by those former members who participated in the parliamentary culture of debate.

NOTES

1. In 1679 Parliament had passed the Habeas Corpus Act, according to which any person charged of a crime had the right for appeal in a court of law. But in the case of public unrest, Parliament had the right to suspend the Act, and anyone on criminal charges could be sentenced without trial.
2. Significantly, the idea of political opposition in eighteenth-century Britain was connected with the notion of party activity. In writings of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the notion of ‘party’ was frequently synonymous with ‘faction’, and political

opposition was considered tantamount to treason (Ball 1989, 167). Opposition in Parliament was largely considered 'disloyal' towards the government and the state (cf. Skinner 1974). Foord (1964, 10–11) has argued that the concept of 'opposition' was only applied in British parliamentary politics in the modern sense after 1830. By 'modern' parliamentary opposition Foord means the way the opposition became a generally accepted part of the sovereignty of the British Parliament. It was a crucial step towards the idea of parliamentary government, and an idea the Whigs capitalised on after the passage of the 1832 Reform Act.

3. However, that argument does ignore the fact that earlier debating societies were operating in London at approximately the same time. For example, it has been suggested that political topics have been debated in clubs since the 1650s (Timbs 1872/1899, 4). But, certainly, The Club is the oldest collegial debating society in the United Kingdom whose records still remain (Burtchaell 1888, 391).
4. The College Historical Society was expelled from Trinity College after 'a dispute with the Board' in 1794 (Burtchaell 1888, 391). It was readmitted in 1813, but dissolved in 1815, after which it was refounded in 1843 (Samuels 1923, 205).
5. I will discuss the concept of eloquence in connection with parliamentary rhetoric in section 'Rhetoric and Parliamentary Eloquence' in Chapter 3.
6. Bickersteth is named as one of the founders of the Cambridge Union Society. He also participated in the procedure reform debates in Parliament in the 1830s; see section 'Revision of Debating Procedures from 1837 to 1861' in Chapter 3.
7. Both Stanley and Denison were involved in the procedural reform debates discussed in the section 'Revision of Debating Procedures from 1837 to 1861' in Chapter 3.
8. The university authorities took action most probably as a precautionary measure because the Union Society had been reported lately to have been discussing the bill of Seditious Meetings and issues surrounding it with president William Whewell, whose father was a carpenter (Martin 2000, chap. 5). Whewell (1794–1866), however, later became an esteemed scholar at the University of Cambridge.

9. Edward Herbert (1818–1891) was educated at Eton and St John’s College, Cambridge, where he graduated with an MA in 1840. He was elected to the House of Commons in 1843 and created peer in 1848 when he entered the House of Lords.
10. The topics were potentially as political as any other theme, which I will discuss in Chapter 4 in more detail.
11. It perhaps should be added that in the first half of the nineteenth century university teaching of classics was reportedly not up to the same standards as in public schools (Clarke 1959, 103). The university education relied mostly on tutoring which was not at the same level in all colleges. The colleges were financially and administratively independent. Obviously, it also meant that some colleges were better provided for than others.
12. Digby Cayley Wrangham (1805–1863) was educated at Ripon and admitted at Brasenose College in 1822. Lord Dudley, Canning ministry’s foreign secretary, offered him a junior clerkship in the foreign office in 1827. Wrangham served as his private secretary and, after a change in government, remained as the private secretary of Lord Aberdeen. He was elected a Tory member for Sudbury in 1831. Wrangham also participated in the formation of the Carlton Club in 1831–1832.
13. Previously there existed a college at Durham closely connected with Oxford University. It had been established by a community of scholars at Durham Cathedral in the Middle Ages. The religious clerics and scholars continued to be educated at Oxford until the early nineteenth century. They provided for academic education and local administration in the Durham area.
14. However, the matter of membership restrictions was raised again in 1846, following which member candidates had to be proposed by current members (CUS laws 1846, 1). In 1847, the Cambridge Union Society again reopened the matter of elections by ballot (see the discussion in Chapter 5).
15. Later on the rule was amended so that new members were elected only before public business meetings, whereas no such elections were held during private business meetings (see OUS rules 1863).
16. The position of honorary member was a title, not to be confounded with the expression ‘honourable member’. The latter formulation obviously has a parliamentary reference, as Members of Parliament traditionally address each other as ‘honourable members’. The

- expression was, however, also used in the Union Societies to denote a fellow member taking part in the debates.
17. The term refers to the act of posting the offence and the name of the offender in a public place.
 18. In both Union Societies the president had the right to expel a member who continuously disrupted the debates.
 19. George Joachim Göschen (1831–1907) was elected a Liberal MP for the City of London in 1863. He was educated at Rugby School and admitted at Oriel College in 1850. During his political career he served in Gladstone's first government (1868–1871). In the early 1850s he was active in the Oxford Union: he was a member of the standing committee from Easter term 1851 to Lent term 1853, during which time he served three terms as treasurer and one term as secretary. He was elected president for Michaelmas term in 1853.
 20. In German Bundestag and Swedish Riksdag, for example, the practice is that a motion is challenged by a counter-motion.
 21. The question of giving notice at Union debates is further dealt with in Chapter 4.
 22. A poll could be called after the final vote on a motion. It was used as a way to test the majority in any decision of the house.
 23. A division refers to the act of voting where the votes are 'divided' for and against a motion. The term 'division' derives from the parliamentary practice of physically moving to different parts of building to perform the vote. Usually the vote on motions was made *viva voce*, but in the case that at least two members challenged the vote, the Speaker had to agree to a 'division'. After strangers were asked to withdraw, members who had been present when the question was put were asked to move to either of the division lobbies, which were located adjacent to the House of Commons' chamber. The Speaker gave directions regarding which side was for the 'Ayes' and which the 'Noes' (Redlich 1908, vol. 2, 233–235). In the Union Societies, 'division' was adopted as a term to denote voting by any method.
 24. Sir John Robert Mowbray (1815–1899), also known as John Cornish until 1847, was educated at Westminster School and Christ Church, Oxford. He was a long-serving MP, becoming first elected to the House of Commons in 1853 for Durham, and then representing Oxford University from 1868 until his death in 1899.

25. Sir William Vernon Harcourt (1827–1904) entered Parliament as a Liberal member for the borough of Oxford in 1868. He was appointed the first Whewell Professor of International Law at Cambridge University in 1869. In the late 1880s and the 1890s he served in the Gladstone government, serving as Home Secretary 1880–1885 and Chancellor of the Exchequer 1892–1895.
26. Harold Spender (1864–1926) was a Liberal party MP, author and journalist.

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Procedure and Debate in the British Parliamentary Culture

In 1832 the Parliament passed the Great Reform Act, which was more or less a political compromise. It did not solve the corruption of the electoral system or remain the only reform of the century, unlike many leading Whig politicians had hoped. However, it had unexpected consequences in terms of the constitutional setting. In 1867 Bagehot (1867/2001, 48–49) described the House of Commons as a ‘true sovereign’ that governed the country in the form of a public meeting. This aspect was shown in the practices of parliamentary politics, as the constitutional practice of ‘parliamentary government’ became central. In practice it meant that the role of debate became more important, as the significance of the role of the House of Commons grew.

In this chapter I first explain the changes in the constitutional and political setting as well as the series of procedural reforms that were undertaken in the House of Commons at the time when the Union Societies were formed and began the adoption of parliamentary procedure in their own debating practices. The shift of constitutional arrangement from the balance of powers to the parliamentary government was done by the mid-century. The new Whig interpretation of the constitution involved a new role for political parties. They were seen as instruments holding back the power of the monarch and the outside demagoguery of the non-educated populace. The ‘parliamentary government’ was connected with an educational aim: the Parliament’s role was to guide and form public opinion

on issues of national importance. Publicity of the debates in the House of Commons was seen as a tool for the purpose. The particular emphasis on debate put the pressure on parliamentary procedure. Attempts to revise the procedure were prompted by the lack of efficiency in legislation. The causes of delays in the legislation were not just due to the growing amount of business in the House of Commons but also the political uses of procedure. Individual members of Parliament still had a lot of ways to speak and use the floor of the Commons for their own political purposes.

The public image of the House of Commons did not benefit from association to debating societies. Although debating societies were spoken in rather derogative terms in the House of Commons, a closer assessment of the role they played in the wider parliamentary culture shows their significance. The increasing publicity, the professionalisation of the press and parliamentary journalism contributed to the transfer of ideas between Parliament and the Unions. I will also discuss how rhetoric and parliamentary eloquence were portrayed in the nineteenth-century literature on parliamentary speaking. The treatises and other writings show that the way parliamentary rhetoric was written about was affected by the constitutional changes as well.

CONSTITUTIONAL AND PROCEDURAL CHANGES IN WESTMINSTER AFTER 1832

The period after the 1832 Reform Act marked the beginning of procedural revisions in the British Parliament (see e.g. Cox 1987; Kelso 2009). They had an enormous impact on Westminster political culture while affecting the way politics became conducted and legitimised. I will here discuss the more general changes in the Commons' agenda of the period, not aiming at an overview of British political history as such, and the need to revise the modes of regulating debate by considering aspects that are relevant from the point of view of the Union Societies.

Constitutional and procedure changes of post-1832 Westminster marked a simultaneous shift in the debating culture. The constitutional idea of parliamentary government was dominant during the same period as parliamentary debate was featuring prominently in British political culture. Particularly between the 1832 and 1867 parliamentary reforms, the mode of acting politically was through 'government by discussion' (cf. Bagehot 1872). As a concept parliamentary government was adopted in 1835. However, the term 'parliamentary government' had appeared already in 1832 and has been attributed to J. J. Park, Professor of English

Law and Jurisprudence at King's College, London (e.g. Hawkins 1989, 641). Park's lectures on constitutional theory and practice were published as *The Dogmas of the Constitution* (1832). His main argument was that the practice of the British constitution does not correspond to the prevailing theories. In fact, Park maintains that, for the previous 150 years, there had been two 'concurrent, but essentially different' constitutions at work (Park 1832, 7). In his view, the constitution actually represented the state of affairs of the time it was written, and had long since become outmoded with the current situation. He directs his criticism against the 'balance of powers' theory.¹ The theory had in particular been endorsed by William Blackstone in his influential *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (1765–1769). Park considers Blackstone's constitutional theory as having no relation to what was happening in day-to-day practice (Park 1832, 40–41). He defines 'parliamentary government' as a constitutional practice that, though having been in use for a long time, had not yet been recognised in theory.

The concept of 'parliamentary government' dominated constitutional discussion by the 1850s. In his pamphlet *Parliamentary Government* (1858) Earl Grey formulated it as a way for the Crown to exercise its powers through Ministers

who are held responsible for the manner in which they are used, who are expected to be members of the two Houses of Parliament, the proceedings of which they must be able generally to guide, and who are considered entitled to hold their offices only while they possess the confidence of Parliament, and more especially of the House of Commons. (Grey 1858/1864, 4)

According to this interpretation of the constitution, the powers of the Crown were executed by ministers who were held responsible for their actions to the House of Commons. Grey was also arguing that parliamentary government had by now replaced the Blackstonean constitution, having taken place 'by gradual development of principles' (Grey 1858/1864, 8).

Furthermore, Grey puts forward a definition of parliamentary ministry in which ministers are expected to be members of one of the houses of Parliament.² However, this principle seems never to have been explicitly asserted (Redlich 1908, vol. 2, 94). Grey's arguments were based on conventions that had by now become the political custom. The direct link created between the government and the Parliament legitimised cabinet politics and made it increasingly difficult for the Crown to exercise its

prerogative power (e.g. to appoint a government without the acceptance of the majority of the House of Commons). It has been suggested that the Crown's influence in parliamentary business was already declining well before 1832 (Foord 1947, 486–488). However, it has also been pointed out that as late as November 1834 a British monarch was allowed to use royal prerogative to remove a government that enjoyed the confidence of the House of Commons majority (Hawkins 2007, 152). The constitutionality of the dissolution remained a 'disputable question' (Dicey 1885/1915, 432).

While Grey's interpretation of 'parliamentary government' became dominant, not all parliamentarians at the time endorsed the Whig explanation of the constitutional arrangement. Tory administrations prior to 1830 favoured a doctrine that emphasised order and independent executive power (Hawkins 1989, 647). Also, while Tory opposition leader from 1835 until 1841, Peel did not fully act according to the tenets of parliamentary government. Even though Peel supported the royal prerogative to form ministries, he was aware of the benefits of forming alliances inside Parliament as well. Despite almost certain victory for the Conservatives in the upcoming elections, Peel recognised that he had to comply with the principle of parliamentary government in order to stay in power. He decided to change his view publicly for the purpose of getting the support of the Whigs for his future government. He wrote an electoral programme entitled the Tamworth Manifesto after the name of his own constituency. The manifesto was designed to pre-empt any moderate Whig assertions about the Tories being obstacles to progress (Hawkins 2007, 159). The manifesto was published in *The Times*, which Wellington had earlier managed to persuade to take the side of the future Conservative government. In this way Peel managed to get favourable publicity for his new pro-reform policy. Although some Tories would not be favourable to the new tactics, Peel was counting on the majority of the Tory party to be amenable to compromise in order to remain in office (ibid., 160). By expressing his appreciation for the Whig reform policy, Peel was able to draw support for his election campaign from the opposition and thereby secure a majority in the House of Commons. Peel's campaign was the first in British electoral history where there were clear parliamentary elements involved (Andrén 1947, 221).

Another new characteristic that marked the 1835 elections was the greater role accorded to electoral organisation of the political parties (Andrén 1947, 221). Hawkins (1989, 642) has highlighted that parlia-

mentary parties were Park's solution to the constitutional dilemmas of parliamentary government. Parties' constitutional function was to protect parliamentary sovereignty from both the prerogatives of the monarch and the rash demands of the uneducated populace. Therefore, parties were considered 'political associations' inside Parliament that worked as safeguards against outside influence. Furthermore, in *The English Constitution* (1867) Bagehot argues that one does not fully understand parliamentary government without realising this 'standing wonder' of government by club (Bagehot 1867/2001, 99). And, it was not just any other club or public meeting but an 'organised body' in which the role of parties was crucial (ibid., 100–101). There was no permanent settlement between political parties in the House of Commons, as they competed against each other.

In the Whig interpretations of parliamentary government there was worry over the influence of the non-educated classes. In Grey's arguments for parliamentary government the Whig effort to legitimise Parliament's educational role is conspicuous. He maintains that the way in which 'parliamentary contests' have been conducted 'has had the further and great advantage of contributing much to instruct the Nation at large on all the subjects most deeply concerning its interests, and to form and guide public opinion'. In Grey's opinion, then, Parliament was 'the organ for expressing and enforcing the national will' (Grey 1858/1864, 37). Parliamentary government ensured that the representatives of the nation in Parliament would be actively involved in educating the populace in matters that concerned them.

John Stuart Mill, too, wrote about the educating aspect of Parliament. For him, the main element of a good form of government was the promotion of 'virtue and intelligence of the people' (Mill 1861, 30). This, he argues, is most likely to be accomplished by the representative form of government. But, according to Bagehot, this teaching mode of British Parliament was not adequate. He criticised the leadership presented by prime ministers. In Bagehot's opinion prime ministers ought to have taken the position of educators of the populace (Bagehot 1867/2001, 117–118).

Grey mentions as one of the prerequisites of parliamentary government that ministers have the ability to gain the confidence of the nation through parliamentary debating contests (Grey 1858/1864, 27). He argues that 'success as a Parliamentary debater' is helpful for a minister to secure his position (ibid., 34). A more important quality in a minister than skill in debate, however, is the maintenance of character. In debate one might win

backing for certain policies, but in order to keep such support a parliamentarian must maintain the good opinion of others. In a minister, Grey finds this quality the most significant of all: ‘A man who has failed to establish, in the party he belongs to, a character for judgment and for ability, can hardly become, as the leader of the House of Commons, the most important member of a British Ministry’ (ibid., 35). Character is, in his view, formed in the party the speaker belongs to. In case a member was aiming at becoming a party leader it was more expedient to express one’s opinions in a Commons debate, even though they happened to be contrary to the joint effort of the party. This was certainly applicable to the political career of William Harcourt who opposed the adoption of the secret ballot in the election system against the Liberal government’s policy but was able to gain the party’s leadership (cf. Haapala 2015, 76, 80–81).

Grey’s views on ‘parliamentary government’ were later echoed in Bagehot’s *The English Constitution*, which was first published in 1867. In Bagehot’s view cabinet government plays an important role in educating the nation, but it also generates critical opposition against itself. Accordingly, he highlights the importance of debate as part of the process:

The great scene of debate, the great engine of popular instruction and political controversy, is the legislative assembly. A speech there by an eminent statesman, a party movement by a great political combination, are the best means yet known for arousing, enlivening, and teaching a people. The cabinet system ensures such debates, for it makes them the means by which statesmen advertise themselves for future and confirm themselves in present governments. (Bagehot 1867/2001, 14)

Parliamentary debate, in Bagehot’s opinion, is an educative tool that is created by cabinet government. Furthermore, he argues that the cabinet system benefits the representation of the people by allowing for Members of Parliament to engage with the general public. Those who become elected are given opportunities to speak their minds and are also more likely to enjoy speaking in public. In that way the public cannot avoid hearing all sides (Bagehot 1867/2001, 14).

Erskine May’s *Constitutional History of England*, first published between 1861 and 1863, also influenced discussion of Parliament’s constitutional role. The needs, to which parliamentary speaking was a response, May argued, had been completely altered. The state of parliamentary oratory had become connected to situations in which parliamentarians who are able to demonstrate outstanding verbal talents raise not

only the level of parliamentary oratory, but the quality of Parliament as an institution as well. According to him, the authority of the House of Commons had increased by the introduction of the new rules: 'Indeed, as the Commons have advanced in power and freedom, they have shown greater self-restraint, and a more ready obedience to the authority of the Speaker' (May 1861/1875, 128). The Speaker represents the House and is in charge of maintaining the order. As he emphasises the role of the Speaker, May gives the impression that the constitutional arrangement was also beneficial for the legitimate position of the House of Commons.

In contrast to the Whig interpretation of the constitution, Peel and his followers did not readily accept the idea of parliamentary government according to which the legitimate use of executive powers was based on the ability of parties to consolidate opinions (Hawkins 1989, 652). Nevertheless, parliamentary majorities became of increasing consequence when 'parliamentary government' became used as the basis of conduct in Westminster. Parliamentary party activity in mid-century was conducted according to the principles of parliamentary government in the Whig sense (*ibid.*, 661). Along with the new emphasis on parliamentary majorities came new requirements and aims. A serious parliamentarian would now direct his efforts towards acquiring debating skills and securing a position in a ministry. The 'combating' talents practised in the Unions became useful in the manifestation of skills in political argumentation.

In the new framework of parliamentary government with its interplay between parliamentary majorities and the maintenance of character, it became increasingly important for parliamentarians to form alliances and practise their debating skills. Even though debating societies potentially offered both, they were more often than not spoken of disparagingly in the House of Commons. It was common for MPs to make a distinction between what was suitable as a topic for a debating society as opposed to the Commons. For example, in 1866 Sir John Hanmer was concerned that the Commons debate on parliamentary reform would seem 'a mere windy expression of opinion, having no result' and that the time wasted 'lowered the House to the position of a common debating society' (House of Commons, 11 June 1866, col. 169).³

The way debating societies were talked about had to do with the public image of Parliament. As the House of Commons was marked as being a debating club (*cf.* Bagehot 1867; De Mille 1878), it was prudent not to intensify that impression since the parliamentary government also meant the increase in speaking and disruption of the House business. In 1860 Gladstone, as the Chancellor of Exchequer, held that 'it was not the prac-

tice' of the House of Commons 'to make its floor a floor of a debating society', but to attend to more 'practical duties' (House of Commons, 17 July 1860, col. 2025). Both Hanmer and Gladstone had been members of the Oxford Union before the passing of the reform. Contrasting the practices of debating societies with the House of Commons reflects the fact that both were acutely aware of the increasing amount of government business that was not aided by giving the impression that legislative duties were less than a priority in the House. The constitutional position of the Commons was, at the same time, legitimised and put under strain as being the nation's debating arena.

REVISION OF DEBATING PROCEDURES FROM 1837 TO 1861

After the first parliamentary reform in 1832 until the 1870s, the constitutional role of the House of Commons expanded for several reasons. One was the dominating idea of 'parliamentary government': the government had to enjoy the confidence of the majority of the House of Commons. In effect, this meant the attaining of popular sovereignty. Ultimately, cabinet government itself was a political solution to a problem that had arisen with the increased number of motions and bills. The House of Commons, having been designed to control the finances of the Crown, now disbursed grants too specific for such a large collective body. An individual member had practically unlimited freedom to have his say on any matter. Another important factor for the gradual adjustment was that the procedure of the House was starting to be increasingly used for political purposes. It was accentuated in the late nineteenth century when Irish National members used obstruction in a more systematic and determined manner (cf. e.g. McCarthy 1897, xv). The situation eventually resulted in an arrangement in which ministers of the Crown were given quasi-monopoly over proposing initiatives and the House of Commons was left with the duty to oversee and criticise government policies. All of these changes were done through the procedural revisions of the nineteenth century.

The procedural reforms that were made between 1832 and 1867 remained largely respectful of the privileges of individual members, even though the number of speakers had increased. In terms of debate and free speech, it was ancient privilege of individual members to raise debate on any issue by claiming priority (Fraser 1960, 450). After the establish-

ment of ‘order days’ in 1811, which in practice set aside Mondays and Fridays for debating government business, such privileges became the most powerful tools for disruption. In the nineteenth century they were frequently resorted to as a means to gain public attention by obstructing the work of the government. This was especially the case in connection with petitions.⁴

According to Campion (1929/1958, 13), public bills are what turned Parliament into a legislative assembly. But as the powers of the House of Commons were strengthened in the course of the nineteenth century, its public business became seriously obstructed. Government business was frequently delayed due to debates on private members’ bills. The increasing demands of dealing with the problem of time shortages, therefore, left a mark on the nineteenth-century procedures of the Commons (Cox 1987, 52). Petitions were, before the Commons constituted a standing committee for their presentation in the 1860s, a source of numerous debates, which hindered government business since they were presented before any other business of the house was transacted. In the 1830s the House began to introduce rules to put an end to the great amount of time expended on petitions (Redlich 1908, vol. 2, 239).

The problem was first addressed in 1837 when both houses of Parliament decided to appoint select committees to inquire into the delays that had long caused detriment to the transacting of business. Thereafter, three more select committees were appointed between 1848 and 1861. In this section I will focus on the debates in the reports of four select committees appointed by the House of Commons, in 1837, 1848, 1854 and 1861.

At the same time, both Union Societies had their own procedural reforms. In 1840 a committee was set up to recommend revisions of the laws of the Cambridge Union. The committee decided to make a collection of all the resolutions that had been passed in the previous private business meetings, but still remained not written down in the rules. It was suggested that, as long as the rules of procedure were incomplete, the society was to follow ‘the Precedents of the House of Commons’ (CUS minute book vol. 10, 13 February 1840). In 1845 all the rules of the Cambridge Union were rewritten but the revision was done again in 1847 and to some extent in 1856. At Oxford, revision of all the rules first took place in 1842 but, already before that, the Union had formed a ‘select committee’, to suggest revisions to the rule of allowing strangers to be present in its debates (see OUS minute book vol. 5, 19 November 1840).

The subsequent revisions at Oxford were recorded in 1848, 1853 and 1856.⁵

In the House of Commons the committees were charged with inquiring into the ways through which the forms of parliamentary proceeding could be amended to more efficiently deal with the course of business. The politics of procedure revolved around the question of how to limit debates without compromising the privileges of the House or its members. Throughout the nineteenth century, the Standing Orders of the Commons were revised chiefly for the more effective distribution of time (Campion 1929/1958, 38–39). Revision was conducted for securing the efficient conduct of government business. Procedural changes were, therefore, also a reaction against parliamentary opposition within. The remedy was sought from written rules instead of relying on ancient privileges and customs (Fraser 1960, 445).

Already in the 1820s, the amount of agenda items in the Commons had increased to the point that it disrupted the conduct of business. The select committee report of 1848 argued that the debating procedure was equally put under strain as the number of parliamentarians who spoke in debates grew (Report from the Select Committee 1848, iii). The amount of petitions from constituencies was also growing at a remarkable rate, between 7,436 and 18,450 new petitions per year between 1832 and 1848 (*ibid.*). A motion to form a select committee to address the problems caused by the petitioning was first moved by Lord Brougham in 1837, during Lord Melbourne's second ministry. Brougham argued that parliamentary business had suffered due to the increased amount of private legislation. But he did not seek to put 'blame on any party' in particular, as the 'system alone' was to be blamed (House of Lords, 5 June 1837, cols 1176–1177). Brougham's concern was that demands from constituencies, although they needed to be taken seriously, would continue to harm the proceedings of Parliament if nothing was done. The 1832 Reform Act had not alleviated problems related to bribery at elections as intended but rather exacerbated them (Seymour 1915, 174).

Brougham suggested that the House of Lords conduct inquiries into the restriction of private business. In particular, he argued for a revision of the Standing Orders, which had been established in 1811. Brougham was raising a matter that would later be more frequently debated: he wanted permanent rules. He was of the opinion that an inquiry would help to show the necessity of it (House of Lords, 5 June 1837, cols 1181–1182). The

motion passed and, subsequently, both houses of Parliament appointed select committees to inquire into their conduct of business.

In the House of Commons report of 1837, practical recommendations for both private and public business were made. The committee suggested that, in the case of public business, notices of motion should be given well in advance and that they should be written in the Order Book (Report from the Select Committee 1837, 6). However, the committee seemed anxious to suggest limitations on public business. For the part of private business, it was notable that the 1837 committee did not accept any plans which were suggested or adopted in the upper house. It was made clear that the lower house was an independent body with separate functions, even though its members were ‘also immediately responsible to particular bodies of electors’ (ibid., 7).

The committee did not deny that there were issues in need of amendment, but it made clear that the means proposed and adopted in the House of Lords could not be directly applied in the Commons. In short, the report of 1837 strongly supported a separation between the lower and the upper house in the area of private business. The committee also recommended minor changes to the conduct of public and private business in the Commons. After the report had been read and adopted by the House of Commons, Lord Brougham, speaking in a sitting of the Lords, expressed his dissatisfaction concerning the changes made in private business. According to him, the Select Committee of the House of Lords had succeeded in improving the conduct of private business in its house, whereas the committee of the House of Commons had failed. He called for more effort on the part of the Commons to revise their procedure accordingly (House of Lords, 15 July 1837, cols 1913–1914). However, this revision was put on hold.

Another initiative regarding the issue came from the House of Lords in 1848. Lord Stanley, who had been a member of the House of Commons’ committee in 1837 and would later three times become prime minister of minority governments, introduced his idea of giving both houses the power to postpone proceedings (Hawkins 2007, 347). According to his view, the House of Lords suffered from the postponements in the lower house, and thus became an ‘unwilling accomplice’ in the matter. Stanley suggested that, unless an initiative come from the Lords, the problems would not be addressed properly and would result in outside criticisms against both houses of Parliament.

While presenting his motion, Lord Stanley made references to the constitutional changes as well as to changes in the character of the House of Commons that had occurred over the previous twenty-five years. He also remarked on how the public business and legislation of both houses of Parliament were more carefully followed than before. In that respect, he was particularly concerned about the delays in public business, as the general public was anxious to see legislative measures taken up by the government (House of Lords, 14 April 1848, col. 330).

Lord Stanley maintained that the liberty given by the Commons to individual members to speak was to the detriment of consistent government policy (House of Lords, 14 April 1848, cols 330–331). His disapproval was directed to the way in which legislation was carried out in the lower house. In his view it was lamentable that the House reserved three days of a week for motions proposed by individual members, and only two days for government business. The regularity of conducting government business was disrupted whenever individual members introduced new motions onto the agenda. It was the excessive talk in the House of Commons which was ultimately destroying the credibility of Parliament as a legislative institution.⁶ Lord Stanley argued that the House of Lords did not have enough time to deliberate on all of the bills coming from the lower house, which affected the quality of and public opinion of the efficiency of legislation (House of Lords, 14 April 1848, col. 334).

In Lord Stanley's view, the House of Commons is an essential part of the legislation and should function accordingly. Debate is something that is dispensable to a certain extent and that should be restricted for the benefit of the greater good of passing laws. According to him, legislation, since it is what is primarily expected of Parliament, should be made its first priority.

Like Brougham in 1837, Stanley also urged the House of Commons to look into the revision of procedure without delay. He even proposed restrictions on its privileges regarding debate (House of Lords, 14 April 1848, col. 334). Other speakers in the debate on Stanley's motion agreed with him that some restrictions on debate in the lower house would be necessary. Brougham, however, again argued that this was a matter that was not suitably addressed by proposing new laws, but rather by amending the Standing Orders. In the second reading, speaking against the bill, Lord Campbell argued that 'the bill would introduce a very important change in the working of our constitution' and, therefore, 'we must take care that we did not cause greater inconveniences by our legislation than

those which the measure was intended to remove' (House of Lords, 15 May 1848, col. 981). Further, Lord Redesdale warned of possible disputes between the two houses of Parliament if the bill was passed (*ibid.*, col. 982). He was concerned about constitutional imbalance between the two houses of Parliament. In his view the House of Commons was more likely than the House of Lords to come under pressure from outside of Parliament in times of crisis. In the event that the bill was now passed, the upper house would likely not be able to remain unaffected by demands from the general public. He suggested that the House of Lords should not let the lower chamber take the lead in revising the procedure.

Although Lord Brougham supported the aims of the bill, he agreed with Lord Redesdale that it would possibly lead to legislation unfavourable to the House of Lords. Lord Beaumont also argued that the House risked losing the power to propose new measures, as the bill would give the House of Commons the power to make all legislative initiatives (House of Lords, 15 May 1848, cols 983–985).

In Lord Stanley's reply, he did not anticipate the kinds of problems that Lord Campbell had predicted. A Conservative leader, Stanley said that it was ironic for a Liberal, such as Lord Campbell, to oppose a measure for reform (House of Lords, 15 May 1848, col. 987). He then gave assurances that the purpose of his bill was only to facilitate the dispatch of public business in both houses and would not lead to the dangers Campbell had raised. By mocking Campbell's unwillingness to support the bill, Stanley sought to diminish Campbell's arguments against it.

In the third reading of the bill, Lord Campbell moved for a postponement of the vote. He remained convinced that the formulation of the bill was unsuitable. Lord Langdale argued that Campbell's objections were unfounded.⁷ He supported the bill, even though he thought it inadequate for solving the problems it sought to address.

Langdale argued that the best means for tackling the kinds of problems Parliament was facing would be with more expert formulation and preparation of bills 'before they are introduced to either House' (House of Lords, 2 June 1848, cols 247–248). He goes on that legislation would greatly benefit from more consistent government policy and greater ministerial responsibility. It is the duty of government ministers to take legislative initiatives as it would ensure 'less time wasted in idle and unnecessary discussions' and 'more of useful deliberation' which would result in 'better laws' (*ibid.*, col. 248). In this way he links debate to cabinet government, as he calls for more care in the formulation of motions on the part of the

government for the sake of more purposeful deliberation. Langdale was, in fact, supporting a view that would later lead to what is called the ‘modern procedure’, where the House of Commons’ powers are restricted to criticism of government policy (cf. *Campion 1929/1958*, 35).

The discussions on Lord Stanley’s bill show the increased pressures the Parliament as a whole was facing from the growing amount of legislation. Both houses were equally affected, although they had different constitutional agendas. In the 1848 House of Lords discussions, those speaking against the bill argued that reforming the procedure of the House of Commons should be undertaken with great care, as it might create a change detrimental to the constitutional balance. In this way the debate on the bill also included the question of the power relations between the two houses of Parliament.

The bill was directed to a select committee of the House of Commons on 5 July 1848. The committee compared the amount of business the House of Commons had in the present session with the previous years. Petitions were seen to have increased enormously, which meant more and more committee work for the house. In its report, the committee especially pointed out that members, exhausted after working in committees in the mornings, did not attend the evening debates. The party leaders and other main speakers did not consider it worthwhile to address the house half empty, which led to adjournments of debates.

The committee of 1848 highlighted the fact that a number of important topics had lately been adjourned in the House of Commons. As many subjects were in adjournment at the same time, debates were confusing for the members and, consequently, made them lose interest (Report from the Select Committee *1848*, iii). On 10 July the Speaker of the House of Commons, Charles Shaw-Lefevre, was asked to describe the state of public business and give recommendations for solving the problems that had been discovered. He responded that more members were generally speaking in debates than previously, and this did lead to adjournments. It was the right of members to speak whenever they wished, which made it difficult to restrict. In his view the privileges of members of the house should not be restricted. Instead of reducing the privileges of members, Shaw-Lefevre suggested other means of helping the business of the house to run more smoothly. In his view, the committee should concentrate on motions of adjournment because they always caused interruptions to public business (Report from the Select Committee *1848*, 1). He argued

that the management of public business would improve if all motions of adjournment were to be decided without debate. However, he pointed out that, in the event that motions of adjournment were decided without debate, members would likely resort to other means of hindering the proceedings. He also said that delays could be created by constant divisions on motions of adjournment. Therefore, he proposed a rule that at least 21 members should be present to second a motion of adjournment. He also insisted that there should be a further regulation that forbade motions of adjournment being proposed a second time within one hour (Report from the Select Committee 1848, 1–2).

Shaw-Lefevre was again interviewed by a select committee in 1854. The Speaker's involvement in both committees was related to the fact that he represented the interests of the House of Commons. Therefore, his opinions usually reflected the interests of the house as a whole and his justifications were given in the name of the institution.

The Select Committee report of 1854 made reference to some of the same hindrances to the proceedings as previously. For example, disruption of the business in the Commons was still affecting the House of Lords. It was asserted that it had become almost impossible for the Lords to handle any bills due to the delays in the Commons. The results of the 1848 committee were described as successful even though some of the same recommendations were repeated. For example, the importance of the rule that members speak only to the matter was reiterated. This implies that debates were still allowed on motions of adjournment. Such debates diverted arguments to matters other than the original motion. Even though it was the parliamentary rule that members should only speak to the motion at hand, the Speaker could not prevent members from raising a motion of adjournment.

In the committee report, adjournments were singled out as the most important form of proceeding whose rules needed to be more carefully observed. In his *Treatise* Erskine May explained the different usages of two types of motions of adjournment:

It is a common practice for those who desire to avoid a decision upon the original question, on that day, to move alternately that 'this house do now adjourn', and 'that the debate be now adjourned'. The latter motion, if carried, only defers the decision of the house, while the former [...] supersedes the question altogether. (May 1844, 172–173)

In short, the motion for adjournment of the house interrupted or superseded the original motion under discussion. Motion for adjournment of debate, however, evaded the discussion on the original motion. May pointed out that in cases where a minority wished to discuss the motion another time (in hope of a better result in the division), they sometimes mistakenly moved for an adjournment of the house instead, and thus ended the debate altogether, when they meant only to defer the decision. The procedure had traditionally protected the minorities so that they could introduce matters that had been neglected in the original debate. Motions of adjournment gave minority members a chance to put forward initiatives. However, during the interviews conducted by the select committee of 1854, the Speaker was willing to restrict these initiatives of individual members. At this point, the pressure to alter the procedure of debate in the House of Commons did not only come from the House of Lords but inside the lower chamber as well.

Until 1849 motions of going into committee had created opportunities for individual members to open discussion on issues they wanted to advance and caused further disruptions to the ordinary course of business. Erskine May criticised this ‘abuse’ as being ‘at variance with the spirit and intention of Parliamentary rules’ (May 1854/1881, 21). While the report of 1854 stated that the previous committee had contributed to a less frequent use of both motions of adjournment, members were still reported to misuse them, especially on Fridays for postponement of debate for Mondays. That was said to interfere with initiatives from the government, as Monday was one of two days a week when priority was reserved for government business.

The Select Committee of 1854 gave the Speaker the power to make proposals for dealing with the problem. Speaker Shaw-Lefevre was asked to describe the difficulties when the house went into committee. The chairman of the committee, Sir John Pakington, argued that especially motions of going into Committees of Supply, in which supply of funds for various ministries were debated in detail, were taking too much time from all other business. The Speaker confirmed this and gave evidence of how members took advantage of these situations. In his opinion the problem had escalated lately when members had taken to making notices of speaking before going into a Committee of Supply.

Erskine May, now Clerk Assistant of the House of Commons, and Edward P. Bouverie, Chairman of the Committee of the whole House, were also interviewed. May, whose procedural treatise on parliamentary

proceedings was now in its second edition and used as a reference in the 1854 select committee report, expressed his concern about the great amount of speaking possibilities the old procedure allowed in general. He was not in favour of restricting debates as such, but he called for restrictions on the opportunities for debate granted by the procedure (Report from the Select Committee 1854, 24). In his view, the procedure had to be amended to accommodate the increased volume of business in the House of Commons. The same understanding of the state of affairs was, indeed, conveyed by the Speaker. He held that debates on motions of adjournment should be further restricted and proposed the so-called American plan, whereby questions of adjournment, if moved in the middle of a debate, should be decided without an additional debate. Shaw-Lefevre emphasised the detriment to the management of the business of the nation if nothing were done to alleviate the situation (Report from the Select Committee 1854, 62).

The Select Committee of 1854 suggested further restrictions on debate. It was proposed that all discussion on the principles of the bills should be confined to the first reading, thus restricting the tendency to open a new debate. The committee stressed that, permitting such debate, time pressures be put on the second and third readings as well as committee work. Finally, the report of the select committee resulted in the revision of the Standing Orders of the House of Commons. However, of the thirty-six alterations proposed by chairman Pakington, only nine were agreed on in the committee of 1854. According to the select committee report of 1861, only eight of the nine were finally approved by the house, and the committee considered them as mere additions to the changes proposed in the report in 1848 (Report from the Select Committee 1861, iii). The recommendations of the 1854 committee were not radical but their tendency was to make the Commons debates more efficient and streamlined.

In 1861 the cautious nature of the changes in the previous committee reports and the House of Commons' decisions were not subject to criticism and were, in fact, praised for respecting the traditions of Parliament: 'This respect for tradition and this caution in making changes have proceeded on the principle, that no change is justifiable which experience has not proved to be necessary, and that the maintenance of the old rules is preferable to new, but speculative, amendments' (Report from the Select Committee 1861, iii-iv). The report stated that a guiding principle for making procedural changes should be the avoidance of unexpected consequences. This rhetoric of risk management was adopted from the previous

Speaker, Shaw-Lefevre, who had called for ‘predictability of proceedings’. The new Speaker, John Evelyn Denison, was reported to strongly agree with his predecessor. He had also been involved in procedural revision as the chairman of the 1848 Select Committee. Now, as Speaker, he argued that the main purpose of the committee was to improve certainty about the proceedings of the house.

The pursuit of certainty was expressed as the main impetus of the committee of 1861 when it directed attention to the Speaker’s recommendation that debates on motions should be prevented from going into the Committee of Supply. According to the report, the Committee of 1854 had been unable to make suggestions against the practice due to ‘fear of unduly limiting the opportunities of debate’ (Report from the Select Committee 1861, iv). The report referred to incidents in which formalities of the proceedings, for example the motion ‘that the House resolves itself to the Committee’, were increasingly used as opportunities for debate. They caused further delay in the workings of the house. The quoted passage, while confirming that delays were a problem, understated their effects. At this point in time, obstructions were generally considered less harmful than useful and therefore were permitted. McCarthy noted that even such highly respected parliamentarians as Gladstone and Sir Charles Dilke were allowed to use obstruction without any serious attempt to limit debates: ‘In every single instance the obstruction was directed to one particular measure, and everybody knew that when that particular measure had been disposed of in one way or the other, the obstruction would come to an end’ (McCarthy 1897, xiv–xv). Not until the Irish obstruction in the 1880s was the necessity of limiting the length of debate apparent. And only then, when it was perceived to be absolutely essential, were more radical restrictions adopted.

The 1861 select committee report states that the discussion of grievances before the Supply Committee was ‘among the most ancient and important’ privileges of the House of Commons and ‘the surest and the best’ opportunity for ‘obtaining full explanation from the Ministers of the Crown’ (Report from the Select Committee 1861, iv). Thus, the delays caused by discussion of grievances were also portrayed as an unfortunate by-product.

In their report, the committee suggested that certainty was guaranteed by the forms of proceeding, upheld by the Speaker according to the time-honoured practice. Although the committee held that it was ‘expedient to preserve for individual Members ample opportunity’ to introduce

and pass bills, the ministers should have priority 'in the opportunities for pressing them on the consideration of the House' (Report from the Select Committee 1861, vi). In other words, the ancient privileges of the house were best served by the principles of parliamentary government.

The committee suggested the Standing Orders be revised so as to accommodate governmental initiatives. The increased governmental control over legislation would, it was suggested, give more predictability to legislation. By emphasising the importance of ministerial control, the committee was also making a constitutional statement: the principle of parliamentary government was a justification for preserving the privileges of the House of Commons.

The parliamentary reforms of procedure were closely observed in the Union Societies as they started their own revisions of rules at approximately the same time as the procedural reforms were proposed in the House of Commons. The motivation for doing so emanated partly from members' disorderly conduct and also from the confusion related to how to proceed. The Unions did not have access to any handbooks as yet (of which one of the first was Palgrave's *Chairman's Handbook*, published in 1869) that would have given the members guidance on how to conduct debates in the parliamentary manner. In order to create order and legitimisation for their activities, they decided to follow the precedents of the House of Commons. Moreover, they resorted to 'polls' as an opportunity to debate on issues that had already been voted on, and in this way emulated readings in Parliament. The suggestion of the 1856 Oxford Union committee for revising its rules was that any member could demand a poll 'on any question of Private Business after a division on it has been taken' (OUS minute book vol. 8, 28 April 1856). After it was adopted, it meant, in practice, that all members of the society received more powers to extend discussion. But this rule relates only to the private business of the society.

In the House of Commons, Speakers had promoted more predictability by introducing adjustments to the Standing Orders. Overall, the reports of the select committees to revise the rules of debate in the House of Commons between 1837 and 1861 show reluctance to make radical changes to the procedure. The rhetoric used in the 1861 report justified increased government initiative while emphasising constitutionality and certainty of proceedings. Compared to the initiatives put forward in the House of Lords to impose procedural change in the lower chamber, the aim was rather different. Lord Stanley, for example, argued for restrictions of debate and expressed concern for the public image of Parliament,

arguing that members of the House of Commons should surrender some of their rights to debate for the sake of streamlining legislation. In the 1861 select committee report, however, the adopted constitutional form of parliamentary government was used to justify the amendments to the Standing Orders. The aim was not to restrict debate but to regulate it to accommodate cabinet government. Thus, government initiatives were starting to gain priority inside the House of Commons. The committee report shows that the publicity of debate had become an integral part of the constitutional system, not something in need of control. As Bagehot noted, controversy and opposition were consequences of cabinet government as the system makes debates ‘the means by which statesmen advertise themselves for future and confirm themselves in present government’ (Bagehot 1867/2001, 14).

PUBLICITY, PRESS AND PARLIAMENTARY JOURNALISM

In 1852, Henry Oxenham, the president of the Oxford Union Society proposed a motion:⁸

That the Society having had its attention called to anonymous letter which appeared in the *Record* newspaper of May 18th containing several misstatements in reference to a Debate at the Society’s meeting of the previous Thursday, and also a personal criticism on the character and opinions of the mover, desires to express its unqualified indignation at the insult which the writer of that letter has offered to the society by publishing and slanderously misrepresenting its debates. (OUS minute book vol. 7, 27 May 1852)

The meeting to which he was referring had contained a public debate on a proposal⁹ put forward by the Union treasurer, Thomas Wetherell. A few years later, it was added to the Standing Orders of the society that ‘no abstract or report of speeches delivered at the Society’s Meetings’ was to be sent for publication in ‘any Newspaper or Periodical’ (OUS rules 1858, 52). Efforts to try and change this rule were made, for example, in 1866 when it was suggested that the publication of the Union proceedings should be permitted if there was no mention of the actual content of the speeches delivered. However, the majority was against the change of a Standing Order (OUS minute book vol. 9, 4 December 1866). The Cambridge Union was also very restrictive regarding the publication of its debates in the press. But, in 1868, the rule that gave the president ‘author-

ity to prohibit the publication of any debate or other proceeding of the Society' was reviewed. A member proposed that the rule be amended as follows: 'No member shall be at liberty to publish or authorize the publication of any debate or other proceedings of the Society and any member so doing shall be fined one Guinea' (Moore: CUS minute book vol. 19, 23 March 1868). However, an amendment was finally adopted that permitted any member 'to publish the Subject of Debate, the result, and the names of the Speakers, but no other proceedings of the Society and that any Member breaking this rule be fined one Guinea' (Leeke: CUS minute book vol. 19, 23 March 1868).

These Union policies regarding the publication of their debates show that there was strong resistance to allow public scrutiny of the contents of their meetings, especially the ones pertaining to private matters of the Societies. But the recorded discussions on the topic also illustrate that outside interest in the Union debates grew. Restrictions concerning the publication of Union debates were argued for in terms of prevention of misrepresentation and personal criticism. Although the minutes of private meetings of the Union Societies were still kept secret, the public debates were finally opened to visitors and members became free to inform the press of the debate topics and names of participants.

Parliamentary proceedings also have a long history of secrecy. It was realised in the political struggles between Parliament and the Crown since Elizabethan times when it became a tradition to keep parliamentary debates private. The journals of the Houses were kept only for the purposes of the members. In 1680 the House of Commons, for the first time, allowed the votes of the House to be printed. The following year it also granted permission to publish its proceedings. Until the early eighteenth century, *Votes and Proceedings* included simple records of passed motions and received petitions (Hoover 1953, 5). In fact, they share a close resemblance with the minutes of Union Societies which only contain the minimal information regarding their contents.

The newspaper press and professionalisation of parliamentary journalism enabled parliamentary ideas to spread in the nineteenth century. However, printers and publishers had been already involved in the politics of reporting since the early eighteenth century. Parliamentary debates have been reported in periodicals since the 1710s. The reporters were expected to show the different partisan sides in their writings and to provide the general public with an account of the political controversies inside Parliament (Hoover 1953, 6). Their reporting introduced daily parlia-

mentary politics to the coffeehouses and taverns. Habermas (1962/1989, 64) has suggested that this reporting led to the creation of a critical reading public, whose ideas were mediated in the controversies between the governing party and the opposition. However, it has also been argued that Parliament was already conceived as the main public forum for political debate (Black 2001/2008, 217). It is important to note that the growing reading public did not challenge the political authority of Parliament. In fact, in nineteenth-century British political culture, the importance of Parliament grew even stronger due to the increased publicity given to its debates.¹⁰

One of the early commentators of parliamentary reporting was Jeremy Bentham. In his procedural tract, *Essay on Political Tactics*,¹¹ he discusses the publicity of the proceedings of political assemblies, considering it ‘the fittest law for securing the public confidence’ (Bentham 1791/1839, 310). Even though the publication of debates was officially still a crime, Bentham acknowledged that it served a greater good: ‘It is to these fortunate crimes that England is indebted for her escape from an aristocratic government resembling that of Venice’ (ibid., 316). Bentham argued that the publishing of parliamentary debates carried further political benefits: ‘The body which speaks in public, and whose debates are published, possesses all the means of conciliating to itself numerous partisans, whilst those who deliberate in secret can only influence themselves’ (ibid., 317, fn.). He thus recognised that the publicising also had the effect of legitimising political action.¹²

Bentham participated in the politics of publicity with his notion that it secured public confidence in Parliament. The publishing of debates was, indeed, a political matter. In an interview before the 1871 Select Committee on business of the House of Commons, Erskine May was asked whether he supported the privilege of individual members of the House to clear the gallery of strangers. He responded that this old prerogative of individual members was based on the assumption that strangers were not present, which was not the case anymore (Report from the Select Committee 1871, 13). Therefore, in May’s view, it was not a right at all but rather a ‘relic of a past age’ (ibid., 20).

In the Union Societies the notion of publicity remained a contested issue. As an example, in the Cambridge Union a private meeting was called by the standing committee to discuss a letter that had been published in the *Morning Post* on 21 November 1844. It was argued that the newspaper’s deliberate informing of the public of the Union Society’s proceedings

was a breach of privilege (CUS minute book vol. 13, 2 December 1844). This did not remain the only incident. In the Oxford Union Society, the question of publication of its proceedings in newspapers was discussed on several occasions. In fact, already in its second year of existence, in 1824, the United Debating Society (as it was then called) met to discuss such an incident. On 6 June a paragraph had been published in the *John Bull* which had presented the proceedings of the debate of 29 May on the topic 'That the dethronement of Charles I was fully justifiable' (*Transactions of the Oxford Union Debating Society: 1823–1825*, 29). The standing committee of the Oxford Union recommended in 1866 that the rule prohibiting the publication of speeches should be amended as follows:

No notice or report of the proceedings of the Society, which mentions or alludes to individual members of the Society, shall be published in any Newspaper or Periodical whatsoever. The President is empowered to take steps to prevent such publication. (OUS minute book vol. 9, 22 February 1866)

The proposal was formulated in a way that, in practice, permitted the publication of proceedings as long as no names of members were mentioned. Another important provision was that the president alone had the authority to prevent such publication. In the rules the president was not, however, allowed to act without first consulting the standing committee (OUS rules 1863, 17). The motion was not passed, but one of the proponents demanded a poll, which was granted by the president. The result was that the majority favoured passage, but the matter remained unsettled as some members still showed reluctance towards permitting publication.

In the House of Commons, the presence of reporters was accepted in practice after 1834 when press galleries were installed in the new Houses of Parliament, which had been rebuilt after a fire. In the aftermath of the Wilke's affair in 1771, parliamentary reporting began to form a specific branch of journalism. It became more professional as the circulation of newspapers continued to rise during the nineteenth century. From 1774 onwards most newspapers started to write their own versions of debates. As demand for parliamentary reporting grew, it eventually led to competition between London newspapers, and they started to specialise in specific aspects of parliamentary debates. However, it was difficult to make accurate reports until 1783, when the ban against taking notes from the press gallery was lifted. By the nineteenth century, the debates were written

down in shorthand and then rewritten as coherent reports of what had been said (Sparrow 2003, 45).

In the nineteenth century parliamentary ideas were even penetrating into literary culture. For example, Byron and Tennyson, poets considered among the greatest of the period, were deeply affected by parliamentary politics (see Bevis 2007). They both appeared also in many motions proposed in the Union public debates: ‘That Tennyson is the Poet of the 19th century’ (Bengough: CUS minute book vol. 16, 6 December 1853) or ‘That with the exception of Lord Byron, Percy B. Shelley is the greatest English Poet of the last half century’ (Austin: OUS minute book vol. 7, 6 December 1849). It is also known that Charles Dickens’s writings were influenced by his experiences as a reporter, for example, in the *Mirror of Parliament* and *Morning Herald*, in the early 1830s (Sparrow 2003, 37–38).

Dickens’s uncle, John Henry Barrow, was the editor of the *Mirror of Parliament*. His aim was to give accounts of parliamentary proceedings that were ‘impartial’ and ‘correct’ (Brown 1955, 312). In that way he offered an alternative to the newspaper reports that notoriously took sides and made representations of debates for their own purposes. Before *Hansard* became the official provider of parliamentary reports in 1909, the *Mirror of Parliament* was among its rivals. The first to report full debates was William Cobbett (1763–1835), who had started by attaching parliamentary proceedings as a supplement to his *Annual Register* in 1804. Soon after, *Cobbett’s Parliamentary Debates* appeared as an independent publication. In 1808 Thomas Curson Hansard appeared as its printer and in a couple of years took over the publishing. At that time, Hansard was just one more publisher of parliamentary proceedings. The *Mirror of Parliament*, which appeared from 1828 to 1841, had for a short period been regarded as the leading publication (Jordan 1931, 438).

The *Hansard’s Parliamentary Debates* were, at first, mainly collected from newspaper reports. As Rix (2014) has noted, nineteenth-century reports of debates were not always considered to give a full picture of Commons proceedings. Parliamentary papers as well as full division lists, for example, became sold to the public in 1836 to provide information that was lacking in debate reports (*ibid.*, 464). The wider publicity of Commons debates also affected the way politicians spoke in the plenary sessions. Allegedly, the parliamentarians’ ‘eloquence’ became less appealing when they were aware of the absence of reporters in the gallery (Grant 1836, 48–49).

The demand for parliamentary journalism both broadened the variety of press coverage and increased popular knowledge of parliamentary politics. The wider circulation of reporting on parliamentary debates and consequently greater interest in how politics was conducted in the House of Commons gradually contributed to a transfer of ideas of parliamentary political agency. Along with the professionalisation of parliamentary journalism, other writings of the period also affected the way parliamentary debate was understood and discussed. While in the early decades of the century debating was not always appreciated, and was sometimes even interpreted as a constitutional threat, in the late nineteenth century ‘debate’ became commonly connected with parliamentary speaking:

In the course of these fifty years we have become a nation of public speakers. Everyone speaks now, and tolerable well too [...] Eloquence is but a facility, or instrument, or weapon, or accomplishment, or, in academic terms, an art [...] We are now more than ever a debating, that is, a Parliamentary people. (*The Times* 1873, 1)

In the following, I will present the range of discussion related to the interpretations of parliamentary eloquence from the late eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century. It will be shown that such related concepts as ‘debate’, ‘rhetoric’, ‘eloquence’ and ‘oratory’ did not bear the same meaning in contemporary writing on public speaking. In addition, their relations were often interpreted in different, sometimes even opposing, ways among the writers of the period.

RHETORIC AND PARLIAMENTARY ELOQUENCE

In his posthumously published essay entitled *Public Speaking* (1838), Gladstone took notice of the lack of political and rhetorical education in England. He considered experience in public speaking a prerequisite for a ‘healthy constitution of moral and intellectual character’, and argued that a student of public speaking should particularly observe how oratory was practised in the House of Commons (in Reid 1953, 266–267). During his studies at Eton, Gladstone had written a short essay in *The Eton Miscellany*, in which he already argued for the benefits of public speaking skills acquired in debating societies (Gladstone 1827, 113).

Young Gladstone’s views of oratory and the role of debating societies were rather contrary to the mainstream thinking of the period. Redlich

notes that Gladstone ‘formed a link’ between two periods of British parliamentary history (Redlich 1908, vol. 1, 70, fn. 1). He experienced the periods before and after the 1832 Reform Act which stood in complete contrast regarding their modes and extent of legislation (cf. Ilbert 1901, 211). At that time, the notion of public speaking was still largely being shaped by eighteenth-century attitudes and theories of rhetoric. Debating societies were considered suspect, which is also detectable in the way they are spoken of in Richard Whately’s revised edition of *Elements of Rhetoric* (first published in 1828).¹³ In the 1846 volume Whately discussed the role of debating societies in providing rhetorical training and noted that ‘true eloquence’, which means ‘to convince or persuade, rather than to display ability’, is easily lost in debating societies as their aim is to ‘learn to speak well, and to show how well one can speak; not, to establish a certain conclusion, or effect the adoption of a certain measure’ (Whately 1828/1846, 26–27). Whately’s view was in complete contrast to what the former Union members praised the debating societies for providing: an arena for the use and show of political talent.¹⁴ In other words, Whately blamed the debating societies for the very same feature for which former members tended to applaud them.

The main argument for learning public speaking in debating societies, according to Whately, is that those who have had practice are well prepared for ‘matters of real importance’ and do not have to start training in ‘actual combat’ (Whately 1828/1846, 27). He emphasises that, if started too early and without ‘general cultivation of the mind’, debating societies may be more harmful for the education of young men than they are beneficial. He argued that the temptation was too strong to resort to ‘specious falsehood and sophistry’ instead of sound reasoning:

Scruples of conscience, relative to veracity and fairness, are not unlikely to be silenced by the consideration that after all it is no real battle, but a tournament; there being no real and important measure to be actually decided on, but only a debate carried on for practice-sake. (Whately 1828/1846, 33)

All in all, Whately seems to endorse the kind of debating societies that were strictly private and academic in character, an example of which is the Speculative Society of Edinburgh. The idea that rhetorical training offered in debating societies was something to be treated with caution was con-

nected to the more general culture and education of public speaking still prevalent at the time.

Howell (1971) distinguishes four distinct strands in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century British rhetorical thought, most of which he regarded as derivative of Aristotelian or Ciceronian thought or affected by the new sciences (ibid., 696). There was, first, a rhetorical scheme by John Ward and John Holmes incorporating ancient Greek and Roman theorists into popular oratory. They emphasised the grand style of the ancients as opposed to the ‘plain unadorned speech of civil life’ (ibid., 697). Second, there was style-oriented rhetorical thought, aimed at poetry, novels and drama, and represented by such theorists as Nicholas Burton, Anthony Blackwall and John Stirling. The third variant was the elocutionist movement, which was popular in Great Britain and America until the end of nineteenth century. Its most prominent adherents were Thomas Sheridan, Orator Henley and John Walker. The elocutionists were interested in turning ancient rhetorical theories into a scheme of delivery. Sheridan, for instance, was well educated in the ancient art of oratory and saw a need for educational reform that would emphasise oratorical mastery for public purposes in the English language. His *British Education* was well received, for example, in Trinity College, Cambridge, where declamation competitions were held since 1760 (Reid 2013, 635). Finally, the fourth type of rhetorical theory was called ‘new rhetoric’. Inspired by teachings of Bacon and Locke and accentuating ‘learned communication’, it mainly concentrated on creating a general theory of literature (Howell 1971, 697). Its proponents included Adam Smith, George Campbell and Hugh Blair. Scottish enlightenment philosophers frequently connected the idea of politics with an understanding of mutual courtesy and tolerance. The cultivation of one’s manners was part of the general goal of self-improvement and was connected to the idea of the independence of individuals.

Blair and Hume were among those who referred to parliamentary eloquence as one form of the British public speaking tradition. In his *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (1783), Blair discussed eloquence in connection with popular assemblies. The aim was to provide instruction to those who wanted to elevate their social status by improving their public speaking. For that purpose, Blair provides descriptions of various forms of eloquence suited for public assemblies, the bar and the pulpit. In the case of eloquence in public assemblies, he cited the Parliament of Great Britain as the best example: ‘Wherever there is a popular court, or wherever any

number of men are assembled for debate or consultation, there, in different forms, this species of Eloquence may take place' (Blair 1783/1812, 6). He further stresses the importance of persuasion in public assemblies as the attempt to convince an audience:

Nothing can be more erroneous, than to imagine, that, because speeches to popular assemblies admit more of a declamatory style than some other discourses, they therefore stand less in need of being supported by sound reasoning. When modelled upon this false idea, they may have the shew, but never can produce the effect, of real eloquence. (Blair 1783/1812, 7)

It seems that Blair intended to deflect accusations of demagoguery in relation to eloquence by referring to 'sound reasoning' instead of rhetoric. Furthermore, he declares that 'the foundation of all that can be called Eloquence, is good sense, and solid thought' (Blair 1783/1812, 7). Much like Whately, he argues that there is no point in making 'mere declamations' without any relation to reasoning. With similar justifications, Blair disapproves early rhetorical training in debating societies:

I know, that young people, on purpose to train themselves to the art of speaking, imagine it useful to adopt that side of the question under debate, which, to themselves, appears the weakest, and to try what figure they can make upon it. But, I am afraid, this is not the most improving education for public speaking; and that it tends to form them to a habit of flimsy and trivial discourse. Such a liberty, they should, at no time, allow themselves, unless in meetings where no real business is carried on, but where declamation and improvement in speech is the sole aim. (Blair 1783/1812, 8)

The assumption is that the education in debating societies should restrict itself to mere declamation and self-improvement. As a representative of the 'new' rhetorical theories, Blair keeps figures and tropes clearly separate from argumentation. He considers it unwise to use figurative speech that is without substance in assemblies of 'real business' because it might jeopardise *ethos*.

Having been one of the founders of the Speculative Society of Edinburgh, Hume, however, was less explicit. In his *History of England* Hume continually refers to parliamentary manners of speaking. But he does not express his definition of eloquence directly. Rather, he alludes to a connection between English liberties and parliamentary oratory (Hume 1778/1983, 150). The idea that liberties could be strengthened through

parliamentary oratory may have been so common an assumption as to require no explanation. Similarly to Blair and Whately, although recognising parliamentary oratory, Hume does not focus on the rhetorical practices in use in Parliament.

Howell (1971, 716) notes that rhetoric as a term became mostly associated with ‘declamation’ or ‘ornate expression’ in the beginning of the twentieth century. Rhetoric had, according to this view, become by then alienated from its traditional relations to eloquence, particularly from the practice of it. This does not mean, however, that the lack of theoretical attention paid to the connection between rhetoric and public speaking made rhetoric disappear from political life. It has been shown that there was intensive criticism towards British oratory already at the beginning of the eighteenth century and that this led to much theorisation of public speaking, including on the topic of rhetoric (Sandford 1929, 131–132), of which the works of Blair, Hume and Whately are also proof.

During the eighteenth century, rhetoric was regarded as a subgenre of literature, and later it played a part in the formation of English literature when it became an academic discipline in its own right (Howell 1971, 716; see also Miller 1997, esp. chap. 9). In the various places where public speaking was practised, from the pulpits to Parliament, the study of rhetoric remained in the background. Even though rhetoric in general terms was considered more a literary field of study, it had oratorical connections to parliamentary life, as already noted by young Gladstone. As the classics still formed the basis of their education, parliamentarians themselves had a sound knowledge of classical rhetoric. Classical rhetoric did not lose its importance as long as it remained instrumental for various types of public action, such as politics, literature and religion (Wellbery 2000, 189). Hidden from sight, its tenets were still embedded, for example, in the practices of debating societies and Parliament.¹⁵

From the early nineteenth to the beginning of the twentieth century, a specific genre of literature emerged on parliamentary eloquence. Tracts were written commenting on parliamentarians’ styles and manners, including quotations from their speeches. The excerpts were carefully selected to illustrate the heights of British eloquence. Some of the tracts claimed that the peak had been reached in the eighteenth century (e.g. Browne 1808, 9–10).

William Pitt the Elder (1708–1778), also known as the Earl of Chatham, was usually considered the greatest British orator due to his classical proficiency and style (cf. e.g. Hazlitt 1810, 4–7). He was described

as the model parliamentarian, with unbeatable ‘voice, presence, delivery, courage and character’ as well as ‘unerring instinct for the temper of his auditory, unassailable public and private virtue, imagination, fire, statesmanship, and poetry of expression’ (Lampson 1918, 1). Speeches of the Earl of Chatham were often written down in the tracts as authoritative examples. However, they were hardly in the original form given the fact that the publication of parliamentary proceedings was strictly censored in the eighteenth century. The purpose of including the quoted speeches with the portraits of the parliamentarians was to depict them as possessing a model of public character (cf. Craig 1913, 8). The orators of the past were seen through the lenses of the reviewers keen to use them as models for their own times.

According to Hawthorne (1899) certain historical events, such as the American Revolution, produced ‘parliamentary giants’ unequalled in oratory. They are portrayed as the great protectors of the liberties of Englishmen (see Hawthorne 1899/1900, iv–v). The preference of oratory over debate was related to the constitutional arrangement of the period as well as the sense of responsibility among members of the House of Commons. Redlich has noted that the eighteenth-century Commons was ‘an assembly of gentlemen’ with similar, privileged backgrounds and tacit assumptions of ‘the noble parliamentary game’ (Redlich 1908, vol. 1, 67). It was taken for granted that the ancient parliamentary conventions and procedures were not used for party political purposes: ‘For all parties and sections of the whole governing class united in maintaining as the cardinal conception of the state that the machine of government must never be brought to a stop, that the function of Parliament must never be risked in the struggles of party’ (ibid., 68).

As parties and their political contest became part of the constitutional setting in the middle of nineteenth century, debate became more accentuated instead of oratory. This shift is shown in contemporary portraits of parliamentarians. In his first essay on the Earl of Chatham (1834) Macaulay described him as an unsuccessful debater, though he was otherwise considered a model parliamentarian:

[H]e was not a great debater. That he should not have been so when first he entered the House of Commons is not strange. Scarcely any person has ever become so without long practice and many failures. [...] But, as this art is one which even the ablest men have seldom acquired without long practice, so it is one which men of respectable abilities, with assiduous and intrepid

practice, seldom fail to acquire. It is singular that, in such art, Pitt, a man of great parts, of great fluency, of great boldness, a man whose whole life was passed in parliamentary conflict, a man who, during several years, was the leading minister of the Crown in the House of Commons, should never have attained to high excellence. (Macaulay 1834/1913, 18)

It is clear that Macaulay did not admire the style of public speaking on the same standards as those who emphasised the value of oratory. Instead, he supported the same values as Gladstone for whom training and practice in public speaking acquired through rising to the occasion in various parliamentary conflicts ultimately determined the style of politics. Certainly, Macaulay's interpretation was also influenced by the early experience he had gained in the debates of the Cambridge Union Society.

However, Gladstone's and Macaulay's views of public speaking were not shared by all contemporaries. George Henry Francis's *Orators of the Age* (1847) was published as separate articles on leading parliamentarians' 'conduct and personal character' in *Fraser's Magazine* from 1845 onwards. As typical of the genre of parliamentary portraits, Francis treated his chosen parliamentarians without reference to each other. As he portrayed them as individual speakers, he did not consider his subject matter from the point of view of debate and conflictual argumentation. Indeed, he wrote that his portraits were intentionally written so that there would be as little as possible to remind the reader of party politics (Francis 1847, iii–iv). It was a markedly different aim from that of Macaulay's essay in which 'parliamentary conflict' was recognised as a key element.

We can also contrast Francis's arguments to De Mille's typology of public speaking in his *Elements of Rhetoric* (1878).¹⁶ In the 1882 edition of his rhetorical manual De Mille makes a distinction between 'oratory' and 'debate':

Oratory is the discussion of a subject by one; debate is the discussion of a subject by more than one. Oratory considers the subject from one point of view; debate considers the subject from two or more opposed points of view' (De Mille 1878/1882, 471)

He describes 'oratory' as one-sided speech. 'Debate', in contrast, is speech from at least two opposing sides, which is further divided into two distinct forms: controversial and parliamentary debate. Controversial debate is a 'natural' form of expressing dissent: people are by their nature prone to

engage themselves in controversies, and therefore debates are unavoidable. Parliamentary debates, for their part, are something more procedural: ‘The peculiarity of parliamentary debate is that the subject to be examined is presented in a formal statement, called a resolution, or question, to which alone the discussion must refer’ (De Mille 1878/1882, 472).

De Mille argues that the parliamentary form has overtaken the controversial since it provides for a more thorough treatment of a subject. He sees parliamentary debate as ‘one of the finest exhibitions of the powers of the human mind’ in which all intellectual powers are used for discussing ‘a subject from many points of view, in which two opposite forces struggle for the victory’ (De Mille 1878/1882, 473). Francis, in contrast, disregards the consideration of opposing sides and accentuates individual oratorical performances. He further argues that the House of Commons deserves to be called ‘a giant debating-club’ when party struggles reduce it to ‘a mere battle-field for gladiatorial combats’, of which purpose is ‘personal distinction and public honor [*sic*] alone’ (Francis 1847, 16). He portrays debate as an inferior activity claiming also that, at the time of his writing, British eloquence had declined compared to the quality of the past. In his view, the only parliamentary orators deserving of their eminence are found in the period from the 1770s until the 1840s, for they were subjected to each other’s mutual criticism and scrutiny. Francis described them as ‘indifferent’ to outside demands:

It is in the *animus* that vivified the speeches of the elder orators—their concentration of soul—their indifference to all external modifying influences, to all but the full development of the spontaneous creations of their intellects, that modern speeches are deficient. (Francis 1847, 18)

Francis’s conception of parliamentary oratory was very much an apologetics for the traditions of the past. He struggled to come to terms with the outside influence on parliamentarians complaining that the Commons had become ‘the property of the public’ (Francis 1847, 19–20). In Francis’s view parliamentary eloquence is a matter of talent obtained in pristine conditions. Now that the House of Commons had come under greater scrutiny by the general public, its character had completely changed. He seems to suggest that parliamentary oratory is at its purest in the absence of party political expediency or short-term goals.

Francis (1847, 21) argues that, when there is no immediate need for change, an orator acts without self-interest. Politics is, therefore, only resorted to at times of necessity. Hawthorne (1899) seems to have a similar view that the greatest oratory in Parliament is only attained at times of distress. This idea was shared by many eighteenth-century commentators on eloquence (Potkay 1994, 26). British oratory was conceived as belonging to a tradition of eloquence stemming from antiquity. The concept of eloquence was, therefore, understood in terms of former ages (*ibid.*, 31).

William Gerard Hamilton's (1729–1796) posthumously published manual entitled *Parliamentary Logick* (1808) serves as an example. In this manual for parliamentarians Hamilton explicitly applied ancient Roman rhetoric to parliamentary speaking by advising about what techniques were the most persuasive to use in the British Parliament. For instance, his book included a variety of examples about how and when to use oratorical wit: '*Reductio ad absurdum* is the best style of argument for a popular assembly. Consider there for not only the mere weakness of your adversary's argument, but the absurdities of which it is necessarily productive' (Hamilton 1808/1927, 40). Hamilton's fragmentary manual shows an attempt to compile the first comprehensive treatise on parliamentary rhetoric in a way that would serve the needs of debate. The aspect of collecting rhetorical devices for the use of parliamentary orators makes his tract clearly part of the classical rhetorical tradition. Hamilton's pamphlet further proves that classical rhetoric was not altogether absent from the political thought of the eighteenth century.

In light of the great changes affecting the House of Commons the ideals of the past were increasingly difficult to realise, as Francis described. Traditionally the business of the House of Commons has been regarded as analogous to a 'grand inquest of the nation' (Thomas 1971, 14). In the eighteenth century the proverb was used to describe parliamentary business as continuous conflicts between the opposition and the Crown's ministers. The constitutional practice of cabinet government, however, changed the configuration in that the ministry, consisting of members of Parliament, was now held responsible for their policies to the majority of the House of Commons. Therefore, the business of the House, which was still based on procedure favouring the minority, had to accommodate to a new setting. The cabinet was reliant on the majorities, and these were more difficult to maintain in circumstances where individual members had strong privileges.

In his essay on public speaking Gladstone defined ‘eloquence’ as a practical activity as well as a subject of study (in Reid 1953, 268). ‘Eloquence of the study’ refers to a written form, whereas practical eloquence is defined as debate. Like Blair, Gladstone deplores any style of public speaking that takes place without conviction. In his view, a subject can be treated brilliantly in a written declamation, but appear too didactic and pompous when performed in front of an audience. In short, the artificiality of a written speech becomes clear when it is uttered. The reason why written speeches fail to convince in debate, he suggests, is that they undermine the contingency of the speech situation. In a case where the situation is imagined beforehand and the speech is delivered regardless of what has been uttered by the others before, the parliamentary audience will not be convinced. As a former member of the Oxford Union and an elected member of Parliament, Gladstone took debate as the highest form of rhetoric.

The gradual constitutional shift to cabinet government is shown in Gladstone’s description of parliamentary debate. For him, debate is dependent on a ‘principle of sympathy’ (in Reid 1953, 269), where the passions are moved by confrontation. The aim of the debater is to win over the sympathy of the audience. The key is to carefully observe the ‘mood of the moment’: ‘The ultimate construction therefore of his speech is the work of the moment’ (ibid.). If we take Parliament as a model for debate, he argues, it is imperative to recall that parties play a significant role. Therefore, the debater must consider his fellow party members, as he ‘rises as it were on behalf of those among whom he sits’ (ibid., 270).

Party politics and struggle became increasingly integral to the functioning of the constitutional arrangement of cabinet government in the middle of the nineteenth century (see Hawkins 1989). However, this does not mean that there was no party conflict in the eighteenth century. Reid has argued that eighteenth-century Britain was already a ‘debating nation’ (Reid 2012, 11). Reports of parliamentary speeches were reaching a wider national audience and affecting opinion building as well as the rhetorical culture out of doors. However, the procedural element of parliamentary debate was still mainly left to the knowledge of parliamentarians. Gronbeck (1982) has studied the eighteenth-century use of procedure in the House of Commons. He maintains that parliamentarians had to possess procedural knowledge in order to be politically competent (ibid., 43). But this knowledge was not transferred to the public until the nineteenth century when the procedural aspect of debate started to become more generally recognised.

In a *Times* column marking the fiftieth anniversary of the Oxford Union Society, debate was mentioned in favourable terms:

Debating implies comparison of opinions and occasional submission. It is vastly better than the wordy declamation of the platform or the table, where there is no reply, and, consequently, little fairness. It is vastly better, too, than the endless overflow of the aristocratic visionary or the plebeian demagogue, who never listens to anything but his own sweet voice, or consults anything but his own admired egotism. (*The Times* 1873, 1)

It was debate from the opposite sides of a question that became generally considered as a fairer form of public speaking than, for example, declamation. It was not enough to imitate the speeches of leading politicians or respond to them by writing letters in local newspapers. Instead, there became a strong demand for debate in the parliamentary style. This is shown, not just in the adoption of parliamentary-style debating practices, but also in the publication of a new genre of handbooks.

Reginald Palgrave, the clerk assistant of the House of Commons, wrote a manual for the use of public meetings and county boards. First published in 1869, the book's main objective was to assist chairmen who wished to follow the 'method employed by Speakers of the House of Commons' (Palgrave 1869/1878, v). Palgrave's predecessor, Erskine May, had already noted 'confusion' in public meetings, especially relating to the use of amendments, where no 'fixed principles and rules' were followed. He was of the opinion that 'it would be well for persons in the habit of presiding at meetings of any description, to make themselves familiar with the rules of Parliament in regard to questions and amendments; which have been tested by long experience, and are found as simple and efficient in practice, as they are logical in principle.' (May 1844, 180)

The parliamentary rules of debate were circulated through several other manuals and their conception of debate was repeated in the practices of various debating societies and clubs. The Speaker of the Liverpool Parliamentary Debating Society, Charles Willett, produced a rule book in 1880 in which he described the debating society as serving as 'an *educational medium* for Parliamentary Debate, and for the purpose of discussing "Political and Social Topics", according to the rules and forms of the House of Commons, as far as may be practicable' (Willett 1880, 5; emphasis in the original text).

In 1913 Earl Curzon of Kedleston¹⁷ noted that, within the past fifty years, the need to ‘go back to the ancients’ or to the study of ‘oratorical masterpieces of our own country’ had given way to more practical forms of learning public speaking: ‘The power of speech that a man takes to the House [of Commons] when he enters it is that which has been developed in the college debating society, or on the platform, but not in the study of the past’ (Curzon 1913, 11). Rhetorical training for a parliamentary career was now serving for practical and more extemporaneous purposes, reflecting the needs of party politics.

Alongside parliamentary debate there was also the new form of platform oratory that required special consideration of the audience.¹⁸ In contrast to parliamentary speaking where the political opponent was in the same audience and rules of debate had to be observed, the platform orator addresses ‘members of his own political party’ who ‘come to hear him perform’. And, in that position, he is ‘free from interruption save such as springs from the often useful interjections of scattered opponents, or the indiscriminating enthusiasm of friends’ but ‘no one can refute him or say him nay’ (Curzon 1913, 15–16). Curzon considers platform oratory as a vital medium for party leaders. A ‘statesman’ needs the ability to gain wide support of his party and the nation which is tested in the political platform. But, it is a very different form of action compared to parliamentary debate.

When it comes to parliamentary eloquence, Curzon, contrary to Francis, does not seriously consider it as being in a state of deterioration or long for a time long gone. He maintains that eloquence in Parliament is always tested in practice by whether the audience is impressed or not. In this sense Curzon is more inclined than Francis to view parliamentary eloquence as contingent and adaptable in its form. Curzon also takes into consideration the fact that parliamentary audiences now prefer shorter speeches to displays of talent lasting for hours as the agenda has become more diverse (Curzon 1913, 19–20). It is, in his view, only natural that, in the past the purpose of debate in the House of Commons created occasions for oratory, as the form and volume of legislation was different. In fact, Curzon points out that the style of speaking in the so-called ‘Golden Age’ would now seem ridiculous and out of place. Although the fineries of classical rhetoric are not present or even appreciated any more in the House of Commons, he argues that the general quality of speech has risen in the past fifty years. What is now

expected from a parliamentary speaker is the standard of a public meeting (Curzon 1913, 21).

All in all, Curzon emphasises the importance of public speech and its training for national politics. He makes a clear distinction between ‘oratory’ and ‘eloquence’. More specifically, Curzon avoids the term ‘oratory’, arguing that no such art as was taught or practised by the ancients exists. ‘Eloquence’, however, means something that occurs irrespective of the age. For him it is ‘the highest manifestation of the power of speech’, and one which the public speakers of his time were still capable of performing (Curzon 1913, 4).

In rhetorical treatises and manuals the concept of rhetoric had a wide spectrum and it was used for a variety of purposes. In many eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century treatises on parliamentary eloquence the ‘greatest oratory’ was attributed to the leading politicians and times of crisis (cf. e.g. Hawthorne 1899). The style and manner of declamation were the main objects of interest and the character of the parliamentarian his highest virtue. In the majority of oratory tracts parliamentary speeches were presented as individual displays of honour and skill. Furthermore, debate and procedure were not discussed, or they were treated as inferior forms of parliamentary activity. For example, Francis argued that, whenever Commons had ‘combats’ between parliamentarians, it reduced its oratory to mere performance and show of talent. Compared to Francis’s account of parliamentary speech, Curzon’s description does not take oratory as its guiding principle. As he delivered his lecture in 1913, parliamentary speaking was already rather limited to short interventions in debates. By the mid-nineteenth century parliamentary speeches were more likely to be interpreted as parts of debate than before. Macaulay and Gladstone, both former Union Society members, were among those who accentuated the debating skills as a requisite for a successful parliamentarian. It was mainly due to the increasing publicity of parliamentary proceedings and the new constitutional setting that emphasised debating instead of declamation and set speeches. These changes in the parliamentary culture do not come across from the rhetorical treatises of the nineteenth century. However, we may get a sense of the effects by taking a look at what kinds of practices were adopted and used in the Union Societies.

NOTES

1. According to the constitutional settlement, Britain had been a constitutionally limited monarchy since the Glorious Revolution of 1688. The ‘balance of powers’ theory was based on an idea of the mutual check of power between three branches of government: the Crown, the House of Lords, and the House of Commons.
2. This practice is in direct contrast, for example, to the United States where the Cabinet members cannot simultaneously serve as elected representatives. In Norway and the Netherlands, cabinet ministers are Members of Parliament but they vacate their seats temporarily after becoming nominated to government.
3. Hanmer (1809–1889) had been educated at Eton and Christ Church, Oxford. He was appointed treasurer of the Union in Easter term 1829. After entering Parliament as MP for Shrewsbury (1832–1837), he later represented Kingston upon Hull (1841–1847) and Flint Boroughs (1847–1872).
4. The history of the legislative powers of the British House of Commons is connected with petitions. At least since the fourteenth century the House of Commons’ proceedings were mainly related to petitions from outside and inside of Parliament. The individual and group petitions from outside of Parliament became later known as ‘private bills’, and the collective ones from members of the House of Commons were named ‘public bills’ (Campion 1929/1958, 11).
5. I will discuss in more detail the politics involved in the revision of the rules in the Unions in Chapter 5.
6. To accuse the House of Commons of immoderate amounts of debate was nothing new. The Crown’s spokesmen had used the same allegation in pre-revolutionary Commons while, at the same time, making full use of their rhetorical skills (Peltonen 2013, 210–211).
7. Also known as Henry Bickersteth, one of the founders of the Cambridge Union Society; see section ‘The Foundation of the Cambridge and Oxford Unions in the Early 1800s’ in Chapter 2.
8. Henry Nutcombe Oxenham (1829–1888) was educated at Harrow and went to Balliol College, Oxford, in 1846. He became theologian and author contributing regularly to the *Saturday Review*.

9. The debate topic was ‘That association is the only principle by which the welfare of the people can be secured and the true ideal of a state attained’ (OUS minute book vol. 7, 13 March 1852).
10. It should be noted, however, that the House of Commons did consider coverage of its debates ‘in contempt of Parliament’ until 1971. See <http://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/evolutionofparliament/parliamentwork/communicating/overview/hereonsufferance/> (accessed 23 November 2016).
11. Bentham’s pamphlet was not fully published during his lifetime. I have used the edition in *The Works of Jeremy Bentham* collected by John Bowring published in 1839.
12. His followers were later involved in an attempt to arrange parliamentary debates in a publication with commentaries. The publication was named *Parliamentary History and Review*. It only appeared twice in the late 1820s.
13. Richard Whately (1787–1863) was an educator, logician and social reformer. He was elected to the professorship of political economy at Oxford in 1829 and held the office until 1831 when he was appointed as the Archbishop of Dublin.
14. Cf. section ‘Training of Debaters in the Union Societies’ in Chapter 2.
15. I will come back to this argument later when I discuss the politics of agenda and the adoption of the parliamentary procedure in the Union Societies in Chapter 4.
16. James De Mille (1833–1880) was a Canadian novelist and a professor of rhetoric. Rhetorical manuals and public-speaking tracts were written on both sides of the Atlantic from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century.
17. George Nathaniel Curzon (1859–1925) had been educated at Eton and at Oxford University, where he participated in the activities of the Union Society, becoming its president in 1880. He entered Parliament as a representative of the Conservative party in 1886. He served as Undersecretary of State for the Conservative government, and was later nominated Viceroy of India (1898–1905). After his return to England, Curzon was appointed Chancellor of the University of Oxford (1907), and created Earl in 1911. During the First World War he returned to Parliament and served in the cabinets of Asquith and Lloyd George.
18. For a discussion on the rise of the political platform in nineteenth-century Britain, see e.g. Meisel (2001).

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The Politics of Agenda in the Union Debates

By the nineteenth century there existed at least three types of associations relating to the parliamentary political culture of the time, all with a different relationship to the parliamentary model of acting politically. First, there were extra-parliamentary movements demanding parliamentary reform in the 1830s and 1840s that attracted thousands of people. Such political associations—the best example of which had been the Anti-Corn Law League—relied on platform oratory (Ostrogorski 1964, 67). Cobden and Bright, who became long-serving MPs, started their public careers from the ranks of the League. While these radical clubs and associations had an important role as pressure groups, they did not remain active after the Parliament started to enact the reforms they called for. These types of movements did not seriously threaten Parliament as a constitutional institution during the period. Rather, their aim was to increase parliamentary representation (*ibid.*, 69).

There were also a number of private political clubs that had parliamentary connections. The most famous, and still existing, are the Carlton and Reform Clubs. Conservatives established the Carlton Club after the fall of the Duke of Wellington's government in 1830. It became the political headquarters of the Conservative Party until 1853 (Phelps 1983, 1–2). The Reform Club was founded in 1836 with the intention to organise the Whigs and Radicals for the cause of reform (Woodbridge 1978, 2). They have traditionally been described as the first political clubs, due to their connections with the formation of party organisations. This understanding

can be challenged for at least two reasons. First of all, there had previously existed political clubs formed around leading parliamentarians, such as the various Pitt Clubs. Second, what is termed ‘political’ in connection with the clubs of the time fails to take into account those that were not tied to party politics.

The Union Societies did not participate in the kind of politics that has been attributed to the Carlton or Reform Clubs: they were not founded around a specific policy or by a political group. Nor did they advocate platform oratory with a view towards the extension of suffrage or other extra-parliamentary demands. Instead, the Union Societies represent a third type of political association, one that connects specifically with parliamentary political culture. What distinguishes these kinds of societies from others is the way they allow ‘adversaries’ in the same audience. The adversarial politics they advocate has inspired debating in Britain for centuries, deriving its force from classical rhetoric literature (see e.g. Peltonen 2013).

This chapter discusses in more detail how parliamentary politics, and the underlying idea of political conflict, shaped the debates of the Union Societies. In terms of sources, the analytical focus is on the public business meetings of the Societies.¹ The ‘public’ nature of these meetings referred to the debates, which were on topics of current public interest. The public debates were instrumental in attracting new members. What ultimately preserved the Union Societies was that they could harness a wide range of members from the universities.² The Union Societies became relatively open in terms of membership, considering how they had started out with the rather club-like characteristics of exclusivity.³ The issues debated were part of the attraction. The topics ranged from the arts, literature, history and religion to the politics of the day. The debates increasingly had explicit references to the politics debated in contemporary Westminster. Topics such as parliamentary and suffrage reform, the ballot, the confidence of governments, ministers or individual MPs, or the domestic and foreign policies of the current governments became part of the debates in the Unions. The shift in the type of topics, from more general and historical to politics of the day, also marked a turn away from mere experimenting with debating skills to the formation of political stands among the students—the number of students participating at the debates and votes also increased since the mid-nineteenth century. It is this familiarity with the actual Westminster debates which later contributed to making the Union Societies known as training grounds for parliamentarians.

AGENDA SETTING IN THE UNION SOCIETIES

In contrast to the British Parliament, the debates of the Union Societies do not bear any subsequent importance in terms of national policymaking or representation in general. Additionally, matters of urgency do not disrupt their deliberations. The Union Societies do, however, meet the traditional characteristics of a parliamentary body. Parliamentary bodies tend to follow the pattern of formulating resolutions based on debates that begin with motions. According to Redlich (1908, vol. 2, 215), ‘motion’ and ‘resolution’ are the historical building blocks of a parliamentary body. They are the two fundamental components of parliamentary activity. In short, they form the pattern of formulating a decision (i.e. resolution) following a debate on a question (i.e. motion) brought before the parliamentary body. The Union Societies follow the same model: their motions are turned into resolutions after the final vote.

Agenda setting in the Union Societies was limited to a rule that a subject that had already been debated upon during one term was not allowed to be discussed again. That rule is also part of parliamentary procedure (cf. May 1844, 186). Adopted since the seventeenth century, a question once put and decided upon was not allowed to be reintroduced during the same session ‘but must stand as a judgment of the House’ (Hatsell 1781/1818, 125). The rule was applied with the aim of minimising unresolved questions before the House. The rule could, however, be bent to a certain extent by moving an adjournment during the debate. May referred to the adjournment of the house as a way of ‘evading or superseding a question’ under consideration (May 1844, 172). A motion of adjournment often involves a delay to the decision. For this purpose it was frequently applied in the nineteenth-century House of Commons debates (see section ‘Revision of Debating Procedures from 1837 to 1861’ in Chapter 3).

Parliamentary rules of debate are not only regulative but can be used rhetorically, as ‘their “competent” or “effective” use depends upon knowledge of their rhetorical effects on others’ (Gronbeck 1982, 52). A member could, for example, postpone a debate to a later date by proposing a motion of adjournment of the House. The use of this procedural device affects the timing of the debate and adds more room for discussion. Motions of adjournment may be proposed without prior notice. Additionally, they may be used as an ‘urgency motion’ in cases in which there is a specific question that needs the immediate attention of the House (Redlich 1908,

vol. 2, 219). It is a matter of rhetorical skill to propose such motions for the consideration of the assembly.⁴

In the Union Societies as well, any member could propose an adjournment of debate at any time. A motion of adjournment could, effectively, end the debate. At Cambridge, the rule that the debates were supposed to end by 9:45 p.m. (cf. CUS laws 1824, 1–2) was abolished by 1841. In the Oxford Union, there did not exist at first any precise deadline for ending the debate, but a member could move that the House adjourn by a certain time; to pass, the motion required a qualified majority of votes (OUS rules 1839, 31). Adjournments could be moved by a member without giving notice. However, once the motion had been put to and lost in a division, adjournment could not be moved again for at least half an hour (*ibid.*). The rule was a precaution against excessive disruption during the debates. Because motions to adjourn the debate could be proposed without notice, someone could have used the rule for obstructive purposes. The laws of the Cambridge Union did not recognise a motion of adjournment until 1845.

Unlike their counterparts in the House of Commons, members of the Union Societies had plenty of opportunities to speak for and against motions. From very early on, however, both Unions had already adopted the parliamentary rule that limited members to speaking only once on the same topic (e.g. ‘No Member shall be allowed to speak twice on the regular subject of debate’ in CUS laws 1824, 8; ‘No Member shall be permitted to speak more than once during the Debate’ in OUS rules 1837, 7). In the debates the speakers could only speak for and against a question, which is the most familiar format for parliamentary speaking.

The consideration of both sides of a question points to the classical past (cf. Hakewill 1659; also Palonen 2008, 83). The transfer of this practice from classical rhetoric to political institutions happened more or less due to the systematic implementation of the humanist programme in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the traces of which were almost lost in nineteenth-century university curricula but can be found in the debating practices of Parliament and debating societies. Debating on both sides of a question had already been practised at Burke’s ‘Club’ in the 1740s. But questions were not put in parliamentary form. Also at the Speculative Society, which was the main model available during the early years of the Cambridge Union, debate topics only assumed a simple question of yes or no: for example, ‘Ought any permanent support to be provided for the poor?’ (The Speculative Society of Edinburgh 1905, 9).

The manner in which topics were proposed did not at first follow parliamentary procedure in the Cambridge Union either. Debate topics were delivered as ordinary questions: ‘Is the Principle of the Salique Law worthy of adoption in Hereditary Monarchies?’ (CUS minute book vol. 6, 9 February 1830). In this particular feature, Cambridge was somewhat slower in the parliamentarisation of the rules than Oxford where the parliamentary style of proposing motions was already applied in 1824 (see *Transactions of the Oxford Union Debating Society: 1823–1825*). Around 1842 the Cambridge Union adopted the parliamentary form: ‘That the Salique Law was a proper measure’ (CUS minute book vol. 12, 2 May 1843).

Later both Unions started adopting new forms of expression that represented more the nature of the resolutions as jointly formed: ‘That the House looks with alarm ...’ (CUS minute book vol. 14, 22 February 1848), or ‘That in the opinion of this House ...’ (OUS minute book vol. 9, 17 May 1860). Some of the formulations clearly indicate that the debates were conducted with a view towards a judgement on the matter: ‘That this House, considering the National Church should be an integral part of the British Constitution, is opposed to the abolition of Church Rates on grounds of principle as well as of expediency’ (Abbot: OUS minute book vol. 9, 28 February 1861). The motions were explicitly drafted for the purpose of coming to a joint decision after the debate. This, of course, was also the aim of parliamentary debate (Campion 1929/1958, 20).

In the Union Societies the agendas for public business meetings were set either by members themselves or by the standing committees. At Cambridge it was the tradition to decide among all the members present in a public meeting after voting on a debate what questions would be debated next. In the early days of the Union, members were each in turn required to participate in formulating debate topics: ‘Every member shall open a debate in his turn, unless he provide a substitute; but a preference shall be given to the proposer of the question chosen’ (CUS laws 1824, 7). However, two years later the rule was amended so that ‘any member may propose a subject for debate, [...] but if no question be proposed, it shall be incumbent on the Treasurer and Secretary each to submit one to the choice of the Society’ (CUS laws 1826, 4). The obligation to submit questions for debate was thereby transferred to the elected officers. But the official selection of the topics remained in the hands of the full meeting, not a committee.

At Oxford Union, the committee (later known as the standing committee) was mainly in charge of the agenda. However, any member could propose a debate topic by delivering a written notice of it to the committee (OUS rules 1856, 40). Debate topics were, at first, chosen and announced three weeks before they were put before the meeting. The rule was, however, later changed and thereafter the announcement was required only five days before the debate (*ibid.*, 36), leaving less time to get acquainted with the subject. After the selection of topic was made, the question was put in the form of a motion at the next public business meeting.

Motions for adjournment and points of order, as well as amendments and riders⁵ to a motion, take precedence in a debate because they can be introduced without notice. They can also be best described as chances to speak about something that was not mentioned in the original motion or to introduce a proposition that is the complete opposite. In other words, they open up new horizons or fields of argument to the debate. In comparison with the Cambridge meetings, the Oxford records clearly exhibit more amendments being put forward during its debates. This shows that the original questions put from the chair were more actively amended than in the case of the Cambridge Union. The difference may partly derive from the simple fact that, at Cambridge, the debate topics were presented to the house and voted upon for selection, whereas at Oxford the topics were selected and put in the form of motion by the standing committee. The amendments put forward during Oxford Union public meetings might, in some cases, have been more frequent due to the perceived misinterpretations of the standing committee of what the proposer had intended as a motion. But it does not explain the difference altogether, as the comparison shows a distinct divergence from the practice of the Cambridge Union Society.

Members of both Unions were subjected to fines for showing any disrespect for the meetings, which comes close to the idea of unparliamentary behaviour (cf. Redlich 1908, vol. 2, 141). A member could also be fined for neglecting to open a motion that had been approved by the standing committee (OUS rules 1853, 35). At Cambridge, fines were imposed especially in cases when members disturbed the meetings or defied the authority of the president (CUS laws 1834, 4). These kinds of rules show that the Union Societies devised their rules not just to imitate parliamentary politics, but to make the rules more conducive to facilitate their own political practices.

The political aspects of agendas in Unions' meetings are best illustrated by debates that included an additional motion, such as a rider or an amendment. For example, the Oxford Union Society debated the motion 'That the present ministry are undeserving of the confidence of the country', which was proposed by Fowler of Pembroke College and to which Hussey of Balliol moved the rider:⁶

That our want of confidence is occasioned by their cowardice in shrinking from the obvious duty of destroying the present Church Establishment in Ireland, and of adapting generally the institutions of the country to the inevitable progress of Democracy. (Hussey: OUS minute book vol. 4, 9 June 1836)

Hussey's rider disapproves of the present situation.⁷ Had his rider gained a majority of votes, it would have been added to the original motion. It seems that it would have provided more argumentative power to the resolution. Those who would have been in favour of the original motion in the first place would, however, have to be persuaded that these were the precise reasons for their disapproval of the ministry. The house was then adjourned and the debate resumed on 11 June, when Cornish of Christ Church moved another rider:⁸

That our want of confidence is grounded as well on the degrading alliance with O'Connell, as on the miserable experience which the English people have had of genuine Whig policy, the supporters of which have consulted the interests of a faction at the expense of a nation, have preferred tortuous paths to an honest and straightforward course, *availing themselves of temporary expedients, instead of relying on fixed principles*, and have ever been found the ready tools for measures, the disastrous consequences of which they were not sagacious enough to foresee, or too unprincipled to regard. (Cornish: OUS minute book vol. 4, 11 June 1836; emphasis added TH)

There were now two competing riders to the original motion. Cornish's rider adds more information on the political context to which this debate originally referred. In it, the Whig policy in general is rhetorically portrayed as unreliable. In the rider proposed by Hussey, however, the disapprobation is directed against only one incident.

Rhetorically speaking, the setting of a political agenda refers to *inventio*. In a parliamentary setting *inventio* is perhaps best described as the invention of arguments either for or against an issue, where the speakers use the

commonplaces, or *topoi*, particular to the debate themes to persuade their audience. A similar setting is found in classical rhetorical treatises and also later in English renaissance humanist tracts and textbooks (see Skinner 1996; Mack 2002; Peltonen 2013). In classical rhetoric *loci communes* or *topoi* refer to conventions that are learnt and used in appropriate circumstances in order to win favour with an audience. It is assumed that speakers participating in a debate can identify these conventions and apply them to further their own agendas.

The debate just discussed provides a glimpse of the formulation of motions in the Union debates and how debates could be directed for various political purposes by linguistic means. For this purpose, amendments and riders are important for my analysis of how motion formulation could be used to direct the debates. They serve as excellent examples of the political use of all the rhetorical commonplaces I will analyse in more detail in the following section. It is in the rhetoric of the topics introduced that we can also see various trends and connections to the politics of the day.

FORMULATION OF MOTIONS

The sources that were selected for this analysis date from 1830 and until around 1870. The four decades coincide with a period in British history when petitions for reform constantly appeared before the House of Commons (see Chapter 3). After the passing of the 1832 Reform Act further reforms became seen more generally as ‘improvements’ demanded by the times, though they had to be reconciled with past requirements (Briggs 1959/1984, 437). A great majority of the debate topics in the Union Societies related to reform questions in general. Some attention will also be paid to the way the discussion themes vary according to different periods of time.

More generally, the subjects debated at Union meetings were extremely varied. The issues stretch from the state of drama to questions concerning patriotic duty. Not only was a wide variety of topics represented, resolutions included matters ranging from literary preferences to judgments on the performance of past or present British governments. Due to the fact that the sources do not allow us access to the arguments actually presented in the meetings, the rhetorical analysis here is limited to the formulations of the motions. The idea is that these formulations can give clues for identifying broader debates, proposed standpoints and compromises between them, even when the actual argumentation used in Union debates is not available.

I focus on the *rhetorical patterns* of putting questions in the meetings in order to highlight how the language used in the motions provides information about the way political action was understood based on the information available at the time about debates in the Westminster Parliament. In other words, the analysis prioritises the forms over the substance of the motions, although the examples I provide also show how closely the members of the Union Societies were following the current politics.

To find out what kinds of commonplaces, or *topoi*, members of the Union Societies used, I will conduct a rhetorical reading of the motions and resolutions presented in the debates. Given that the motions entail resolutions, the following typology provides a tool for understanding at what kinds of resolutions the debates were aimed. The *topoi* of the Union Societies' resolutions can be divided into four categories:

1. Principle (whether or not something is desirable or justified)
2. Character (legitimate or commendable action, or the opposite)
3. Expediency (whether or not something is beneficial to some party or is convenient)
4. Vote of confidence (to a government on a policy or a political decision)

Even though the *topoi* are not all-inclusive and may even overlap, they do indicate starting points for further analysis of how political agency was rhetorically conceived in the Union Societies. They can serve as identifiable directions of political activity, showing which way the debate turns at any given point.

The four types of formulations should be considered abstractions of the debates, not representations of their substance. While making the typology, it was assumed that the formulations used are directed towards certain resolutions: the speakers of each debate spoke for or against the given motion before voting on them. The vote taken after the debate is the moment when a motion turns into a resolution. For example, a 'vote of confidence' directs attention to a course of action. At the same time, it refers to representation: whether or not the actions of elected representatives merit approval. For example, in the event that a motion was formulated 'That the administration of the Duke of Wellington is undeserving of the confidence of the country' (Gladstone: OUS minute book vol. 1, 11 November 1830) it is fair to assume that the debate for and against included arguments either supporting or opposing the

government. The object of the debate, therefore, and ultimately the resolution, was a vote of confidence.

Principle

In cases where a motion suggested that a course of action *should* be based on a certain theory or idea, it is here considered a resolution based on ‘principle’. In ancient Roman rhetoric it corresponds to *honestas*, the commonplace that prioritises the virtuous character of things (Cicero 1942, Sect. III, 377, col. 90). It is the most frequently employed *topos* of the four as it represents a form of opinion based on political preference in relation to a course of action: ‘That it is desirable the British possessions at the Cape of Good Hope be abandoned’ (Stephen: CUS minute book vol. 15, 26 October 1852). ‘Principle’ relates to an underlying theory or idea that supports proposed actions. The motion presented in Cambridge Union is framed to induce a debate on the justifications of British actions abroad. An amendment to the motion was formulated that ‘this House, considering the Cape of Good Hope, in its present state, a very unprofitable possession, is of opinion, that more energetic measures for subjugating the Kaffirs should be immediately adopted’ (Carte: CUS minute book vol. 15, 26 October 1852). In Stephen’s motion there seems to be no indication of the grounds for the argument.⁹ In Carte’s amendment, however, one reason for why the possession of the Cape of Good Hope should be abandoned has been provided.¹⁰ Whereas the original motion asks whether it is ‘desirable’ to abandon British possessions at the Cape of Good Hope, the amendment provides a justification for it being ‘unprofitable’ and suggests a remedy to the situation. The amendment gives a better description of the issue at stake. This shows also that motions that are formulated in the form of ‘principle’ usually entail a value judgment which is not always directly expressed.

The motions that included some kind of principle suggest that, in order to pass them as resolutions, the debate had to include a judgment on conduct that was more speculative than based on immediate experience. ‘Principle’ motions include such themes as duty, rights, freedom, justice, sound policy and sovereignty. These topics were all as much political as any other, as the adopted parliamentary procedure of arguing for and against motions implies adversary politics. For example, when the Oxford Union debated ‘That the spirit of the age is wholesome, hearty, and vigorous’ (Blackburne: OUS minute book vol. 7, 6 December 1850) the

speakers had to support their stand and find arguments from both sides of the issue. Similar rhetorical training was provided more systematically in early modern English grammar schools. Peltonen (2013) has argued that the rhetorical instruction for pre-revolutionary schoolboys was based on the assumption that politics always consisted of debate. This kind of political speech-making training equipped them with the adversarial view of politics and helped to put it into practice (ibid., 62). The Union minutes show that debates with the intention to decide about a principle often had the qualities of deliberative rhetoric with an orientation towards future or present action.

All Roman rhetoricians agreed that deliberative speeches were aimed at *honestas* and *utilitas* (Peltonen 2013, 70). Similar to *honestas*, ‘principle’ represents the classic rhetorical *topos* of morality as opposed to the political convenience of ‘expediency’, or *utilitas*. The use of the two *topoi* was associated with the Sophists in particular: ‘Ought one to do what is expedient or what is just?’ (Aristotle 1984, Sect. 12, 294, col. 20). But the same also appears in Roman rhetorical literature. For example, in Cicero’s writings there appears a standard division between ‘honourable’ (*honestum*) and ‘expedient’ (*utile*) topics (Morstein-Marx 2004, 61). The two *topoi* are often used together in Union debates as well: ‘That the Occupation of Cracow, by the three absolute powers of Europe, renders a war on the part of England and France justifiable in principle, and not inexpedient in policy, when we consider the state of liberal principles throughout Europe’ (Congreve: OUS minute book vol. 6, 25 February 1847). In this case, a war is suggested to be justified in terms of principle as well as of expediency, which makes it a classical example of a sophism.

To compare with early modern rhetorical education, political debates in the Union Societies not only engaged with many similar forms but also themes and topics. In pre-revolutionary grammar schools the instruction of political speech-making focused on legislation, taxes and foreign policy (Peltonen 2013, 62). These themes were also frequently discussed in the Union Societies. A motion relating to taxes included the ‘principle’ *topos* when Harcourt proposed,

That Lord Stanley’s proposal to remove the Income Tax for the purpose of imposing a duty upon the subsistence of the people, violates every principle of sound taxation and good government; by relieving the rich at the expense of the poor; and is calculated—by alienating the confidence of the industrious classes in the justice of Parliament—to endanger the institutions of the

country, which can only rest with safety upon the confidence and good will of the great masses of the people. (W.V. Harcourt: CUS minute book vol. 15, 18 March 1851)

This is a question of principle as the formulation includes a value judgement. The removal of the tax is disapproved in terms of injustice, institutional decline and confidence of the people. The motion is a somewhat unusual example of ‘principle’ as it is relatively detailed by showing clearly the contextual reference. It mentions ‘confidence’ but is not a vote of confidence as such. Moreover, it can also be read in terms of ‘expediency’ as it points to the disadvantageousness of the bill.

The theme of legislation, or policymaking, appears also under the *topos*: ‘That the principles on which the new Reform Bill is based are sound, wise, and practical’ (Göschel: OUS minute book vol. 8, 13 March 1854). The bill proposal on parliamentary reform is questioned here as to its foundation on sound policy, wisdom and practicality. Another example deals with British colonial policy: ‘That all legislation for the Colonies should have in view the unity of the British Empire’ (Bulstrode: CUS minute book vol. 15, 23 February 1853). It is proposed that the basis of all legislation concerning the British colonies should be founded on the principle of maintaining the empire. Again, this is a question involving an assessment of standards and priorities.

In the following example on foreign policy, it is implied that engaging in war with Russia would be unjustified: ‘That the government of this country ought to use all its influence in order to secure the liberties of Poland; but it would not be justified in making war with Russia on behalf of that country’ (Peto: CUS minute book vol. 18, 17 November 1863). Again, the formulation of the motion does not provide details as to the actual context of the debate. While the details of argumentation for and against are left unaccounted for in the proceedings, an amendment was moved providing more explanation:

That all after the word ‘That’ be omitted, and the following substituted: ‘the Government of this Country ought to abstain from all diplomatic action for the settlement of the dispute between the Russian Government and the Poles, as worse than nugatory, unless they are prepared for the alternative of War.’ (Goodman: CUS minute book vol. 18, 17 November 1863)

The amendment seems to specify the matter to which the original motion is referring. The amendment shows that the topic of the debate is not

merely about securing Poland's liberties in general but related to a current situation of hostility between the Russian government and Poland. It must also be noted that here we have a case where government policies are evaluated. Although both 'principle' and 'vote of confidence' refer to certain policy decisions, a vote of confidence either approves or disapproves of a decision to act and principle evaluates the desirability of a course of action. Therefore, in this case, the rhetorical emphasis must lie on 'principle' as both the formulation of the original motion and the amendment show a preference to an alternative policy.

As a further example on the political use of 'principle', in 1839 the Oxford Union debated the topic 'That in the present state of the Empire, it is the duty of an enlightened Government to propose a free and liberal measure of National Education' (Blackett: OUS minute book vol. 5, 9 May 1839). The original motion is formulated in a manner that suggests a debate on the duties of a government in general. It is rhetorically implied that the present government, in order to prove itself 'enlightened', has to make an initiative towards national education. Northcote of Corpus Christi College moved the amendment: 'That National Education, to be conducted on any sound and efficient principles, ought to be carried on in connection with the National Religion' (Northcote: OUS minute book vol. 5, 9 May 1839).¹¹ He suggests additional principles that should be considered in the drafting of the future policy by making the values represented by the national religion a condition of national education. The debate was adjourned till the following Thursday, on which date it was proposed

That it is an universally acknowledged principle, that the State is bound to provide for her members; so, since the alteration of our Constitution by the Acts of 1828 and 1829, the Government is bound to provide for all those Non-conformists, who, by our present Constitution, are members of the State, such education as they can accept, and as seems most calculated to improve the condition of our lower classes; and further, that it is the bounden duty of every individual, who would promote the peace and welfare of every society, to further such education. (Arnold: OUS minute book vol. 5, 16 May 1839)

Arnold's formulation suggests that there is only one 'universally' agreed 'principle' on which government policies should be based.¹² He argues that the question of national education is a constitutional rather than a religious one. But he also makes a reference of it being a moral question

by arguing that it is the duty of every individual to support education for all. In terms of contemporary political language, ‘principle’ here had a strong connotation to utilitarian philosophy. The utilitarians, also known as the Philosophic Radicals, combined the idea of scientific progress with ethics in order to create practical reforms. For Bentham, for example, the principle of utility was a universal that should be used as the basis for judicial revision in Britain (Halévy 1955, 76). He argued that legislation would best serve the interests of individuals by identifying the interests of the community.

Presumably, Arnold’s amendment has a connection to utilitarian philosophy. He formulated his argument as a motion in a very particular manner, first, by presenting a ‘universally accepted’ principle and then by drawing certain conclusions from it of the duties of individuals. Rawlinson, however, reverts to the rhetoric of duty without any direct reference to principles: ‘That in the present circumstances of the Empire, it is the duty of an enlightened Government to strengthen and support the National Church in the efforts which she is making to adapt her Educational System, and the existing wants of the Nation’ (Rawlinson: OUS minute book vol. 5, 16 May 1839).¹³ Rawlinson’s amendment seems to combine the arguments of the original motion and Northcote’s amendment. It mentions the duty of an ‘enlightened government’ of the original motion along with a consideration of religion given in Northcote’s amendment.

It was not merely the utilitarian philosophy that was put forward in the Union Society debates but, for example, the Whig ideology was also promoted when discussing the Union with Ireland (cf. Parry 2006, 130–131). The Irish question was discussed in the Oxford Union, for example, when Blackett moved ‘That the present cry for the Repeal of the Union with Ireland has arisen from our neglect of that country’ (Blackett: OUS minute book vol. 6, 22 May 1846). Likewise, the Irish issue was debated in the Cambridge Union: ‘That our present knowledge of Ireland would not justify the endowment (as proposed by some reasoners) of the Roman Catholic Religion in that country’ (Campbell: CUS minute book vol. 13, 3 November 1846).¹⁴

The liberal values of universal education and tolerance were present in many motions relating to ‘principle’. Some formulations of ‘principle’ are very clear as to their intention to influence public opinion, especially in the latter part of the time period under discussion: ‘That, in the opinion of this House, the educational system of this University does not meet the

educational wants of the times' (Seeley: CUS minute book vol. 19, 11 February 1868). Seeley's motion presents an interpretation on university politics and the requirements of education. It does not so much suggest a debate on theoretical or ideological matters but, rather, an expression of opinion with a very clear, practical object. The expression 'in the opinion of this House' shows that the motions relating to 'principle' were also beginning to be very direct in their expression of what was jointly agreed to be a desirable course of action.

The Union minute books show that 'principle' appears in the majority of motions presented in the Societies' public debates (see Appendix A). The application of this *topos* is wide and varied. 'Principle' can be used to express a stand on legal and value issues. It is found especially in those formulations that imply a potential action that does not necessarily have reference to a specific case. These kinds of motions clearly suggest deliberative rhetoric, although there might not be any immediate contextual reference in the formulation. The context is usually given in amendments and riders to the original motions. The action is expressed in terms of desirability. In terms of political activity, then, the Union members received skills in rhetorical argumentation on how to defend or oppose motions that were based on those terms.

'Expediency'

The *topos* of expediency refers to action that is concerned with the solving of a practical problem. It has a connotation of advantageousness rather than that of what is just or ideologically sound. Along with 'principle' it is the most frequently used commonplace in the Union Societies' resolutions (see Appendix B). It can be traced from the classical rhetorical *locus* of *utilitas* that is used to emphasise necessity and efficiency (Cicero 1942, Sect. III, 379–383, cols 91–97). Whenever 'expediency' is used in a debate the attention is on legitimisation of policymaking, the weighing of necessities and political consequences for future action. It is about persuading in terms of political circumstances, not just in the level of what is good or bad, but what seems to be necessary and therefore beneficial in the present context.

As was the case with 'principle', 'expediency' is mostly used to argue for or against some future action. The classical juxtaposition between 'principle' and 'expediency' was in use in the Union Societies' debates. The two are often used in the same formulation: 'That while we condemn the

Norman Invasion, as in principle unjust, with reference to its effects we must pronounce it highly beneficial' (Tickell: OUS minute book vol. 6, 20 October 1842). There also appeared debates where 'expediency' and 'principle' were included in competing amendments. For example, on 17 November 1859 the Oxford Union Society met to debate on a motion 'That Universal Suffrage is desirable, and that, while it may be questioned whether we are ripe for it at present, this House will never regard Reform as completed until it is carried' (Tollemache: OUS minute book vol. 8, 17 November 1859). The rhetoric of desirability refers to a value judgment, and therefore to the *topos* of principle. The formulation of the motion points to the idea that the reform may be accomplished only if certain circumstances are obtained in the future. Therefore, the future goal has not yet been reached, even though the necessity for change is implied. In this way the realisation of 'principle' is made conditional on 'expediency'. An amendment was moved 'That Universal Suffrage is not desirable, and that this House will never approve of any Reform Bill, which has not for its basis a property qualification' (Blennerhassett: OUS minute book vol. 8, 17 November 1859). The formulation of the amendment has a very strong connotation to 'principle', at least the principle of property, and does not include any reference to 'expediency'. An adjournment was moved and passed, and the debate resumed a week later. After several speakers, the following amendment was moved:

That this House, whilst it fully recognizes the justice and desirability of Universal Suffrage, whenever we may be ripe for it, considers that it would be neither just nor desirable that this Suffrage should give an equal voice to all who possess it. (Burney: OUS minute book vol. 8, 24 November 1859)

Here, only the 'principle' of plural voting is implied. Then Messenger¹⁵ of Lincoln College moved another amendment:

That the leading interests in the nation, not the mere predominance of numbers, are what mainly claim to be represented in the National Legislative Body; and that *this principle will be most efficiently carried out* by allowing a certain number of the learned, professional, and commercial bodies to send members to the House of Commons. (Messenger: OUS minute book vol. 8, 24 November 1859; emphasis added TH)

In Messenger's amendment both 'principle' and 'expediency' are used. The emphasis is more on 'expediency' than 'principle' in that the first

part of the motion, which defines Parliament as representing interests, is supported by the rest of the argument as being a principle itself. In short, Messenger seems to use a principle as an argument for ‘expediency’.

In some cases ‘principle’ and ‘expediency’ were used to rhetorically complement each other in the same motion. This type of formulation was presented in the Oxford Union Society when it debated ‘That the French Revolution of 1789 was justifiable, and has conferred the greatest benefits on mankind’ (Göschel: OUS minute book vol. 7, 13 November 1851). Here the first part of the motion introduces the *topos* of principle and the latter conveys the one of expediency. When Göschel uses the expression ‘greatest benefits’ he implies that the French Revolution was conducted with good intentions and, therefore, may be considered justifiable. An amendment was proposed ‘That a Revolution was necessary in France, but that it is premature to pronounce definitely concerning the good effects resulting from it, in consequence of the excesses in which the Revolution terminated’ (Butler: OUS minute book vol. 7, 13 November 1851). The amendment is formulated in a way that only accentuates ‘expediency’. The rhetoric of necessity here implies that the revolution was the best possible means to change the situation prevailing in France, though Butler added a cautionary remark concerning the assessment. Another amendment was presented by Nussey of Oriel College: ‘That the French Revolution has conferred the greatest benefits on mankind’ (Nussey: OUS minute book vol. 7, 20 November 1851).¹⁶ Unlike Göschel’s motion, where ‘principle’ was used to support ‘expediency’, in Nussey’s amendment it has been altogether abandoned. Nussey seems to suggest that the practical outcome of the revolution itself should be commended. In this way his rhetoric emphasises ‘expediency’.

In the Union debates, ‘expediency’ often appears in connection with national benefit. At Cambridge, for instance, it was debated in connection with the question of national education: ‘Is the universal extension of education a national benefit?’ (Smythe: CUS minute book vol. 14, 4 December 1838). The formulation related to national benefit was also put in the words ‘the best interests of the country’:

That this House, on account of the unsettled state of Europe, does not think the present a fitting time to remit taxes, and is of opinion that the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his budgets pays too much attention to beauty of language, and too little to the best interests of the country. (Curtis: OUS minute book vol. 9, 2 May 1861)

Here the oratorical fineries of the pre-Reform Act period are rhetorically portrayed as opposed to carrying out the best interests of the country.

The rhetoric of expediency in the formulation of motions shows more than anything that the Unions were deliberative assemblies with a strong interest in national politics. The records of both Unions show that they had Burrow's *Mirror of Parliament* and Hansard's *Parliamentary Debates* in their collections. Along with parliamentary papers, members of the Union Societies had access to several periodicals and magazines. In both Unions their reading rooms held copies of *Edinburgh Review*, *Quarterly Review*, *Fraser's Magazine* and *Westminster Review*, to name a few. In their pages there appeared a number of timely commentaries of daily politics as well as articles on eminent statesmen, literature and other current topics, which can also be found in Union debates. Göschen's motion proposed in an Oxford Union meeting in 1852 shows that the press, too, was discussed in terms of expediency: 'That the newspaper press of England has on the whole contributed beneficially to social and political progress' (Göschén: OUS minute book vol. 7, 9 December 1852). References to necessities and national benefit were part of the constitutional setting in which public opinion mattered. The debates in the House of Commons dealt with precise questions often related to private bills, the amount of which was rising exponentially in the first half of the century. In those instances the question was rarely about principles or moral justifications but concrete proposals on measures.

The formulations involving 'principle' and 'expediency' had connotations to the past as well as the present political culture. But, whereas 'principle' would involve rhetorical distance from a specific context, 'expediency' would direct attention to the advantageousness and immediateness of certain action. The examples presented show that it was not unusual for Union debate topics to have references to classical rhetoric and daily politics. The classical rhetorical juxtaposition between 'principle' and 'expediency' was frequently used in the Union debates. But the formulations reveal also how the members conceived of political action on the basis of their knowledge of current parliamentary politics. Expediency also related to the rhetoric of reform in the attempts to revise the procedure of debate in the House of Commons (see section 'Revision of Debating Procedures from 1837 to 1861' in Chap. 3). In this sense, 'expediency' referred more and more to the national benefit and necessities.

'Character'

'Character' was attached to various political arguments related to the established positions and actions of public figures (see Appendix C). Its rhetorical force came from its reference to *ethos* in the civic sense (cf. Collini 1991/2006, 109–110). Whereas 'principle' implied depersonalisation of political activity, 'character' rather connotes personalisation. In that sense the *topos* of 'character' rhetorically focuses the attention to specified political conduct and 'principle' takes distance from it.

Character was a central question already in eighteenth-century parliamentary politics. Reid has noted that character was seen in Roman terms relating to hereditary prestige and acquired reputation (Reid 2012, 158–159). It was also employed to add force to certain ideas in party political struggles (Collini 1985; Ledger-Lomas 2004). For example, the 'character' of William Pitt the Younger was employed as representing certain Tory principles decades after he had passed away. Whigs, in their turn, would define Pitt's character in a negative light in order to advance their own political agenda (Ledger-Lomas 2004, 642).¹⁷ Related to this type of politics, the Oxford Union debated in 1830 on whether the conduct of Fox and the Whigs deserved approbation: 'That the conduct of Mr Fox and his party in reference to the Treason and Seditious Bills, which were passed in the year 1795, deserved the admiration and gratitude of their country' (Moncrieff: OUS minute book vol. 1, 11 February 1830).

'Character' is related to the evaluation of political conduct but not in terms of representation, like 'vote of confidence'. At Cambridge, the character of Fox became a question of debate some years later: 'Is the political character of Fox deserving of our approbation?' (Christie: CUS minute book vol. 10, 21 November 1837). With reference to the conduct of Fox as the head of the party, it appears that a strong personalisation of politics as exhibiting a 'character' existed. Other former party leaders were also subject to debate: 'Does the political character of Mr. Burke entitle him to the approbation of posterity?' (Hopwood: CUS minute book vol. 9, 18 April 1837). In this manner, a party could also be judged on the basis of its former leader (cf. Ledger-Lomas 2004, 642). This is further confirmed by a motion that was presented in Cambridge Union that shows a deliberate attempt to break a connection between Pitt and the party he represented: 'That the Political opinions of the late Mr. Pitt were not, as is frequently assumed, coincident with those of the Conservative or Tory Party' (Campbell: CUS minute book vol. 13, 23 February 1847).

There were many instances in which the character of a monarch, a poet or other notable figure was mentioned. In Cambridge Union, for example, the work of Wordsworth was compared to others in terms of greatness: ‘That Wordsworth is the great regenerator of modern English poetry’ (Luke: CUS minute book vol. 18, 14 May 1867). This formulation can be included in the *topos* of character, as it refers to the *ethos* of a public figure. Debate topics such as these remind us that members of the Union were not simply interested in political issues but possessed wider knowledge on culture, literature and history. In political life there were many who were interested and knowledgeable in ancient cultures and history.¹⁸ Union members discussed, for example, the actions of classical authors and historical figures: ‘That the Political character of Themistocles is not deserving of our esteem and admiration’ (Karslake: OUS minute book vol. 6, 9 December 1841).

Besides people, also nations’ actions could be evaluated while references were made to ‘character’: ‘That the aggressive conduct of Russia is dangerous to the peace of Europe and the interests of England, and that the present ministry have not resisted it with sufficient firmness’ (Montgomerie: OUS minute book vol. 8, 14 November 1853). It could be argued, however, that the question here was more on the conduct of the British government than on that of a foreign nation. In that sense, the motion can also be read as a vote of confidence. But the amendment to the original motion shows that at least the rest of the debate related to the *topos* of character: ‘That in the impending struggle between Russia and Turkey, the latter is deserving of our cordial sympathy and cooperation’ (Oxenham: OUS minute book vol. 8, 14 November 1853). The amendment was formulated in a manner that emphasised the conduct of a nation instead of the British government. And, when put to the vote, a considerable majority was for the amendment, which gives the impression that its formulation better corresponded to the argumentation in the debate and that the rhetorical focus was on ‘character’ instead of ‘vote of confidence’.

The concept of national character appears in connection with reform in a Cambridge Union Society debate: ‘That Vote by ballot would fail to accomplish its intended object; and would be productive of great injury to the National Character’ (Smith: CUS minute book vol. 15, 11 March 1851). It is suggested that a radical change in the mode of voting would be harmful for the ‘national character’. The concept was, indeed, prevalent in mid-nineteenth-century political culture (Collini 1991/2006, 106–107). The argument for national character could also be used indirectly. For

example, on 25 November 1851, the Cambridge Union Society debated the proposition ‘That the Foreign Policy of the present government has been conducive to the honour and dignity of this country; and deserves the approbation of this House’ (Cust: CUS minute book vol. 15, 25 November 1851). The motion can be read as a vote of confidence but the reference is to national character, even though it is not explicitly said. The suggestion is that government’s foreign policy has contributed to the *ethos* of the country. ‘National character’ has been described as ‘a subtle move from participation to detached observation’ (Collini et al. 1983/1987, 173). This also involves an idea that a nation may learn from its own traditions. The end of the motion is formulated to give rise to a public discussion of the good or bad qualities of the government’s foreign policy: whether or not it is worth a joint approval of the members present.

Most statements about ‘character’, though, referred to an individual’s conduct in the present. However, motions that considered the political conduct of parliamentarians commonly had references to the benefit of the whole nation: ‘That Mr. Gladstone’s political conduct since the General Election has been dignified, consistent, and patriotic’ (Wetherell: OUS minute book vol. 8, 10 February 1853). In this particular instance the question was debated in four separate meetings. The first debate was adjourned and continued a week later when there appeared four amendments to the original motion. The first amendment was offered by Hunt of Christ Church: ‘That Mr. Gladstone’s position in the present ministry cannot as yet be sufficiently appreciated’ (Hunt: OUS minute book vol. 8, 17 February 1853).¹⁹ To compare, Hunt’s formulation is slightly more critical of Gladstone’s conduct than Wetherell’s, and although it is cautiously supportive, it does not propose appraisal. A longer formulation appears in the amendment by Rogers of Wadham College:²⁰

That we view with unmingled regret and disappointment the position assumed by Mr. Gladstone towards Lord Derby’s Government, and his subsequent coalition with the Whigs, as uncalled for by political exigencies, inconsistent with his whole past career, and tending to render permanent the disruption of the Conservative Party. (Rogers: OUS minute book vol. 8, 17 February 1853)

Rogers’s amendment seems to be the most critical of Gladstone’s conduct. It blames Gladstone for having secured his own political position by abandoning his party. Besides this epideictic rhetoric the amendment

also has deliberative elements. It enumerates reasons for not appreciating Gladstone's conduct, and they are shown in contradiction to political expediency.

The formulation of the amendment suggests that Gladstone has acted against what was expected of him and would have been beneficial for party politics. In this manner the amendment takes a stand against Gladstone's actions by references to both 'character' and 'expediency'. The third amendment is proposed by Fowler of Merton College: 'That the general conduct of Mr. Gladstone deserved the support of the Members of this University at the last election' (Fowler: OUS minute book vol. 8, 17 February 1853).²¹ Fowler's formulation does not elaborate on Gladstone's conduct, but regards it as justified or commendable in general terms. Therefore, it could be analysed in terms of 'principle' as well. The amendment, however, explicitly refers to the main reason why the debate was so interesting to the members of the society, which was due to the fact that Gladstone represented the University of Oxford in the House of Commons.

As a former member, Gladstone also represented a direct link between the Union Society and the House of Commons. Therefore, resolutions of the society over his conduct had particular importance. Fremantle of Balliol College presented the fourth amendment: 'That Mr. Gladstone's conduct in joining the present Government is honourable to himself and beneficial to the country' (Fremantle: OUS minute book vol. 8, 17 February 1853).²² Fremantle extends the idea of Gladstone's conduct from his character to the benefit of the country. In a way, he reformulates Wetherell's original motion, but accentuates the beneficial aspects of Gladstone's actions in the form of 'expediency'.

Another amendment was moved by Pearson of Exeter College: 'That Mr. Gladstone's conduct in recognizing the necessity of a Liberal Government by joining the coalition has been eminently patriotic' (Pearson: OUS minute book vol. 8, 24 February 1853).²³ Here, too, the emphasis is on the *topos* of character with an extension to national benefit. The president adjourned the house due to disruption during one speech but, in the fourth meeting, Hunt withdrew his amendment by leave of the house. A vote was then taken on Rogers's amendment, as it had been presented following Hunt's. The majority voted for it, and all the other amendments and the original motion were never voted upon and, subsequently, considered lost. The procedure differed from the practice in the House of Commons. In the case that several amendments are proposed

they are to be decided upon in the order of their appearance (cf. Palgrave 1869). The way the other motions could be discarded shows that the Unions applied their own politics of agenda.

The term ‘political’ was not often used in the Union debate motions. It appeared mostly in connection with words such as ‘conduct’, ‘character’, and ‘career’: ‘That this House entirely disapproves of the Political career of the Right Hon. B. Disraeli’ (Duggan: OUS minute book vol. 9, 23 February 1865). It has been suggested that it is characteristic of English politics, in contrast to a presidential political system, that representatives were required to gain a certain reputation before they could be entrusted with political office. It also meant a show of skills, which, by the middle of the nineteenth century, was judged by performances in parliamentary debate (Grainger 1969, 15). The political performance of parliamentarians was tested when it was, for example, debated ‘That the Political career of Sir R. Peel has exercised an unfavourable influence on the Statesmanship of the day’ (King-Smith: OUS minute book vol. 8, 22 February 1858). Party political struggles became defining moments for gaining a reputation as a statesman. The same is shown in examples such as this: ‘That Lord Ashley’s uniform advocacy of a law to keep down the hours of labour, while supporting those laws whose object is to keep up the price of food, together with his recent letter to his constituents, entirely vitiates his claim to be considered a Statesman’ (Fripp: OUS minute book vol. 6, 13 November 1845). It is suggested here that to be called a ‘statesman’ had a connection with an acquired ‘character’. Indeed, the concept of statesman was used whenever national political merit was emphasised: ‘That the recent resignation of Lord John Russell was an act unworthy of a British statesman’ (Gorst: CUS minute book vol. 16, 13 February 1855). The debate topic touches on Lord Russell’s resignation from his office just a few days prior, and the disapproval of the act as being in contradiction to his acquired character. Gorst’s motion further shows that the authority of someone who was called a ‘statesman’ was related to certain political conduct.²⁴

Both ‘character’ and ‘principle’ are commonplace concepts in nineteenth-century British politics (cf. Collini et al. 1983/1987). In Union debates their rhetorical force derives from their reference to desired or commendable political conduct. The use of ‘character’ is attached to national or individual conduct, whereas ‘principle’ depersonalises political action. Approved political conduct had to do with a certain gained reputation that was increasingly related to the show of skill in party

political struggles. According to a contemporary parliamentarian, what made a politician a statesman was ‘to recognize established facts and to act upon their evidence’ (McCarthy 1903, 270). In other words, ‘character’ refers to the evaluation of political performance. In the system of parliamentary government, more specifically, reputation of a parliamentarian was attached to skills in debate. However, the Union motions with a reference to ‘character’ are not the kind that could have been presented in the House of Commons as they do not have any connection to bills or policy resolutions.

‘Vote of Confidence’

Vote of confidence refers directly to parliamentary politics. As governments became increasingly dependent on the confidence of the majority of the House of Commons, the motion of no confidence became a tool for the opposition to challenge motions put by the government. Votes of censure are debates that the government has to acknowledge and grant time for ‘whenever there is any reasonable cause’ (Campion 1929/1958, 117). In the Union public debates, votes of censure were not about testing the confidence of government but more general discussions on the legitimacy of government’s actions. ‘Vote of confidence’, therefore, can be seen as a rhetorical strategy that can be used to evaluate, not only ongoing policies, but also those that have already been advocated or promoted by a government.

Among the motions of ‘vote of confidence’ presented in the Unions between 1830 and 1870 (see Appendix D) there are topics that explicitly consider public confidence and those that deal with it at a more abstract level. In the early years, as the Unions were careful not to attract the attention of the university authorities, motions like this were sometimes portrayed in the guise of historical events: ‘Did Mr. Grey, in his Bill for reform in 1793, deserve the confidence of the Country?’ (Law: CUS minute book vol. 7, 10 May 1831). In the latter part of the period under investigation, the formulations were becoming bolder in their connection to representation and politicians: ‘That the Political Conduct of Mr. Gladstone does not entitle him to our confidence’ (Lawrance: CUS minute book vol. 17, 29 May 1860). This happened when the motions were starting to be used to express formal declarations of the Union Societies more directly.

Usually the explicit mentions of ‘confidence’ relate to government actions: ‘That the present ministry are undeserving of the confidence of the country’ (Fowler: OUS minute book vol. 4, 9 June 1836). Some of

the formulations were less clear as to their intention than others. The Oxford Union debate on ‘That Mr. Gladstone’s political career has rendered him unfit to represent this University in Parliament’ (Wilberforce: OUS minute book vol. 8, 30 April 1855) shows that the *topos* of vote of confidence is not always easy to separate from that of character. The formulation of this motion takes Gladstone’s career as a parliamentarian as the key evaluative point, which can also direct the debate to a discussion on his character as a politician. The main question, however, still seems to be whether or not Gladstone successfully represents Oxford University, which is why I have selected it as a case of vote of confidence.

Another example of expressing confidence without explicit mention is the question presented at the Cambridge Union: ‘That this House views with satisfaction the policy pursued by Lord Palmerston’s government’ (Beard: CUS minute book vol. 17, 5 November 1861). Here the formulation of motion indicates a debate about whether or not the Union should express confidence in the ministry’s policy. At the same time, it expresses approval of the motion, which refers to the use of the principle *topos*. Similarly, in the Oxford Union Society a motion was proposed ‘That the Budget of the Chancellor of the Exchequer merits the cordial approbation of the House’ (Farrell: OUS minute book vol. 8, 23 February 1860). The motion is both a vote of confidence and a question of ‘principle’. The debate for and against the motion both weighed the competence of the ministry as well as considered the virtues of the budget.

It was not uncommon in either Union Society to find motions expressing the ‘confidence of the House’ on the present ministry or a certain policy. These types of formulations, which began to appear on a more regular basis in the late 1840s, were most likely used to measure the general power relations between political parties within the Union Societies. It is to be noted that the proposals considered the question on behalf of the Commons, not in terms of the nation as a whole.

Edward Knatchbull’s motion in an Oxford Union debate is a good example of evaluation of a government’s conduct.²⁵ He proposed ‘That the present ministry is incompetent to carry on the government of the country, and that it is only from an union of the Conservative party that we can expect an administration which shall possess the confidence of the nation’ (Knatchbull: OUS minute book vol. 7, 9 November 1848). What is presented here, first, is a vote of censure to the incumbent government and, second, a suggestion of restoring the confidence of the nation. In terms of substance, the proposal refers to Lord Russell’s Liberal govern-

ment that fell in 1852 due to an amendment to the Militia Bill issued by Lord Palmerston, a former cabinet member whom Russell had previously dismissed.²⁶

In Knatchbull's motion an alliance between the government and Conservative Party is being suggested. However, the Tories were torn between Peelites and another fraction of Conservatives supporting Lord Derby. The split was mainly due to the repeal of the Corn Laws in which question the Peelites had formed an alliance with the Whigs. Among Peelites there emerged a group of Liberal Conservatives who joined Lord Russell's Whig government in 1846. After the collapse of Russell's ministry, the Earl of Derby and his followers formed a minority Conservative government, which only lasted from late February to mid-December 1852. After the general elections of June 1852 it became clear that the minority government had to be cautious not to give reason for a change of ministry in order to stay in power. The Derby ministry fell in December 1852 due to the vote of no confidence the Liberals provoked against the Chancellor of the Exchequer's (Disraeli's) increased defence budget (Parry 2006, 209). Support for the government was tested at Cambridge when it was debated 'That this House reposes confidence in the fitness of the present Ministers to govern the country; and in the purity of their motives' (Swanston: CUS minute book vol. 15, 30 November 1852). A few days later the Oxford Union was presented with a motion 'That the conduct of Lord Derby's government since their accession to office entitles them fully to the support and confidence of the country' (Cazenove: OUS minute book vol. 7, 2 December 1852). Swanston's formulation seems to refer more to the abilities of the cabinet members, whereas Cazenove stresses the conduct of the ministers during their period in office. In other words, Swanston proposes evaluation of government in the present and Cazenove directs the attention to past performance. The difference between the two cases shows that a motion with the vote of confidence *topos* is connected with a re-evaluation of the representativeness of an entire ministry, not individual ministers.

In the Union Societies, debates on 'vote of confidence' were also questions of setting historical precedent, especially in connection with national political events. For example, the Cambridge Union Society debated the topic 'That this House desires to record its satisfaction at the Reform Bill lately introduced by the Conservative Government, and its admiration at the brilliant leadership of Mr. Disraeli, in the House of Commons' (Owen: CUS minute book vol. 18, 29 October 1867). This debate took place when

Disraeli, now the prime minister, had presented the second parliamentary reform bill which was considerably more radical than the one Gladstone had proposed a year before. The formulation of the resolution gives the impression that the debate and vote on this topic would be an addition to the nation's historical record. The proceedings related to this debate also show that the matter was considered to be important. The debate was first adjourned to next meeting allowing the speakers more time to prepare for their arguments for and against. When the house resumed the question more speakers took part in the discussion than in the first session, there having been two for and three against. This time four Union members argued for the motion and six were against it. An amendment was proposed 'That all after the word "Government" be omitted' (Payne: CUS minute book vol. 18, 30 October 1867). An adjournment of debate was proposed, which showed that twenty-one members of those present were for it and fifty against. The amendment was then put to the vote and it fell. The final vote on the passing of the original motion shows that the audience had grown remarkably: seventy-four voted for the motion and eighty-eight were against.

The *topos* of vote of confidence can refer to the actions or policies of the government in the past or present. But it also has historical and political significance in that its usage became more commonplace after the system of parliamentary government had been widely accepted in British politics. With its reference to popular opinion on representation (whether or not a government deserved confidence of the country), this *topos* is a product of the formation of popular sovereignty in the nineteenth century. Although I would not go as far as to argue that vote of confidence was a sign of a process towards democracy,²⁷ I maintain that it can be read as a rhetorical appeal to the popular opinion. Debating on whether or not the house should give its confidence to a ministry, Union members were trying to impact on whether or not they should make a resolution for or against the party that held the confidence of the majority of the House of Commons. Party alliances were sometimes abandoned due to political expediency. The non-established character of political parties, the lack of party machinery as we know it, meant that parliamentary debates of the period could potentially still pose a threat to ministries. It helps to partly explain the fact that the contemporary press was so keen to publish even the most minimal information about the debates in the Union Societies: the result of voting for and against the present ministry was considered important because it potentially affected and reflected opinion building inside the universities.

A TYPOLOGY OF POLITICAL AGENDA SETTING IN THE UNION DEBATES

In his essay on public speaking, Gladstone (1838; in Reid 1953) emphasised that a debater has to take into account his audience and the ‘mood of the moment’. He referred to the parliamentary context where it became crucial to seize the tides of opinion in order to further one’s own political agenda. In the newly established constitutional setting, it became paramount to exert party political authority and forge alliances (Hawkins 1989, 650–651). Parties were a key element in its functioning in that they secured ‘a solid mass of steady votes’, which were ‘collected by deferential attachment’ to a few reputable statesmen or to the principles they represented (Bagehot 1867/2001, 101). In this chapter I have shown that the motions proposed in the public debates of the Oxford and Cambridge Unions indicate a systematic, repetitive use of certain commonplace expressions that reflect the parliamentary context. I have analysed them to form a typology of political agenda setting which, I argue, can be used to illustrate the rhetorical strategies in operation in the parliamentary culture of debate the Unions shared with Westminster.

The dispatch and timing of proposals are key features of agenda setting in the parliamentary framework. Although the Union debates did not have as much at stake as the ones in the House of Commons, parliamentary forms of debate were gradually adopted as is shown by the use of adjournment motions as well as amendments and riders. At first, especially the Cambridge Union did not follow the parliamentary manner of proposing motions. The debates were conducted in the form of questions: ‘Is the present generation likely to witness the dismemberment of the United States of America?’ (Conybeare: CUS minute book vol. 11, 16 February 1841). The parliamentary form of proposing resolutions was only adopted in 1842. The proposing of motions in a parliamentary manner instead of simply raising questions for discussion is what defined the Union Societies as deliberative assemblies. In the course of the Union debates, original motions were amended and additions to them were moved. The amendments show that the contents of the original motions were sometimes challenged during the argumentation. In short, there was competition over defining the contents of subsequent resolutions.

The formulation of motions in the Union Societies was connected to the parliamentary culture of debate of the time as well as the classical theory of rhetorical invention. Based on classical rhetoric, invention

was learnt and practised in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century English grammar schools (cf. Skinner 1996; Peltonen 2013). Humanist schoolmasters taught their students rhetorical commonplaces in the form of letter writing and public oration. Debate and adversarial politics were generally considered to belong together (Peltonen 2013, 62). In the Union Societies a similar idea was transferred through the adoption of the parliamentary procedure. In contrast to the rhetorical training offered in pre-revolutionary English grammar schools, the Unions did not advocate a civic programme. However, some of the same rhetorical characteristics were present in the Union public debates.

‘Principle’ and ‘expediency’ are the most classical rhetorical commonplaces. ‘Principle’ refers to the desirability of political activity on ideological grounds, and ‘expediency’ is evaluated on the basis of necessity or utility. They both relate to some future line of action or policy. Roman rhetoricians agreed that all deliberative speeches aimed at honesty and utility (Peltonen 2013, 70). Honesty, or *honestas*, related to the showing of virtuous character. In my typology, however, the classical *locus* of honesty is divided into two: ‘principle’ and ‘character’. ‘Character’ relates to the acquisition of authority through virtuous action and, therefore, could be read in terms of the classical commonplace of honesty. However, my analysis shows that the rhetoric of political action in the parliamentary framework was more complex than assumed by the classics. It was, for example, possible to see ‘principle’ in terms of depersonalisation of political action while ‘character’ was its opposite. The principles attached to a parliamentarian contributed to his reputation, but they were as unfixed as party alliances. The reputation of a statesman was attached to his competence of seeing what had to be done and acting upon it (cf. McCarthy 1903). In the context of parliamentary government, party political struggles became defining moments for gaining reputation and authority. Action based on ‘character’ was judged by the skills acquired by the actor or by the action itself.

‘Expediency’ and ‘vote of confidence’ can be interpreted as efforts to employ utility, or *utilitas*, in classical terms. Both include evaluation of political action in terms of policy. But some of the formulations I have analysed showed that ‘principle’ could also be used to argue for ‘expediency’, the weighing of necessities and benefit of the nation. Both ‘principle’ and ‘expediency’ are connected to the evaluation of political conduct in terms of future action. The party political struggles in the House of Commons made it possible that principles were sometimes forsaken for the benefit of

political necessity. ‘Vote of confidence’ is used rhetorically to evaluate the policy or activity of an elected ministry. It is also the only *topos* that has a direct connection to parliamentary procedure.

All the *topoi* I have presented essentially belong to the field of deliberative rhetoric, but represent different aspects of it. ‘Principle’ and ‘expediency’ direct the attention to future action, whereas ‘character’ and ‘vote of confidence’ are *topoi* that relate to the evaluation of past or present conduct. Although ‘character’ can have a connection to an individual’s or nation’s conduct, compared to ‘vote of confidence’, its use relates more to *ethos*, the attributed qualities of an actor, rather than to a pursued policy. As *topoi*, ‘principle’ and ‘expediency’ are more dynamic in that they can be used as justifications for political action, whereas ‘character’ and ‘vote of confidence’ offer the means to evaluate it.

The formulations of motions showed that Union members became more inclined to include issues related to government policies in the latter part of the period under investigation. In the context of parliamentary government, it became important to observe the opinions outside Parliament and how they affected the party alliances inside the House of Commons. Some bills might have risked the fall of a government, as the parliamentary parties were loosely connected to the reputation and principles of a few statesmen. The resolutions of the Union Societies began showing signs of joint statements of a ‘united will’ (cf. Redlich 1908, vol. 2, 215). In relation to national politics, the political significance of the public debate meetings of the Oxford and Cambridge Union Societies began to grow once their members started to act more like members of a parliamentary body. It is precisely this way of acting that ultimately made the Unions parliamentary in character.

NOTES

1. The Unions’ private business meetings concentrated on the politics of organisation and rules of proceeding. They will be the focus of analysis in Chapter 5.
2. The University Pitt Club at Cambridge was also founded by undergraduates in 1835, and it had already set the example of admitting members widely inside the university. The aim of the Club was to unite Conservative students and to promote party interests (Fletcher 1935, 11). Some of its members were active also in the Cambridge Union Society (e.g. G. S. Smythe of St. John’s College

- and Lord John Manners of Trinity College). It suggests that the Union Societies were indirectly in touch with party politics and not conducting debates isolated from daily politics.
3. They should not be confused with gentlemen's clubs such as the Oxford and Cambridge Club, which was established in London in 1830. Its members had the common background of having studied in the two old English universities, of which rule was eventually dropped in 1967 due to financial difficulties (Lejeune 1979/1984, 186–187).
 4. I will further discuss the rhetoric of the use of procedure in Chapter 5.
 5. The difference between an amendment and a rider is that an amendment is a motion which is intended to supersede the original motion, whereas a rider is an addition to any motion. In the event that an original motion or an amendment is accepted by a majority of votes, it will be again put to the vote together with the rider. In the nineteenth century riders are only rarely mentioned in House of Commons parliamentary papers.
 6. John Coke Fowler (1815–1899) became a barrister.
 7. William Hussey (1814?–d. unknown) became a barrister.
 8. Cornish became later known as Sir John Mowbray, see section 'Training of Debaters in the Union Societies' in Chapter 2.
 9. Leslie Stephen (1832–1904), the father of Virginia Woolf, was educated at Eton and King's College, London. He was admitted as a scholar at Trinity Hall in 1851. He became an eminent author and critic.
 10. Thomas Sampson Carte (1829–d. unknown) became Assistant Master at King's College, London, around 1864.
 11. James Spencer Northcote (1821–1907) was a scholar of Corpus Christi College from 1837 to 1842. He became a catholic priest and president of Oscott College in Birmingham.
 12. Charles Thomas Arnold (1818–1878) was nominated Assistant Master of Rugby School in 1841 and later Headmaster.
 13. George Rawlinson (1812–1902) was a Fellow of Exeter College in 1840–1846.
 14. Campbell became elected to the House of Commons as a Whig MP in 1847. For a discussion on the Cambridge Union and Ireland, see Martin (2000).
 15. John Farnham Messenger (1836?–d. unknown) became a clergyman.

16. Edward Richard Nussey (1828?–d. unknown) became a clergyman.
17. The Younger Pitt is known for having represented the Whig Party but later taken the side of the Tories.
18. For a discussion on the influence of classical Athens on Victorian politics, see e.g. Turner (1981).
19. George Ward Hunt (1825–1877) was elected a Conservative MP for North Northamptonshire in 1857. He served as Secretary of the Treasury under Lord Derby in 1866–1868 and as Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1868 in the Disraeli government.
20. Benjamin Bickley Rogers (1828–1919) was a scholar at Wadham College 1846–1852. He was elected a Fellow in 1852 and became a barrister.
21. Thomas Fowler (1832–1904) was educated at King William’s college on the Isle of Man. After taking his honours degree at Merton College, he was elected to a Fellowship in Lincoln College. He became Professor of Logic in 1873 and Vice-Chancellor of Oxford University in 1899.
22. William Henry Fremantle (1831–1916) was educated at Eton. After graduating from Balliol College he was elected a Fellow of All Souls College in 1854. He became an eminent Anglican priest.
23. Charles Henry Pearson (1830–1894) was educated at Rugby School and was admitted to Oriel College in 1849. He changed to Exeter College the following year. He was elected Union president in 1852 and 1853. In 1854 he was a Fellow of Oriel College and became lecturer of English language and literature at King’s College, London. Shortly afterwards he was nominated professor of modern history. In 1873 he became professor of history at University of Melbourne. Pearson’s subsequent political career took place in Australia.
24. John Eldon Gorst (1835–1916) graduated as third wrangler in 1857, the same year he was elected president of the Union. In 1865 he was called to the Bar, Inner Temple, and became a Queen’s Counsel in 1875. Gorst was elected as a Conservative MP for Cambridge borough 1866–1868 and after some years was re-elected as member for Chatham in 1874 general elections which he represented until 1892. In 1885 under Lord Salisbury he was appointed Solicitor-General and in 1886 Under-Secretary of State for India.

25. Edward Hugessen Knatchbull (1829–1893), later known as first Baron Brabourne, went to Eton in 1844 and matriculated at Magdalen College, Oxford, in 1847. He served as Union president in Easter term 1850. In the 1857 general election he was elected for Sandwich as a Liberal. He was nominated as a Lord of Treasury (a whip) of the second Palmerston government in 1859, which position he held until 1866. In Gladstone’s first administration he became Under-Secretary for the Home Office. After being created a peer he became a Conservative.
26. The same government was responsible for the Royal Commissions of 1850 that marked a significant turning point in the position of the two old English universities (see Smith and Stray 2001).
27. The contemporaries generally considered ‘democracy’ in negative terms until the reforms of the 1880s, after which it was defended even though the majority of people remained without the right to vote.

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The Politics of Debate in the Union Societies

The Union minutes between 1830s and 1870s show that the Societies were acquiring parliamentary characteristics and conventions that had only recently been taking shape in the House of Commons. At the inauguration of the new building of the Cambridge Union in 1866, Lord Houghton spoke about the benefits of participating in the society's activities. He accentuated the overall significance of the rules and procedures that governed the activities in the Union:

It is in such societies as this that you will learn the value of political forms, forms in themselves perhaps apparently frivolous and pedantic, but which you will find to be absolutely necessary for the government of these societies, and, in fact, of all societies of men. (Houghton: Cambridge Union Society 1866, 18)

In his view, the 'political forms' that are taught through the practices of Cambridge Union are relevant to any type of government. The role of these forms, or rules of conduct, will be considered in more detail in this chapter. The main aim here is to show that the Unions had certain key parliamentary references both in how they were organised and in how they argued for various procedural changes of their own.

As in the House of Commons, the political use of rules was manifested in the revisions (cf. Chapter 3). The Westminster rules of debate were constituted through the accumulation of various political practices (cf. Redlich

1908, vol. 1, xxxiii). In the nineteenth century, the attempts to revise the Standing Orders had specific political purposes. They were mainly connected to the more effective distribution of time (Campion 1929/1958, 38–39). To offer an example from Oxford Union, in 1865 a rule was added that, in cases of private business meetings where a time limit was applied and if no new business was scheduled to be presented after 11 p.m., the president could adjourn the house (OUS rules 1865, 4–5).

It will be shown that the political activities of the Union debating societies were framed by an interpretation of politics essentially guided by procedure and its revision. The Unions' rules of debate, however, were not the only ones affected by the parliamentary culture. It will be pointed out that the 'standing committees' of the Union Societies had powers comparable to cabinet government. The committees were elected among Union members and became answerable for their actions to the house. They started to take charge of making initiatives on questions of procedure, and this is how they gained greater executive power. Furthermore, they were responsible for the committee work relating to private business meetings.

As the head of the standing committee and chair of private business meetings, the Union president had considerable power over the management of the society and the debate proceedings. The increased authority of the president coincided with the beginning of a comprehensive revision of rules in the Unions in the 1840s. The authority to interpret the rules was in both Unions vested primarily in the president. But, since the role of the president was not impartial and the rules were open to interpretation, their application in practice was a constant source of politics of debate.

PARLIAMENTARY REFERENCES IN THE UNIONS' POLITICS OF DEBATE

In a parliament it is ultimately the procedure that guides debates. It also means that the parliamentary politics of debate would not exist without procedure. Procedure formalises and provides legitimacy to the proceedings. Furthermore, as procedure affects the rhetorical strategies, any change or adjustment has an impact on the conduct of proceedings and the political style.

Parliamentary references in the Union debates were largely visible in the gradual adoption of current conventions. Some of them were under review in Parliament. In the discussion of the revision of the parliamentary procedure (cf. section 'Revision of Debating Procedures from 1837

to 1861' in Chapter 3) it was shown that the attempts to change procedure were initiated by members of the House of Lords. Lord Stanley, for instance, claimed that the debates of the House of Commons had to be restricted as to give way to efficient legislation. The lower chamber, however, was unwilling to surrender the privileges of an individual member. When the Commons finally made adjustments to the procedure, it was made sure that it had a minimum impact on its debates which, by that time, had become a key element of its constitutional role.

It will be examined the extent to which the adoption of parliamentary forms legitimated the political argumentation of Union proceedings. In the private business meetings, which will be the main focus here, members were able to participate in the organisation of the Unions as well as in the rule revisions. As was the case with the Unions' public meetings (see Chapter 4), the arguments for and against motions were not recorded in the minute books. Therefore, the analysis of the politics of debate is based on instances where the rules were somehow challenged or tested. Those kinds of cases will reveal the rhetoric—and the politics—practised. For that purpose, it has proved essential to use the compilations of rules as well as the minute books as primary material.

The rule compilations show the result of the work that was mainly done in the Unions' select committees. But parts of them derived directly from the debates in the private business meetings, where changes to the rules were decided. In the minute books, the secretaries of the Union Societies have recorded the motions and amendments concerning the revision of rules as well as reports of committees that proposed alterations to the rules. By comparing the minute books to rule compilations it is possible to get a sense of how the rules changed over time and what kinds of rhetorical strategies were involved.

POWERS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES

The House of Commons had become more dependent on outside opinion than it had been before the 1832 Reform Act. It had become a 'public meeting' that elected its own 'rulers' and performed the duties of a representative legislature (Bagehot 1867/2001, 99). Ultimately, the House was responsible both for the execution of legislation and its control. The most distinctive characteristic of parliamentary government was that the cabinet became responsible to the majority of the House of Commons. The historical development of the cabinet is traceable to the Privy Council,

of which it was originally a committee (Blauvelt 1902, 4). Cabinet government, however, is ‘the government of a committee elected by the legislature’ (Bagehot 1867/2001, 23). Essentially, the cabinet was now a political committee that was chosen by the House of Commons to govern the nation.

The Union Societies imitated the constitutional practice of the period and elected their own political committees. The officers of the Union Societies¹ were elected by the whole society every term with specific rules. At Oxford, a candidate for any office had to be someone who had, first, been a member of the society for at least one term, and, second, taken part at least once in the debates (OUS rules 1837, 18). On the day of the election all candidates were submitted to the society in the form of a motion, of which prior notice had been given. The election was conducted by secret suffrage.² After the president had put the motion, the votes were examined by the previous committee members (OUS rules 1839, 21–22).

In the Cambridge Union the requirement for a candidate for office was that he was not in debt to the society. The candidate was required to place his name with that of his proposer in the reading room of the society before the election. If there was only one candidate, he was declared elected. In the case of a competition between candidates, the proposer and seconder of a candidate were allowed to address the society and describe their nominee’s merits (CUS laws 1834, 4). However, this rule was changed in 1853 when the proposers were no longer permitted to address the house in support of their candidates (CUS laws 1853, 21).

The elected officers sat in the standing committees, which by the 1850s were responsible for making initiatives to revise the rules. Rules were frequently revised in both Unions, with the new rules written down and circulated among the members. This kind of adjustment of procedure was itself adopted from parliamentary practice. The House of Commons’ procedure after the 1832 reform was characterised by two aspects: first, how to deal with time in the debates, and second, how to regulate the procedure by Standing Orders (Campion 1929/1958, 36). In relation to the former aspect, on 24 November 1851, the Cambridge Union discussed and voted on a motion, ‘That the following be inserted under Cap. VIII: No member shall rise to address the House on any Debate, after half past nine o’clock; except for the purpose of reply, or to move an amendment’ (Cust: CUS minute book vol. 15, 24 November 1851). The motion was

lost in a vote and again in a poll that had been demanded afterwards. Even though the motion was not passed as a rule of the society, the incident shows that the question of time regulation was for the first time raised on the agenda. The idea to limit the time of debates was derived from the House of Commons. In the nineteenth century the sittings of the Commons tended to be prolonged. Restrictions were gradually put in place in an effort to make the business of the House more efficient (Campion 1929/1958, 38–39).

According to its minute books, the Cambridge Union had its entire compilation of rules revised and codified by standing committee for the first time in 1845. Before that the rules had mostly been amended on an ad hoc basis, which had posed the problem that members could not keep up with the alterations. It became an issue, for example, in a discussion concerning a newspaper report. A newspaper had violated the rules by publishing Union proceedings. Due to the incident, the society decided to turn its rules into ‘laws’.

That it is essential to the well-being and respectability of the ‘Union Society’ that Members should be aware of the Rules by which the Society is governed, in order to avoid any violation of them. That to this end it is expedient that all such rules should be embodied in the form of Laws. (CUS minute book vol. 13, 9 December 1844)

The rules of the society had already been alternatively referred to as ‘laws’ but the argument here was, more or less, that governing the society would become more effective with laws instead of rules. In practice the society had no internal authority to enforce the laws. Therefore, it seems that ‘laws’ were here rhetorically portrayed as a more reliable method of keeping order than ‘rules’, without any more severe punishments proposed in the event of their being breached.

Subsequently, in the laws of 1845, a resolution was written down that all previously enacted resolutions and rules of the society that did not appear in the new code of laws became invalid (CUS laws 1845 Lent and Easter, 13). This break with the past was deliberately done for minimising references to past resolutions in the debates. The aim was also to increase predictability by making the rules as inviolable and self-explanatory as possible. It is noteworthy that the rhetoric of minimising unpredictability was also used in the House of Commons, in relation to the revision of proce-

ture in 1861. In the report of Parliament's select committee, respect for tradition and caution in making changes to procedure were named as the two most important characteristics of procedural revision in the House of Commons. It was stated that the amendments to procedure had been done on the principle of making no changes unless 'experience has [... proved it] to be necessary' (Report from the Select Committee 1861, iii). But in the case of the Union Societies the threat was not a potential loss of tradition, but of order: the rhetoric of minimising precedents was used for the government of the societies, not for the preservation of privileges already acquired. In other words, the Cambridge Union preferred the term 'laws' instead of 'rules' as they rhetorically helped to establish the *ethos* of the society as a well-organised institution.

The first time Oxford Union appointed a committee to revise its rules was in 1842. However, the revision concerned the rules relating to the office of president only.³ In 1848 a revision of all of the rules of the society was undertaken by a select committee appointed. The committee's suggestions for alterations were presented in an extraordinary meeting which, as was noted by secretary Meyrick⁴ of Trinity College, was not attended by the required twenty members.⁵ After the recommendations of the committee were discussed, treasurer Melville Portal of Christ Church moved that the rules be approved by the house.⁶ The vote passed. However, not enough members were present so the rules remained officially unchanged (OUS minute book vol. 7, 31 May 1848).

On 2 February 1849 the committee, with Meyrick now the chair as well as Union president, suggested changing its name and role in the revision:

That the President, Treasurer & Librarian be a Standing Committee with power to amalgamate & revise the Rules as often as they are to be reprinted; provided that in case of disagreement any of the said Committee may bring the question before the Society. (OUS minute book vol. 7, 2 February 1849)

The motion was carried, and the practice henceforth was that the revision of rules was reserved for the standing committee only. It was already the practice at Cambridge that the standing committee made the initiatives on rule changes. It seems, then, that in terms of revision of rules, Cambridge adopted qualities of cabinet government earlier than its Oxford counterpart.

The standing committee at Cambridge was first mentioned in the laws in 1841: 'The standing Committee shall consist of those Members who are in, or who have served any office' (CUS laws 1841, 7). In the laws in effect during the October term of 1848, the standing committee with its retired officers was merged with the officers of the society:

The Standing Committee shall consist of the President, Treasurer, and Secretary; and also of those Members who have held any of these offices; provided, that they shall have signified their intention of serving, during the Term, on this Committee, by inscribing their names in a book kept by the Secretary for that purpose. (CUS laws 1848, 15 October)

The fact that retired officers were also admitted as committee members shows that there was some continuity in the policies of the standing committee, even though the terms of office were very short. The general management of the society was left to the three elected officers (i.e. president, treasurer and secretary), who served for one term at a time, and to the two clerks, who were employed by the society for the administration of finances.

The functions of the standing committee remained unwritten until 1845 when a rule was added: 'The Standing Committee shall meet on the Friday before each Private Business Meeting; and any Officer shall be at liberty to call together the Standing Committee on any matter affecting the interests of the Society' (CUS laws 1845 Lent and Easter, 10). The president was named the chair of the standing committee. The role of the committee was 'to consider all proposed new laws, or alterations of laws' by all who proposed them and to consider 'the reasons for their proposals' (CUS laws 1848 15 October). The primary function of the standing committee was, in short, the preparation of the laws of the society before they were debated in private business meetings. The committee became a preparatory institution that dealt with initiatives regarding the rules. The standing committee also decided whether motions of other members were debated in the meetings or not. The decisions of the committee were afterwards announced to all the members of the society.

The committee of the Oxford Union was first composed of ten members (OUS rules 1837, 18). A separate standing committee of the society was constituted in 1849. When the standing committee and the library committee were divided as separate entities, the standing committee, consisting of seven members, became officially in charge of the affairs of the

society (OUS rules 1851, 20). The standing committee met once a week, and in all its meetings at least one of the following officers of the society were required to be present: president, treasurer or librarian.

During public debates, and after a ballot had taken place, members could pose questions to members of the committee without notice (OUS rules 1856, 40). However, the president was allowed to stop the discussion or postpone it. This practice of questioning the committee resembled the way members of the House of Commons criticised government policies. A difference, however, was that in the Unions the criticising did not have the dimension of representation in the same scale. Another difference was that questions could be asked without prior notice unlike in the House of Commons where two days' notice was needed (cf. *Campion 1929/1958*, 147). But it is noteworthy that it was also allowed in the Unions' public business meetings, which were open to visitors. This meant that the audience for the speeches was potentially more diverse than in the private business meetings.

The committees of the Unions were not at first considered 'cabinets'. The elected officers had their own roles as specified in the rules and, as a committee, they could propose recommendations. Only after the establishment of standing committees and acquiring the power to make initiatives did the government of the Unions approximate parliamentary practices.

Already before the establishment of the standing committee at Oxford it had been a custom of the committee to propose motions. For example, Cazenove of Brasenose College was reported to have moved 'the following motion, by recommendation of the committee. That Rule LXIII stand thus "That no member of the Society shall be eligible to serve on the committee unless he shall be of six terms standing at least in the university, and shall have been in the Society at least one term"' (OUS minute book vol. 6, 17 May 1844).⁷ Although at Cambridge there were no similar committee recommendations, motions of the standing committee were moved individually by the elected officers.

At Oxford, select committees were first appointed for revision of rules from 1849 to 1852. The rule from 1849 stated that the standing committee had the ultimate power to revise the rules of the society and only had to consult the house whenever there were disagreements about the changes between members of the standing committee. On 4 March 1852 it was decided that revision was no longer possible without the approval

of the whole house. The president, Walter Shirley of Wadham College,⁸ moved

That a Select Committee be appointed to revise the rules of the Society printed on the basis of the edition of 1843: with power to make alterations in the rules & order of the rules & so incorporate subsequent resolutions of the House. That if they shall see reason to recommend any changes [...] in the rules these shall be proposed by them, after the usual notice, at least week previous to the presentation of their general report. That the Rules of the Society as revised by them shall lie on the table of the Reading Room for one week & full notice of their being put be placed on the notice boards of the Society. The whole report shall then be submitted rule by rule to the House. (OUS minute book vol. 7, 4 March 1852)

The motion was carried unanimously. The work of the committee took several years. However, some adjustments to the old rules were already made before the submission of the committee report. For example, on 10 March 1853 the revising committee presented some of the alterations, but it was then moved that they would not ‘come into operation before the general Report of the Revising Committee’ (Johnstone: OUS minute book vol. 8, 10 March 1853).

In the British Parliament, committees are formed on the basis of a very specific practice. Traditionally, the business of both Houses of Parliament has had two forms of proceeding: that of the House and that of a committee. The distinctive feature is that both the proceedings of the House and the Committee of the whole House are performed as plenary sessions. This means that there is no difference between either session in terms of the members present. But, in a strict sense, the Committee of the whole House is not a ‘committee’ at all. It is simply the House deliberating in a different form (Redlich 1908, vol. 2, 180–181). The actual committees in the British Parliament function as preparatory institutions. Until the nineteenth century the House only had select committees for the purpose of inquiring into matters of interest and planning further action (*ibid.*, 187). Standing committees were constituted in the nineteenth century for dealing with the increasing amount of administrative work of the House of Commons.

In proposing committees for various preparatory purposes, members of the Oxford Union were again following parliamentary precedent. Before the revising committee had presented its report, the standing committee

on Michaelmas 1855 decided to move that a ‘Standing Committee of appeals’ be appointed, which would consist of at least three former presidents of the society and would be charged with interpreting and revising the rules. The specific duties of this committee would be:

- 1) To decide appeals against any decision of the President which may involve the interpretation of rules, or the settlement of a point of order. 2) To revise the rules of the Society, previous to reprinting whenever they shall be empowered to do so by a vote of the House. (OUS minute book vol. 8, 3 December 1855)

The motion was defeated by a majority of one. The following term another standing committee suggested ‘That a Committee of four be appointed to revise the rules of the Society’ (OUS minute book vol. 8, 11 February 1856), which was carried.

The newly appointed revising committee gave its report on 28 May 1856, stating as one of the difficulties having been that they had not received any definite instructions or found any clear precedents in the written records, which prompted them to turn to recent customs and practices: ‘On this point they have, as far as the lamentable imperfect state of the minutes enabled them, followed the precedent, afforded by the proceedings of the last committee appointed for a similar purpose’ (OUS minute book vol. 8, 28 May 1856). According to the revising committee, other hindrances had been caused by the long periods between the revisions as well as the dereliction of the duty of earlier committees to examine the minutes of the society regularly. The committee report claimed that, in terms of consistency, the rules were deficient due to the fact that the minute books were so badly kept. The standing committee had the duty to examine and correct the minutes of the meetings (OUS rules 1853, 30). Because the amended rules did not appear in the records, it made the work of the revising committee extremely difficult:

From this neglect a larger amount of confusion and trouble than they can easily describe has, as was natural, been entailed upon your committee; for example, an entire chapter of rules, concerning the election of officers passed in November 1855 was in April 1856 unentered in the Society’s rules. [...] In several instances unfortunately [...] many omissions and inaccuracies still disgrace the minutes [...] and Book of Rules. Some of them have been rectified by your Committee: others it is feared are of too long standing to be

easily corrected inasmuch as omissions of a grave character are to be found throughout the entire period of the past 8 years. (OUS minute book vol. 8, 28 May 1856)

Due to the inconsistencies of the rules, the committee had decided ‘to carry out a more intelligible classification’. One of the principal alterations proposed was that public and private business should be discussed on separate occasions. Furthermore, it was argued that copies of the rules and of the proceedings should be published with a calendar indicating the society’s meeting days which would ‘provide an authentic account’ and ‘benefit the finances’ of the society ‘from the extensive circulation which so popular a publication would assuredly command’ (OUS minute book vol. 8, 28 May 1856).

The Unions had benefited from relatively liberal policies regarding visitors. At Cambridge the rules concerning visitors attending its (public) debates were somewhat stricter, whereas Oxford from early on allowed for a certain number of visitors to attend its debates. However, the publication of debates had been as vigorously condemned as at Cambridge. It seems that, for the sake of expediency, the revising committee at Oxford was now prepared to publish the society’s proceedings. The argument was that the regular publishing of the society’s transactions would benefit it in the long term. But publication of speeches that had been delivered at society’s public business meetings remained banned.

At Cambridge, the strict exclusion of non-members from its public debates partly contributed to a decline in its attendance in the late 1840s. The problems began in 1843 when the society was confronting financial difficulties. According to a report of the October term 1846 written by Vaughan, the secretary,⁹ the Union had also ceased to attract new members:

The Secretary cannot but regret the slight interest taken by the Majority of the Members in the Public Debates; the consequence of which, is that the Society is very far from sustaining its former character as a school for public speaking; nor does there seem to be any hope of great improvement in this particular, until some general interest shall have been excited, which shall lead to improvement and increase of number in the speakers as well as to larger and more attentive audiences. (CUS minute book vol. 13, 22 March 1847)

In Vaughan's view a change in the character of the Union business had occurred. In 1846 the financial situation was declining rapidly.¹⁰ While reporting on their financial straits, the treasurer of Lent term 1847, Davies of Trinity College, argued that there was a 'want of vitality' in the Union's activities: 'The recent Debates can scarcely be said to have been very successful; they have generally called forth less energy in speaking than the private business of the Society' (CUS minute book vol. 14, 26 April 1847).¹¹

Decisions made in the private business meetings had affected the decline of public debates as well. Davies was referring to the constitution of the standing committee in 1845 as well as the revision that turned the rules into the 'laws' of the society. According to him, the main problem was general indifference toward elections to choose the officers of the society: 'A contested election besides being a symptom of interest, is in itself beneficial to the Society, by enlisting new Members and procuring early payment of subscriptions and arrears' (CUS minute book vol. 14, 26 April 1847). In his view the society needed to become more popular and competitive in order to become successful again.

The decline of speakers in public business meetings had already appeared during Easter term 1846. The usual number of participants had been around sixty a year before, but in 1846 the number was closer to fifteen (CUS laws 1846, 13–23). Davies used the rhetoric of expediency in arguing for the benefits of using electoral competitions for attracting more members. It was also indicative of the change of character pointed out by Vaughan earlier. At the level of political agency, we can analyse the arguments in terms of the typology introduced in Chapter 4. The rhetorical idea behind Vaughan's argument emphasises 'character', whereas Davies's utterance suggests the position of 'expediency'. Davies was more practical in his assessment of the situation. His position was that the political struggles in the elections for officers were the reason for the renewed interest.

For the purposes of expediency, it seems, the Cambridge Union was turning from a 'school for public speaking' into a more parliamentary type of deliberative assembly. Davies's proposal to focus on contested elections to attract new members was addressed in the following term when William Campbell¹² commenced a discussion regarding the election of new members by moving for a return to voting by ballot. As the society met for a private business meeting, he proposed a means to solve the issue of attracting new members: 'That a select Committee be appointed to inquire into the grounds on which the election by ballot was abolished in

the Society, the expediency of restoring it, and the results which have been found to attend the existence of it in the Oxford Union' (CUS minute book vol. 13, 14 December 1846). John Kynaston of Trinity Hall moved an amendment that the debate concerning Campbell's motion should be postponed to the following term.¹³ Kynaston's effort to postpone the matter was, however, blocked by a vote on his amendment, after which Campbell's motion was put and carried by a majority of one. The following term, Campbell was elected president of the Union Society. In March 1847 Vaughan acknowledged that the financial problems of the society had almost been resolved because a considerable number of new members were entering the society (CUS minute book vol. 13, 22 March 1847).

Whether Campbell's initiative was directly responsible for a revival of the Union activities or not, it certainly shows the launch of a new style of politics. After the constitution of the standing committee, the Cambridge Union was faced with financial difficulties and became evaluated in terms of 'character' and 'expediency'. Then a member of the standing committee, Vaughan, argued that the society's character would only improve by some increase of 'general interest'. Treasurer Davies was also concerned over the lack of funds and used the rhetoric of expediency in relation to attracting more members.

Both Vaughan's and Davies's arguments show that the powers of the standing committee were connected to the revision of rules. At Cambridge, revision of rules was reserved for the standing committee. The Oxford Union standing committee ordered select committees to make suggestions for the purpose. As the Cambridge standing committee took charge of making initiatives on questions of procedure, the president gained greater executive power. At Oxford the standing committee was also responsible for the committee work relating to private business meetings. In 1856 the committee that had been appointed to revise Union rules criticised the standing committee for not having examined and corrected the minutes. The committee proposed that, from there on, the Union published copies of its rules and proceedings so as to 'provide an authentic account' of the society. As the proposal was accepted, the Union increased the publicity of its debates. The actions of the standing committee came under wider scrutiny. Being in charge of initiatives regarding procedure and under scrutiny increased the executive power of the Union standing committee and its head officer. Due to the 'double capacity' of acting as head of the standing committee and as the main chair of debate, the president had more considerable powers.

THE PRESIDENT'S ROLE IN THE INTERPRETATION OF RULES

The duties of the president in both Unions included acting as the head officer of the standing committee as well as chairing all private and public business meetings. In both societies, presidents were given the power to interpret the rules. The president was also in charge of identifying and acting against disorderly behaviour. This gave authority over the proceedings much like that of the Speaker of the House of Commons. But, in comparison, Union presidents had more influence, as they were also the heads of standing committees.

The powers of the president were as great at the Cambridge Union as at its Oxford counterpart. However, at Oxford there was less room for challenging the presidents' decisions during their terms in office than at Cambridge. The rule at Oxford was that president's decisions could not be questioned until the end of the term, and then only if a written appeal had been submitted 'within a week of the occurrence complained of' (OUS rules 1839, 29). In contrast, the decisions of the president of the Cambridge Union could be subjected to an appeal at any time. The method of doing so was through a 'requisition',¹⁴ which had to include at least 100 signatures. After receiving such an appeal the president had to declare a committee to inquire into the matter (CUS laws 1829, 4). This 'Committee of the whole House' (a term derived from the usage of the British Parliament) inquired into the propriety of the judgements made by the president:

If a requisition of One Hundred Members, with their Names and Colleges affixed, be presented to the President, it shall be incumbent on him to appoint an early day for a Committee of the whole House, to inquire into the propriety of any decisions from the Chair. (CUS laws 1848, 16–17 October)

When a Committee of the whole House¹⁵ was formed in the House of Commons, the Speaker had to resign his chair, and the proceedings were presided over by another (May 1844, 224). Until well into the 1850s, Speakers took part in the committee debates (Campion 1929/1958, 76). However, in the Union Societies the presidents continued to participate in the committee and other debates even after the 1850s. They were also allowed to give their casting vote in case the numbers for and against were equal. In this respect, the Union Societies did not follow parliamentary practice.

If a Union president chose to participate in a private or public debate, the meeting was presided over by a substitute who was not allowed the full powers of the president. At Oxford the substituting chair only had ‘the full power and responsibility of the President so far as relates to the conduct of that Meeting: provided always that he shall not rule any point of order, or interpret any law, in opposition to an announced decision or interpretation of the President’ (OUS rules 1863, 11). The acting chair was a temporary ‘Speaker’ of the meeting without the authority of Union president. This also meant that the president, by taking part in a debate, did not lose his authority on questions of order or interpretation of rules. He, in fact, had the right to make an appeal against the acting chair, which had to be settled before the next public debate. The acting chair’s decisions were also subject to appeal if questioned, but the matter was to be discussed at a private business meeting.

By 1853 the Cambridge Union had added a rule that the acting chairs were to be ‘invested with all [the president’s] functions’ (CUS laws 1853, 8). The rule limited the time of the substitution until the end of the discussion. Similar to Oxford, presidents at Cambridge who wished to take part in a debate had to temporarily resign their chair and appoint a standing committee member to act as a *locum tenens* for the remainder of the discussion (CUS laws 1848 October, 8).

In the early years of the Cambridge Union the decisions of the president could be reversed through a charge of ‘illegal’ conduct. In the 1830s the powers of the president were debated several times. One of the main discussions was related to the rule that political matters of the day could not be debated. On that issue Orde¹⁶ of Queen’s College, president of the society, arranged a special meeting to discuss a letter, sent by the Proctor of the University¹⁷ who had been informed of the society’s decision on 9 November 1830 that would introduce a rule to allow discussions on current political topics. In the minute book it is shown that some members of the society made ‘objections to the legality of the meeting on the ground that the President had no right to call it under the circumstances’ (CUS minute book vol. 6, 11 November 1830). These objections were, however, overruled. The meeting was then dissolved into a committee on the motion of James Heaviside¹⁸ of Sidney College, with Henry Dupuis¹⁹ of Kings College to act as chair of the committee just formed. The treasurer, William Brookfield²⁰ of Trinity College, moved that the twenty-year rule should be added to the laws of the Society again.²¹

The motion created disorder in the meeting and the president was accused of ‘breaking the law’, according to which, as it stood, a question already brought before the house cannot be decided again during the same term. Lord Kerry²² of Trinity College moved for adjournment ‘*sine die*’, meaning he wished the house to make no resolution on the matter (cf. Campion 1929/1958, 216). The issue would have been completely abandoned and failed to become a precedent had the adjournment motion been carried in a division. However, Matthew of Sidney College then proposed an amendment that the debate be adjourned until the next Tuesday.²³ Matthew’s amendment was defeated, and Lord Kerry’s indefinite adjournment was carried by a show of hands (CUS minute book vol. 6, 11 November 1830). No debate, therefore, could be continued on the same subject.

When the society convened again, president Orde tendered his resignation. The majority of the society, however, voted to decline it. The following week the matter was raised again when Laing²⁴ of St John’s College moved a vote of censure: ‘That a Vote of Censure be passed on the President for his illegal and unconstitutional conduct while in the chair on Thursday the 11th of November’ (CUS minute book vol. 6, 23 November 1830). Laing’s motion again raised havoc and almost led to several offending members being expelled from the Union. President Orde overruled the motion ‘on the grounds that no motion reflecting upon the conduct of the President could be discussed whilst he was in office unless at a special meeting called upon a requisition signed by 100 members’ (CUS minute book vol. 6, 23 November 1830). Subsequently, Laing and some of his supporters were fined.

In the meantime, the law that permitted discussion of politics of the day was passed by the society. Soon after introducing it a motion was moved by Dupuis that a note of protest against the new law should be placed in the records of the Society. A majority agreed and the protest was written down in the minutes. In it the protestors explained that they acted out of fear that Proctors would intervene again in the internal matters of the Union and the situation might deteriorate to the point where members would be prohibited from debating matters of any kind.

The law was under constant revision for several terms, and stood from 1832 onwards without the twenty-year rule. However, again in 1839 there was an attempt to return to the old rule. For a reason undisclosed in the records, president Craufurd²⁵ insisted upon going back to the laws of the year 1824. Despite the existing rules that permitted discussion on

current politics, he declined to put such topics of debate before the house. The house was dissolved into committee to discuss a requisition written by members to oppose the decision of the president ‘that no political subject subsequent to the year 1800 should be allowed as a question for debate’. Hodson of Trinity College moved to declare a formal condemnation of Craufurd’s decision:²⁶ ‘That the late decision of the President by which two subjects proposed for debate were struck off the board in direct contravention of the first law of the society and consequently illegal’ (CUS minute book vol. 10, 22 November 1839). An amendment was moved by a former president, Bartlett of Clare Hall:²⁷ ‘That the President’s decision respecting the subjects of debate be reversed, and that the Society be always considered “as a debating society, to discuss any subjects, except those of a theological nature”’ (ibid.). The amendment was carried unanimously. It contained a suggestion to reverse the decision of Craufurd, which was an alternative to declaring it ‘illegal’. The house voted in favour.

The reversal of Craufurd’s decision coincided with the report of the committee that had been summoned to revise the laws of the society. The report recommended that the president should act according to the House of Commons’ procedure in those instances where there was no precedent in the society’s own laws: ‘In all cases for which no express provision has been made by the Laws it is expedient that the President should regulate his conduct as nearly as possible by the Precedents of the House of Commons’ (CUS minute book vol. 10, 130–132).

The precedents of the House of Commons, however, could also be ignored by the president. On 26 February 1844 Holmes of St Peter’s College proposed: ‘That a Committee be appointed, with powers to direct some Solicitor to draw up a case for the opinion of counsel, as to the means by which the Union Society may securely possess property’ (CUS minute book vol. 13, 26 February 1844).²⁸ Brame of St John’s College moved an amendment ‘That the motion be postponed to this day six months’, after which there was a division, and the amendment was carried by a majority of five votes.²⁹ The result was opposed and a poll was demanded by Delacour of St Peter’s College.³⁰ Disorder ensued, with Thomson of Jesus College moving for adjournment twice, but remaining unsupported.³¹ Ritson of Jesus College moved that the poll, if granted, should take place immediately.³² The president, Ogier of Trinity College, was of the opinion that the poll was to be taken by the mover and second-order of the amendment after the adjournment of the meeting.³³ Ritson then reminded the president of the rule in the society’s *Index of Precedents*

stating ‘That in all cases, for which no express provision has been made by our Laws, it is expedient that the President should regulate his conduct as nearly as possible by the precedents of the “House of Commons”’ (CUS minute book vol. 13, 26 February 1844). This precedent was, however, ignored by the president, who ‘declined revoking his decision’.

The previous debate shows that the powers of the president were considerable regarding questions of procedure. But, as was evident in Craufurd’s case, the president’s decisions could be reversed if a member was able to gather a majority behind a motion. What is also noteworthy here is the priority given to Union politics over a strict adherence to parliamentary procedure or the precedents of the Society. In the House of Commons, in contrast, precedents were commonly used in connection to questions of procedure, as they formed the basis of all the rules and conventions (cf. Redlich 1908, vol. 2, 143).

At Oxford, appeals against any decision of the president or acting chair of society were discussed in the first private business meeting of the term after the president’s or acting chair’s resignation (OUS rules 1863, 11). The Oxford Union’s rules did not specify the manner in which an appeal against the president should be made. Therefore, the rules left ample room for interpretation. At an extraordinary meeting of the society, which the president had called to discuss private business, there was a debate about his decision on an amendment. President Moncrieff³⁴ was accused of giving Townend³⁵ of Oriel College permission to speak on an amendment while refusing Kinloch³⁶ of St Mary Hall the right to speak to a motion. President Moncrieff declared that he acted according to ‘principle’, judging that Kinloch had been out of order (OUS minute book vol. 5, 27 April 1839). Based on this principle (which was not specified in the records) the president declared the matter settled, although several members wished to speak on a point of order. Then Rawlinson³⁷ of Trinity College ‘advised all members on his side to withdraw opposition on points of order, as they saw we had “a one sided President”’ (OUS minute book vol. 5, 27 April 1839). Rawlinson suggested that any opposition would be useless in the present situation because the president would only accept action that he considered to be consistent with his ‘principle’. As president Moncrieff asked Rawlinson for an explanation, Hodson³⁸ of Merton College moved that the president inflicted a fine on Rawlinson pursuant to Rule 70.³⁹ Another suggestion came from Fawcett of University College, who proposed ‘that as in common law, half the penalty should go

to the informer' (OUS minute book vol. 5, 27 April 1839).⁴⁰ The following speaker was Kinloch, who supported Rawlinson in the matter, as he 'objected that it was out of the President's power to fine the Honourable member' (OUS minute book vol. 5, 27 April 1839). President Moncrieff replied by requesting that the secretary read the rules on the subject. President Moncrieff, then, acted upon the rule:

The President shall also interfere, when any words are spoken in the Society, which in his judgment impute dishonourable motives or conduct to, or are otherwise injurious to the personal honour and character of, any Member of the Society; and the speaker so called on by the President, shall be bound immediately to explain. (OUS rules 1839, 28)

The president duly asked for an account from Rawlinson, who replied that 'in stating the President to be "a one sided President," he meant to impute no unfairness to him' (OUS minute book vol. 5, 27 April 1839). The president accepted this explanation. However, according to the rule, the president could have, if still suspecting insult, questioned the meaning of the words before adjournment of the house:

All explanations shall be received without question as to the real meaning and intention of the speaker; but it shall be in the power of the President, (if he deem it necessary,) after such explanation, to direct the speaker to withdraw the expression objected to. No words, however, shall be questioned except at the time they are uttered. (OUS rules 1839, 28)

After the incident the discussion continued on the original motion put by the president and was adjourned according to Rawlinson's proposal.

It was suggested that Rawlinson viewed the president's decision as unfair, despite his denial. This corresponds to the rhetorical figure of *correctio*, used for retracting an utterance and replacing it with a more suitable expression (*Rhetorica ad Herennium* 1954, Sect. IV, Part XXVI, 319, col. 36). While describing the president as 'one-sided', Rawlinson was surely aware of being out of order. As according to the rules an explanation was given, in which instance Rawlinson denied any 'unfairness' being intended. The president did not demand further explanations which, in fact, enhances the rhetorical effect of the figure of *correctio*: 'This figure makes an impression upon the hearer, for the idea when expressed by an ordinary word seems rather feebly stated, but after the speaker's own

amendment it is made more striking by means of the more appropriate expression' (*ibid.*).

Rawlinson's case shows that a Union president could base his decisions on the simple argument of 'principle' and disregard the rules. The same became evident in another incident at Oxford Union Society. On 3 March 1842 Chase⁴¹ of Oriel College appealed⁴² against a decision given by acting chairman in a meeting on 2 December 1841. President Congreve had been absent and his substitute, treasurer Portal, had refused to introduce a topic of debate which Chase had proposed for that occasion. It seems that Congreve had told Portal to refuse the motion beforehand. In the following private business meeting on 9 December 1841, Townend of Oriel College asked the president on which rule he based his refusal to receive motions addressed to the society. President Congreve answered that he based his decision on Rule 72, which stated that a president's decisions were not subject to appeal while he was still in office (cf. OUS rules 1839, 29). Tate of University College questioned president Congreve's decision and inquired whether the president was aware of Rule 68: 'If any Member of the Committee shall refuse to transact any business assigned to him, such refusal shall be equivalent to the resignation of his office' (OUS rules 1839, 27).⁴³ Tate seems to suggest that, by refusing to put Chase's motion, Portal, acting on behalf of Congreve, had failed to fulfil his duties as a member of committee and, therefore, should have resigned his office. Congreve simply denied the applicability of the rule in that situation. Chase inquired into the president's reasons for refusing his motion for a debate on public business. Congreve answered 'that it was placed by the Rules in the discretion of the President' (OUS minute book vol. 6, 9 December 1841). In short, president Congreve argued that the discretionary powers of the president made it legal for him to reject motions of debate.

The following term Portal was elected president, thus acting as chair on 3 March 1842 over Chase's appeal. Chase argued that Congreve's refusal to put his motion, of which due notice had been given, in a public meeting was 'wholly unjustifiable & unwarranted' according to the rules of the Society: 'And that therefore a vote of censure be passed upon him by the House and that he shall be declared incapable of holding any office in the Society until after the expiration of one year from the time of his office as President' (OUS minute book vol. 6, 3 March 1842). In short, Chase's motion included not just a condemnation of Congreve's refusal, but also a proposal to pass a vote of censure. He also demanded Congreve's res-

ignation as a member of the standing committee, to which he had been nominated at the end of his presidential term.

Chase's motion could have created a precedent as no rule to censure a member was mentioned in the existing rules. Neither was there any adopted practice to prevent a former president from applying for a position in a standing committee. Under these circumstances, Chase's motion had the potential to become a precedent that either had to be recognised in the rules of the society or could be used and interpreted as such on other occasions. The motion also undermined the existence of the entire nominated standing committee in the event that the motion should pass. The motion was, therefore, more important and carried wider implications than it might seem at first glance.

The discussion on the motion had not even properly started when Townend was fined for disorderly behaviour, indicating how much the motion stirred passions. After Townend's fine, Chase asked 'leave of the Society to withdraw the latter part of his motion from the words "and he shall be declared" to the end' (OUS minute book vol. 6, 3 March 1842). After the alteration proposed, the motion would still have contained the vote of censure. President Portal and Congreve spoke against the suggestion, after which Townend apologised for his conduct. Portal declared that he was satisfied with the explanation provided and moved that the fine should be cancelled. There was a brief discussion on the cancellation of Townend's fine. Parnell of St John's College spoke against the motion, after which the house divided.⁴⁴ The votes for the cancellation of the fine won.

The society then resumed debate on Chase's second motion, that is, that the latter part of his first motion should be withdrawn. The speakers for this motion included two former standing committee members, Plumtre⁴⁵ of University College and Alban⁴⁶ of St John's College. Those speaking against were Blackett⁴⁷ of Christ Church, a current member of the standing committee, and Cotton of Christ Church, the current secretary.⁴⁸ The house divided on the second motion, and the majority voted against. After this defeat, the meeting continued with a discussion of the original motion. But then Chase moved 'for leave to divide his motion with 3 distinct propositions' (OUS minute book vol. 6, 3 March 1842). According to the rules, a member was allowed to alter his own motion by the permission of the majority (OUS rules 1839, 11). Plumtre seconded Chase's proposal. Tate as well as Chase himself took part in the discussion. The house finally approved the division of Chase's motion into three separate propositions.

The decision was beneficial for Chase in the sense that it provided him the chance to get at least some part of his motion passed in the divisions of the house. In the event that the whole original motion was opposed by the majority, there would not be a second chance to propose the issue during the term.⁴⁹ As the house had now given permission to divide the original motion, there was still a chance for Chase's motion to carry in one form or another. It should also be noted that there is a certain peculiarity in British parliamentary debate practice, which Chase must have known about when dividing his original motion, that once an amendment on the original motion has been proposed, the amendment, once carried, leads to a situation where there may not be a division on the original motion, as the amendment has superseded it. By now Chase had managed to prevent, first, a total rejection of his original motion in a division, and, second, the risk of someone else proposing an amendment which could have superseded his motion.

The debate now continued so that president Portal put the first proposition of Chase's appeal to the house: 'That the conduct of the late President [Congreve] in refusing on the evening of December 2nd to put to the house a motion of which due notice had been given was wholly unjustifiable and unwarranted by the laws of the Society' (OUS minute book vol. 6, 3 March 1842). After a number of speakers on both sides had spoken (Parnell, Tate, Alban and Plumptre having supported the motion), the house voted against the first proposition. It had been the one that was most likely to survive the vote, as it contained the least controversial part of the original motion. However, the house seems to have been unwilling to oppose the rule that the president possessed the ultimate authority to interpret the rules of the society. A house vote in favour of the first proposition would have been against the existing rules. Furthermore, despite the fact that president's decisions could not be challenged before the end of the term of office, Chase's original appeal could be interpreted as a breach of the rules, since it occurred within a week of the incident. In that respect, Chase and his supporters had been out of order by questioning the president in the first place.

The negative result of the division prompted Plumptre to move an adjournment of the debate. After a discussion, the motion of adjournment was put to the vote and lost. In Cambridge Union's private business meetings, motions of adjournment in general were used less than in Oxford. Instead, motions for suspending certain rules to deal with private business were frequently used.⁵⁰ Plumptre's attempt to postpone the debate

to another private business meeting being defeated, Chase asked to withdraw his second proposition. The permission to do so was granted, and the president reformulated Chase's final motion: 'The first meeting on Private Business after the expiration of the present Presidents office, Mr. Chase in accordance with Rule LXXII will appeal against a fine inflicted by the President on him December 9th' (OUS minute book vol. 6, 3 March 1842). Townend and Parnell, among others, spoke for Chase's appeal, while Congreve, the former president, was the only speaker against it. The house supported Congreve while voting against the appeal by a majority of one.

In the example above, it was a decision by president Congreve, not treasurer Portal, that was subjected to appeal, even though it had been Portal who had declined to put Chase's debate topic before the house. Portal had acted as a substitute for the president and thus had reduced powers. According to the rules, the substitute only had authority as regards the conduct of the meeting. The vote of censure that Chase had included in his appeal was not codified in the rules. Politically the proposal was a bold move that potentially could have become a precedent. In this case the basis was the accusation that a president's actions had been 'unjustified and unwarranted by the laws'. As discussed above, this kind of rhetoric of illegality as to the decisions of the president had also been practised at Cambridge Union. As a result, the presidents could be made to resign their office or their decisions could become reversed.

The debates analysed above shows that the right to appeal for a president's decision was not just another rule in the rulebook, but it was actually used and tested. The Union presidents had vast powers over the management and debate proceedings of the societies. The increased authority of the president coincided with the beginning of a comprehensive revision of rules in the Union Societies. The powers of the Speaker of the House of Commons had also become more explicit with the revision of procedure (cf. section 'Revision of Debating Procedures from 1837 to 1861' in Chapter 3). The Speaker was used as counsel in the select committees in matters of procedural revision. In the Union Societies the president not only provided counsel in questions of procedure, but was actively involved in the politics. Since the role of the president was not impartial and the rules were open to interpretation, their application in practice was a constant source of the politics of debate in the Unions. The president's authority was challenged when other members proposed their own interpretations of the rules or tried to prevent the president from resorting to precedents.

RHETORICAL STRATEGIES IN THE UNIONS' POLITICS OF DEBATE

In this section I will provide a very detailed account of the politics of debate in the Union Societies. My intention is to illustrate both the rhetorical skills the members learnt as they debated and, at the same time, the ways in which they interpreted and challenged the rules. The private business meetings, otherwise very plainly recorded in the minute books, may, by a close reading of the proceedings of the Society, reveal how skilfully the members were able to use the established rules and procedures. Therefore, my aim is to illustrate the ways in which members were capable of using the rules for their own benefit and the rhetoric involved.

It will be argued here that the politics of debate in the Unions took the shape of rule interpretation with specific rhetorical strategies. The debates that related to the powers of the standing committee (see section 'Powers of the Standing Committees') and the authority of the president (see section 'The President's Role in the Interpretation of Rules') analysed just above showed the use of the rhetorical *topoi* I analysed in relation to the Unions' public business meetings in Chapter 4. For example, 'character' was used when Cambridge Union members suggested the revision of the rules in order to attract new members. The 'vote of confidence' was also used rhetorically when a vote of censure was passed on Congreve, a president of the Oxford Union. As the initiative to propose revision of the rules was accorded to the standing committee and its main officers, attempts to challenge their authority was restricted to appeals, polls and other procedural devices, such as amendments and adjournments, to which I will now turn my attention in more detail.

At the Oxford Union Society amendments were subject to the discretionary powers of the president. The president could refuse to put an amendment or a rider to the vote if deeming it irrelevant to the motion (OUS rules 1839, 8). The reasons for such refusal were, therefore, contingent. At Cambridge, for example, as president Campbell announced that a previously elected member of a ballot committee had resigned, he moved that Thrupp of Trinity College be appointed instead.⁵¹ The house gave the president its approval through a vote. Afterwards, an appeal signed by 147 members was presented to the society and claimed the election was invalid (CUS minute book vol. 13, 2 March 1847). The claim was based upon Law 56, which read, 'Notice of any motion except motions for adjournment, shall be placed upon the boards on or before the Thursday

previous to the meeting at which it is to be discussed' (CUS laws 1846, 7). Members who had signed the requisition argued that, according to the laws of the society, president Campbell should have given advance notice of the motion to elect Thrupp for the ballot committee. They also asked for 'the President to call a meeting, for the purpose of asserting the validity of that Law, and of electing a Member of Committee' (CUS minute book vol. 13, 2 March 1847). The argument was that it was the duty of the president to act according to the laws of the society and, by his actions, to validate them. Campbell answered with a letter that was placed on the boards of the Society on 12 March:

On March the 2nd before the Debate I informed the Society that the Members of the Ballot Committee were even, and it became requisite, without delay, to obtain a New Member. I therefore requested the permission of the House to add Mr Thrupp of Trinity College, as the nomination of the Committee rests with the Member who proposes it. The permission thus asked at once was unanimously granted. I had felt that it involved some apparent irregularity (and the necessity itself was not one provided for) and invited any Members to object to it as I should have been disposed to yield to any symptoms of objection. (CUS minute book vol. 13, 12 March 1847)

Campbell argued that there was an urgent need to replace Thrupp without delay, and he was, thus, resorting to rhetoric of expediency. The election had been, according to Campbell, a matter of urgency as the ballot committee would have been unable to perform its duties until the next private business meeting 'so that no progress could have been made during the whole term' (CUS minute book vol. 13, 12 March 1847).

Campbell then turned to criticise the requisition as being itself a breach of the law: 'Such a requisition ought according to the Laws only be resorted to for the purpose of impugning a decision of the President on some point of order' (CUS minute book vol. 13, 12 March 1847). Campbell was referring to Law 27, which stated, 'If a requisition of One Hundred Members, with their names and colleges subscribed, be presented to the President, it shall be incumbent on him to appoint an early day for a committee to inquire into the propriety of any of his decisions' (CUS laws 1846, 4). The laws of the Union Society did not specify that a requisition was the means to address questions about points of order of the kind Campbell had referred to in his statement, which meant that the requisition was valid.

In the appeal Campbell had been accused of not giving due notice of his intentions to nominate Thrupp. Campbell turned the question around and accused the requisition of being not only against the law, but also a personal attack against himself:

Notwithstanding the pleasure I derive from at its debates, and the honour which in my opinion, such an office confers, engagements with other parties uninteresting to the House, and of a wholly different nature, are such as to prevent me from consenting, if it is avoidable, to become the cause or subject of a personal contention at the Private Business of the Society. (CUS minute book vol. 13, 12 March 1847)

Furthermore, Campbell argued that ‘personal debates generally lead to scenes of disorder’ and had the tendency to negatively affect the reputation of the society. He seems to suggest that the requisition was an attack on his character as well as that of the society as a whole. His rhetorical strategy was to make the incident a question of *ethos*. While engaging in this kind of rhetoric, he seeks to persuade those who are concerned with the society’s reputation by warning them of disorder.

Campbell then informs the society of his request that Thrupp withdraw from the ballot committee. Campbell himself as well as the president of the previous term, Arthur Garfit, also decided to withdraw in order to prevent the increasingly partisan atmosphere:⁵²

I have also to announce that Mr Garfit and myself feel ourselves justified in likewise retiring from it, as we now perceive the jealousy and party spirit it excited, and these are evils which we cannot hope to outweigh by any advantages to be derived from it. In this manner it has seemed to myself and the Gentlemen I have consulted that harmony will be restored to the Society, which as things now stand, is unfortunately suspended. (CUS minute book vol. 13, 12 March 1847)

By this political move of denouncing ‘party spirit’ Campbell both portrays himself as a proponent of ‘harmony’, and the ones who signed the requisition as those causing disruption. In his rhetoric the requisition had been against the laws and he had only acted in good faith to ensure the prosperity of the society.

On behalf of those who had signed the requisition, Dacre of Trinity College responded to Campbell’s letter.⁵³ He replied that the undersigned had consented to withdraw the demand that there should be a special

business meeting arranged to discuss the matter. However, they would still bring forward the ‘substance of the Requisition’ in the next private business meeting. On 22 March 1847 Dacre, indeed, moved ‘That this house considers the proceedings by which, on Tuesday March 2nd Mr Thrupp (Trin. Coll.) was appointed to serve on the Ballot Committee, to have been contrary to Law 56 and subsequently invalid’ (CUS minute book vol. 13, 22 March 1847). The motion was, however, withdrawn, most probably due to lack of support.

In the first meeting of Easter term 1847 Dacre resumed the issue. His motion ‘That the appointment of any Member to serve on a Committee is always subject to Law 56, as involving a Motion’ was carried by the majority of members present. This undoubtedly prompted Campbell to arrange a special private business meeting that met on 26 April 1847. The secretary, Edward Prest of St John’s College, proposed:⁵⁴

To amend and alter the Law 56 to the following ‘Notice of any motion, except Motions for adjournment, or for the suspension of any Law, or for leave to withdraw any motion or amendment, shall be placed upon the boards on, or before, the Thursday previous to the Meeting at which it is to be discussed.’ (CUS minute book vol. 14, 26 April 1847)

The motion was subsequently carried. It appears likely that Law 56 was revised in order to counter Dacre’s motion, which had carried one week before. This was partly due to the slight participation of members in the previous meeting. It was important to legitimise rule changes with a good attendance. The intention was to make the law as explicit as possible for the sake of its application and in order to limit the president’s interpretive latitude.

Thorough revision and writing down of the rules failed to resolve the issue of interpretation at Oxford, too. For instance, the distinction between public and private business meetings that during Easter term 1856 had been established became a matter of contention. The division had been constituted due to the inconsistencies in the rules. After its adoption, the rules regarding the different types of meetings were challenged which showed how ambiguous they were. It was shown that it was possible to use the rules of debate and meeting venue for one’s own political purposes if a member was able to persuade others to shift the proceedings to a more advantageous type of meeting.

That was the case also when Wetherell of Brasenose College moved for an adjournment of debate in a public business meeting because he wanted

‘to make a statement in a matter strictly personal to himself’ (OUS minute book vol. 8, 10 November 1856).⁵⁵ The treasurer, Bennet of University College, rose on a point of order to ask whether there were precedents in the minute books of similar situations.⁵⁶ The president, Oakley of Brasenose College, did not mention any but answered that a member was permitted to introduce a subject of debate on a motion of adjournment.⁵⁷ Adjournments as well as points of order could be moved without notice by any member during public debates. However, the rule already included a limitation that president Oakley did not mention: ‘No speaker on any such motion for adjournment shall introduce any matter not bearing solely on the question for adjournment or conduct of the meeting’ (OUS rules 1856, 41). In short, the decision to allow Wetherell to speak can be seen as interpretation entirely on the president’s part.

Davey of University College, then, enquired whether the present meeting was to be considered public or private: ‘For if it were one on Public Business the discussion in hand was injurious to the interests of the Debates of the Society, and, if Private Business, how it could be introduced on a Public Business night?’ (Davey: OUS minute book vol. 8, 10 November 1856).⁵⁸ President Oakley decided that a public business night that was interrupted as it was, by the adjournment of Wetherell, became private business. However, treasurer Bennet persisted in arguing that Wetherell’s motion of adjournment was a breach of order. President Oakley insisted that Wetherell continue and explain his reason for moving adjournment. Bennet rose on a point of order again and asked the president to consider the standing rule that, on a meeting for public business, no private business was allowed to be introduced (cf. OUS rules 1856, 39–40). Oakley refused and ‘ruled that the Honourable Member had not transgressed the Rules of the Society’ (OUS minute book vol. 8, 10 November 1856). This incident shows how the president’s authority to interpret the rules could be challenged by a member of the standing committee. However, it seems to have been done in vain, as other members of the standing committee could not challenge the president’s position as the ‘Speaker’ of the house. In fact, Oakley was merely following the parliamentary precedent that prevented the Speaker of the House of Commons from denying individual members the right to speak on a motion of adjournment. The Speaker Shaw-Lefevre mentioned it as one of the most commonly used device of disruption in the House of Commons (cf. section ‘Revision of Debating Procedures from 1837 to 1861’ in Chapter 3).

In a private business meeting on 2 December, treasurer Bennet proposed a motion: ‘That in Rule LXIII,⁵⁹ after the words “all other speakers” the following to be added “But no Speaker on any motion for adjournment shall introduce any matter not bearing solely on the question of adjournment”.’ (OUS minute book vol. 8, 2 December 1856) It seems that with this motion Bennet was seeking to prevent the president from making multiple interpretations of the same rule. At Oxford, unlike Cambridge, references to past precedents had not been prohibited. If one wanted to challenge the authority of the president, it was best conducted through passing resolutions that would complicate the president’s future interpretations.⁶⁰

Bennet’s motion was presented by him individually which indicates that there were differing opinions inside the committee. Members who wished to propose motions of their own were referred to as ‘private members’ for the first time in the rules of 1856:

Private Members must give notice of all Motions to be discussed at such Meetings at the least Four Days previous to the Meeting; but Motions recommended by the Standing, Library, and Select Committees, provided that they do not affect any Rule or Standing Order, may be discussed without notice, and shall take precedence of all other Private Business. All such Motions shall, however, be announced to the House by the President immediately before the commencement of the Business of the evening. (OUS rules 1856, 44)

The rule implies a distinction between the standing committee and other members. Generally, motions recommended by standing committees took precedence over those suggested by individual members and were discussed without prior notice.⁶¹ These were all characteristics of cabinet government that had been adopted from the House of Commons.

Wetherell had used the motion of adjournment as an occasion to discuss a matter that had not been announced beforehand. President Oakley had taken the liberty of interpreting the motion of adjournment as a tool to turn a public business meeting into a private one. At that moment the president used his discretionary powers as the chair of the house to perform a political act: he interpreted the rules for the benefit of a member instead of for the whole house. In contrast, the Speaker of the House of Commons has traditionally been considered a servant of the House, and the House vests its authority in the Speaker (Laundy 1964, 67).

The Speaker has, therefore, powers that he uses on behalf of the House. President Oakley, however, had ignored the multiple points of order that Bennet had raised and decided to interpret the rules for his own purposes. Oakley refused to consider Wetherell's motion of adjournment as a transgression. While treating Bennet's points of order as impertinent, he used the rhetorical strategy of *argumentum ad lapidem*, which involves a refutation of an opponent's arguments without providing any explanation.

By proposing the addition to the existing rule Bennet's intention was to minimise the potential for any similar incidents that could interrupt debates. Byrth of Brasenose College, who had opposed Wetherell's motion in the earlier debate, now moved for an amendment to Bennet's motion:⁶² 'But no speaker on any such motion for adjournment shall introduce any matter not bearing solely on the question of adjournment or conduct of the then meeting' (OUS minute book vol. 8, 2 December 1856). The amendment shows Byrth trying to prevent motions of adjournment from being used as occasions for speaking on other subjects than proposed in the original motion.

It is noteworthy that similar problems had been addressed in the procedural revisions of the House of Commons since 1848. In his 1844 published treatise on parliamentary procedure Erskine May notes that amendments were aimed at altering the original question under discussion (May 1844, 180). They can be seen as tools of parliamentary rhetoric that can 'shift the constellation of majority and minority' or allow policy compromises (Palonen 2014, 118).

After a long discussion for and against Byrth's amendment, the house voted on it. President Oakley declared Byrth's amendment defeated by majority of one. However, a claim was made of 'an informality in the taking of the numbers' (OUS minute book vol. 8, 2 December 1856), though the rules of the society had previously recognised some degree of 'informality' in elections since 1843. After the revision work done by the committee, the rule now stood:

In any case of Informality, whether of Division or Election (of Officers or Members), the President shall annul such Division or Election, and shall post a notice, at the furthest within forty-eight hours, to the effect that such Division or Election shall be brought again before the Society at their next Meeting. (OUS rules 1856, 29)

President Oakley, accordingly, decided ‘That on account of the informality declared he should act upon Rule XXXII and ensure, by the entry on the minutes the introduction of the subject on the next Public Business night’ (OUS minute book vol. 8, 2 December 1856). It seems that the rule relating to informality was intended to prevent the president from making decisions in haste. It provided yet another tool for members to postpone resolutions and to continue debates that otherwise would have been stopped by a president’s decision.

The matter was raised again on 8 December when Byrth proposed an amendment very similar to the one he had suggested before:

That the following words be added in Rule 63, after the words ‘all other speakers,’; ‘That no speaker, on any such motion for adjournment, shall introduce any matter not bearing solely on the question of adjournment or conduct of the meeting.’ (OUS minute book vol. 8, 8 December 1856)

This time the amendment was carried by a clear majority. The rule concerning informality could potentially be used in a similar manner as the rule of calling a poll in the Cambridge Union. However, no reason for proposing a poll was needed. Polls had been permitted by presidents of the Cambridge Union already before October term 1848, when they were inscribed in the laws for the first time: ‘It shall be competent for any Member to demand a poll on any motion in Private Business; but the President shall have a discretionary power to grant it’ (CUS laws 1848 October, 18). Whereas the president could also refuse a poll, it was not possible in the case of suggested ‘informality’. This rule in the Oxford Union had more reference to the minimisation of disorderly conduct rather than to the re-enactment of a house decision.

By this period of time, the Cambridge Union was concentrating on revising the rules with more precision than previously. The practice became more common after the public business meetings of the society started to become better attended. According to the reports of secretaries of October term 1847 and Lent term 1848, the number of speakers at the debates was increasing and interest in them had grown (cf. CUS minute book vol. 14). The rules of debate were amended in a manner that enhanced the predictability of the proceedings. For example, in 1849 the Union introduced a law according to which any member who wished to speak in opposition to a debate topic could place his name on the boards of the society (CUS minute book vol. 14, 19 November 1849). This change

suggested that the order of speaking in debates was decided already before the meetings took place. Naming speakers before the meetings was informative for members and an outside audience.

At Oxford challenging a president's interpretations was primarily done by preventing precedence-setting resolutions, while in the Cambridge Union the aim was to limit interpretation as to the formulation of the rules. At Cambridge, since the 'laws' were so precise, the way to bend the rules of debate was sought from suspension of a rule. The rule regarding suspension had existed for a long time in the laws of the society. But since 1853 the use of suspension became reserved for standing committee members only (see CUS laws 1853, 14). Its use required the concurrence of three-fourths of the members present. Before these new restrictions took place, the rule had been used by both standing committee members (the president included) as well as other members of the society.

President Louis of Trinity College had called a special private business meeting to discuss issues involving a committee that had been appointed to examine certain matters pertaining to the society.⁶³ However, one of the members questioned whether members had been duly notified of the meeting:

A question was raised by an honourable Member as to the legality of the meeting; on the ground, first, that the President (or in his place the Treasurer, or Secretary) had no power to call a special meeting without first consulting the society. Secondly, that due notice of the meeting had not been given, and that therefore the meeting was not competent to transact any business. (CUS minute book vol. 15, 22 February 1850)

This unnamed member argued that the president did not have the right to call a special meeting without the consent of the society. The member was politicising the president's right to call special meetings by claiming that such could not be done without first consulting the society on the matter. The president reacted by overruling the objection. The member then moved suspension of the law that required a three days' notice for any special meeting. It was declined on an argument from other members that the present meeting was not 'competent to entertain the question' (CUS minute book vol. 15, 22 February 1850). President Louis, however, decided that the meeting should vote on the suspension of the law 'in order to legalise its proceedings'. The motion was then put 'That the law requiring three days' notice to be given be suspended.' The motion

of suspension of law did not get the required majority. President Louis's insistence on allowing the vote in order to legalise the proceedings caused the entire meeting to dissolve. It thus seems that this anonymous member who decided to politicise the calling of the meeting actually won the argument, with the help of procedure. After this incident another law was added:

The President (or his Deputy) shall have the power of calling a Special Meeting of the Society, at any time, on giving three days' notice; or less if necessary; but in the latter case, it shall be submitted to the Meeting before any business is transacted, to decide, whether the emergency justified the omission of the usual notice. (CUS laws 1850, 5)

Even though the members of Cambridge Union usually used means other than preventing precedents when they wanted to challenge a president's decisions, there is at least this one exception.

All requisitions to the president of Cambridge Union were debated in the form of a committee of the whole house. This was also the case in February 1873, when the society was given a notice of a special meeting:

In compliance with a requisition signed by 150 members the President appoint a special meeting to be held on Monday February 17th 1873 at 7 P.M. when the House will go into Committee in order to consider the propriety of a decision given by the President on the evening of 26th May 1847. (CUS minute book vol. 20, 13 February 1873)

The requisition concerned a decision made by a former president in a private business meeting held 26 years earlier. It was a very unusual incident, unprecedented in the society's history: the incumbent president was asked to call a special meeting in order to inquire into a decision made by one of his predecessors. The requisition was formulated as follows:

That whereas on Wednesday 26th May 1847 the laws of the society prescribed that any motion to alter an existing law should require the concurrence of three-fourths of those present and that no such motion could be carried save in a house consisting of at least 40 members, and whereas the then President did on that evening declare such a motion carried which was supported by only 28 votes. We the undersigned request the President to appoint a day for a Committee of the Whole House to consider the legality of that decision. (CUS minute book vol. 20, 13 February 1873)

The president in question had been Davies of Trinity College and the matter in question was related to a division that had taken place after a motion to alter an existing law. It was suggested that the manner of passing the alteration of the law had been illegal.

The requisition was dealt with in a special meeting on 17 February 1873. First, the president, Frederick W. Maitland of Trinity College, read the requisition and the names attached to it.⁶⁴ Then a chair was appointed, even though in this case the president in office was not the one under examination, which shows how far the rules were adhered to. A committee chair would usually have been someone who was considered to have no attachment to either side of the case.⁶⁵ In this case, Henry Jackson of Trinity College, a former president himself, was proposed and accepted as the chair.⁶⁶

On behalf of Childers⁶⁷ of Trinity College, Moulton⁶⁸ of Christ's College opened the debate in question. An amendment was then proposed by Matheson⁶⁹ of Trinity College:

That all after the second 'whereas' be omitted, and the following substituted: 'for reasons communicated to the Society the President did decide that such a motion having received the support of three fourths of those voting in a house of more than forty members was carried; and whereas the said decision was sanctioned by a Committee of the whole house, has since remained unquestioned and has been acted upon by the officers of this Society for more than a quarter of a century, this house declines to reverse the decision of the said previous committee of the whole house.' (CUS minute book vol. 20, 17 February 1873)

Matheson argued that the decision made by president Davies had become a valid precedent, as it had been approved by a committee of the whole House. He maintained that the precedent-setting decision should not be reversed since it had been referred to as a rule for over a quarter of a century and had already been accepted as a resolution of the House. It was reported in the proceedings that the debate on the precedent lasted for three hours and twenty minutes in total, and after this 'animated discussion' the house voted against the amendment. The original motion was then also put to a vote and was passed by a clear margin, with 323 votes for and 59 against the motion.

The rule interpretation constituted the Unions' politics of debate. In the Cambridge Union there were constant efforts to minimise interpreta-

tion of the rules. At Oxford, in contrast, the main strategy was to limit precedence-setting resolutions. On 4 February 1858 the Oxford Union Society debated on the use of precedents with a reference to the House of Commons. Scott⁷⁰ of Brasenose College had made an appeal against an acting president, treasurer Bowen.⁷¹ He insisted that Bowen should have not made the decision ‘That it is illegal for a member in moving the adjournment of a Debate to specify the Time to which he wishes such Debate to be adjourned’ (OUS minute book vol. 8, 4 February 1858), because the precedent of the House of Commons’ practice was that debates were adjourned for six months. Bowen, former president Halcomb⁷² and the president in office, Fowle⁷³ of Oriel College, all ‘contradicted the fact & denied the analogy between the 2 case’ (OUS minute book vol. 8, 4 February 1858). They argued that ‘it was not the Debate but the Reading of the Bill that was so adjourned, and the effect was merely to put off the question that session’ (ibid.). It seems that, here, the former presidents interpreted the rules of the House of Commons as supporting Bowen against Scott. All the efforts were related to certain rhetorical strategies. When Cambridge Union members tried to minimise the president’s rule interpretation, they resorted to reformulation of the existing procedure. The rhetorical strategy was to reclaim the initiative from the standing committee to make procedure changes. Ultimately, the intention was to make laws as explicit as possible in order to limit the president’s interpretative latitude. In the Oxford Union, references to past precedents were permitted. The attempts to challenge the president were largely based on complicating future rule interpretation by passing resolutions for future reference. The main rhetorical strategy involved intentional creation of confusion. The purpose was to extend deliberation on past precedents and thus gain more time for debate.

A TYPOLOGY OF POLITICISATION OF THE RULES IN THE UNION SOCIETIES

The Unions adopted and adapted to their own purposes some contemporary characteristics of cabinet government of the British Parliament. They were shown, for example, when they started to reserve the initiative to the elected standing committee members by the 1850s. Although the Oxford and Cambridge Unions were in contact with each other (which makes their debate practices comparable), there were differences in their

adoptions of parliamentary practices and ways of interpreting the rules. At Cambridge the procedure of the suspension of rule was reserved for the standing committee in 1853. In Oxford Union the standing committee had the right to make initiatives on procedure or suggest amendments. Since 1856 all other proposals put forward in its private business meetings were called motions of ‘private members’.

Despite the fact that the Union Societies did not have the same pressure to legislate as the House of Commons they devised rules to make their business meetings more efficient. The rules of the Cambridge Union were carefully renamed ‘laws’ in 1845. The change was called an ‘expedient’ and it was rhetorically used for the purposes of restricting the use of precedents. The reason for the constitution of laws of the Union resembled the justification offered for establishing new Standing Orders to the House of Commons. In 1837 Lord Brougham’s proposal had been to establish permanent rules to ‘expedite’ the business of the House (see section ‘Revision of Debating Procedures from 1837 to 1861’ in Chapter 3). However, the proposal was not adopted. In 1848 the Speaker of the House of Commons, Shaw-Lefevre, had proposed restrictions to the debates on motions of adjournment that caused delays to government bills. But his suggestion was too radical at the time. It was not until in 1854 that the Standing Orders of the House were adjusted to make the debates more streamlined. Similarly, a change to the Cambridge Union rules of proceeding was introduced in 1856, aimed at cutting debates in relation to occasions when new members were proposed as candidates for membership. The idea transferred from the House of Commons was that the procedure of debate had to be adjusted to distribute the available time for debate. The necessity to do so differed from the parliamentary context. Whereas the House of Commons aimed at preserving its privileges and traditions, the Cambridge Union sought for order and stability of its proceedings.

In the 1840s and 1850s the Union Societies started to set up various select committees to inquire about the revision of procedure. And in some ways those revisions were far more radical than at the House of Commons. It had to do with the fact that the revision of rules together with the growing powers of the presidents was a source of politics of debate in the Unions. The president’s role was strengthened with the introduction of standing committees. The Unions vested all the official powers to interpret the rules in their presidents, who functioned as the ‘Speakers’ of the debates, both in public and private business meetings. The presidents,

however, tended to have a more political role than the Speakers of the House of Commons. Although the House of Commons' Speakers functioned impartially by the mid-century, the Union presidents remained politically active. It was the Union president who gave the casting vote in case the numbers for and against were equal. The double capacity in which the presidents served created political conflicts inside the Unions, which were manifested in the private business meetings as competing interpretations of the rules.

In the records of the Union Societies, the challenges to presidents' interpretations were never explicitly mentioned as 'political'. However, a rhetorical reading of the minutes reveals that the political aspects of the debates tended to be based on competing portrayals of the meanings of rules. Decisions of the president were challenged with alternative interpretations of the rules as well as by proposing new rules to limit the president's exercise of discretionary powers. In the Oxford Union the tendency was to hinder the president from making decisions that would become precedents. The other members were trying to form as many precedents as possible to make the president's interpretation of the rules as difficult as possible. This was meant to ensure that the presidency would not gain more powers than it already had. At Cambridge the validity of the rules and precedents made before 1845 was terminated. In addition, the laws of the Cambridge Union tended to be more precise in their formulation in an attempt to minimise the president's scope for making judgements on procedure.

In terms of politicisation of the rules, the private business debates seem to have included the use of the same rhetorical *topoi* that were present in the public debates (see Chapter 4). The rhetoric of expediency, for example, not only appeared in connection with the establishment of the 'laws' of the Cambridge Union, but also in the Oxford Union's discussions about publishing its rules. In private business meetings 'expediency' seems to have been used in the legitimisation of new practices (of cabinet government) that would ensure the managerial and financial stability and efficiency of the societies. 'Principle' was usually involved in the president's use of interpretative power of procedure. It was used, for example, when the Oxford Union president Moncrieff refused to allow a member speak in a debate. Another case in point was when president Oakley used *argumentum ad lapidem* and thus disregarded multiple points of order against his decision. As is characteristic to the rhetorical use of 'principle', no explanation was made to justify the action taken. The *topos* of 'character', for its part, was used when defending the *ethos* of the society or its

main officers. At Cambridge president Campbell defended his actions to appoint a new member of a ballot committee by saying that he had acted in defence of the ‘character’ of the society. A ‘vote of confidence’ related to situations in which digressions to the established rules were made by the president or the standing committee. At Oxford, for example, president Congreve was accused of misusing the procedure when he had advised his substitute to refuse a motion proposed by Chase of Oriel College. Chase made an appeal and moved a vote of censure against Congreve. If it had passed, it would have become a precedent. Even though the motion failed to accomplish Chase’s aim, as a procedural strategy, the vote of censure was brilliantly devised. In the Union public debates, in contrast, ‘vote of confidence’ was applied to the evaluation of the political conduct of government and public policy but it was not recognised in the rules of either Union in relation to the private business meetings. In that sense, Chase’s vote of censure showed the use of imagination and great aptitude for application.

NOTES

1. ‘Officer’ here refers to the president, the treasurer or the secretary, which were the most basic offices in the societies. Also, e.g. a vice president or librarian could be elected.
2. Secret suffrage was a recurring theme in the public business meetings of the Union Societies. It was also an issue contested by parliamentarians and adopted in 1872. For a discussion, see Haapala (2015).
3. The debate related to the establishment of a committee to revise the rules concerning the president will be dealt with in the section ‘Powers of the Standing Committees’.
4. Frederick Meyrick (1827–1906) was a Fellow of Trinity College 1847–1860. He was a lecturer of rhetoric and philosophy in 1850, a public examiner in Literae Humaniores in 1856 and a tutor, 1856–1859. During his career he was an inspector of schools, a rector of St Andrew in Blickling, Norwich, and an active member of the Anglo-Continental Society which promoted church reforms.
5. It was a rule of the Oxford Union Society that the president adjourned the house in the case that only twenty members were present (see OUS rules 1843, 13).

6. Melville Portal (1819–1904) was elected a Conservative MP for North Hampshire 1849–1852 and for Winchester 1852–1857.
7. John Gibson Cazenove (1821–1896) became Chancellor of Edinburgh Cathedral.
8. Walter Waddington Shirley (1828–1866) had been educated at Rugby School under Thomas Arnold. He matriculated at University College, Oxford, in 1846 and was elected a Fellow of Wadham College in 1852. Shirley became Regius Professor of Ecclesiastical History in 1863 and a canon of Christ Church.
9. David James Vaughan (1825–1905) was educated at Rugby School and admitted to Trinity College in 1844. He was a founder of the Working Men’s College of Leicester in 1862.
10. Whereas there were 107 members paying the membership fees of the society in the October term 1845, only seven did so in the Easter term 1846 (CUS laws 1846, iv).
11. John Llewelyn Davies (1826–1916) was twice elected president of the Union, in 1847 and 1849. He was educated at Repton School and admitted to Trinity College in 1843. In his long career as a priest he served, for example, as Chaplain to Queen Victoria. With Vaughan, he translated Plato’s *Republic* into English.
12. William Frederick Campbell (1824–1893) served as president of the Cambridge Union in 1847. He was elected a Whig MP for Cambridge 1847–1852 and for Harwich 1859–1860. After inheriting the title of Baron Stratheden in 1860, he entered the House of Lords and remained in his seat until his death in 1893.
13. John Kynaston (1825?–d. unknown) was admitted at the Inner Temple in 1846.
14. Requisitions were also commonly used in Parliament.
15. In a Committee of the whole House, Members of Parliament are allowed to speak more than once. This kind of practice is needed for a detailed consideration of matters: ‘When a member can speak only once, he cannot omit any argument that he is prepared to offer, as he will not have another opportunity of urging it; but when he is at liberty to speak again, he may confine himself to one point at a time’ (May 1844, 226). At both Unions, it was possible to speak more than once at any private business meeting. Although Committees of the whole House are mentioned in the rules of the Union Societies, they had a different character in practice.

16. Leonard Shafto Orde (1807–1895) served as the president of the Union twice in 1830.
17. Proctors are authorities in English universities whose duties include disciplinary functions.
18. James William Lucas Heavyside (1808–1897) became Proctor of the University in 1835.
19. Henry Dupuis (1808–1867) was educated at Eton and was elected a Fellow of King's College in 1830.
20. William Henry Brookfield (1809–1874) was the president of the Union in 1831 and 1833.
21. Previously, the Cambridge Union had a rule barring debate on political topics that had occurred within the past twenty years.
22. The Earl of Kerry, William Thomas Petty Fitzmaurice (1811–1836), was the elder son of the third Marquess of Lansdowne, who was a Whig leader. Lord Kerry was elected Member of Parliament for Calne in 1832, succeeding Thomas Babington Macaulay, also a former member of the Cambridge Union.
23. Henry Matthew (1807–1861) was a former president of the Union.
24. Samuel Laing (1812–1897) graduated as Second Wrangler, received a Second Smith's prize in 1832 and was elected a Fellow. He was elected MP for Wick Burghs as a Liberal in 1852.
25. Edward Henry John Craufurd (1816–1887) had been admitted at Inner Temple two years previously. He was known as a Radical politician. In 1852 he was elected to Parliament as a member for Ayr Burghs.
26. George Hewitt Hodson (1817–1904) became a clergyman.
27. Symeon Taylor Bartlett (1812–1877) had been president of the Union in 1838.
28. Richard Holmes (1823–1893) became a clergyman.
29. John Brame (1817–1889) became assistant master at Derby School in 1845.
30. Robert William Delacour (1822–1888) became a clergyman.
31. William Thomson (1816–d. unknown) was a chaplain of St Nicholas, Guildford, 1845–1848.
32. John Ritson (1823–d. unknown) became a clergyman.
33. John Creuzé Hingeston Ogier (1820–d. unknown) was educated at Eton and called to the Bar in 1842.

34. George Robertson Moncrieff (1817–1897) graduated from Balliol College and became rector of Tattenhall, Cheshire, in 1842. He had already once served as the president of the society, in 1837.
35. John Townend (1817–1858) became a barrister.
36. Alfred Kinloch (1819–d. unknown) became a chaplain.
37. George Rawlinson (1812–1902) was a Fellow of Exeter College in 1840–1846. He also became president of the society in Easter term 1840. Rawlinson was ordained a priest the following year. He was a canon of Canterbury and a historian.
38. John Fowden Hodson (1815?–d. unknown) was a son of James Alexander Hodson, a Member of Parliament for Wigan. He changed his name to Hodges after the death of his maternal uncle in 1844.
39. Rule LXX. 1: ‘In the meetings of the Society, it shall be the duty of the President to interfere (though not appealed to) whenever there is a breach of order; and it shall be in the power of any Member to call his attention to any conduct which appears to him disorderly, or to request him to fine any Member’ (OUS rules 1839, 27).
40. Ralph Thomas Fawcett (1818?–d. unknown) was admitted to Lincoln’s Inn in 1840.
41. Drummond Percy Chase (1820–1902) became President of the Union Society the following term. He was later the Principal of St Mary Hall, Oxford.
42. The president of the term in question was Richard Congreve (1818–1899) of Wadham College. He was educated at Rugby School under Thomas Arnold. He became Fellow in 1844 and subsequently a noted positivist philosopher.
43. Francis Tate (1817–1867) had been matriculated at Balliol College and was a scholar of University College 1838–1844.
44. Paul Parnell (1821–1852) was a Fellow of St John’s College and later became a barrister and a crown solicitor in Perth, Western Australia.
45. Edward Hayes Plumtre (1821–1891) was elected a Fellow of Brasenose College 1844–1848 and took up an academic career in theology.
46. William John Alban (1821–1862) became a clergyman.
47. John Fenwick Burgoyne Blackett (1821–1856) was a son of an MP for Northumberland South. He was educated at Harrow and, before becoming elected a Fellow of Merton College in 1842,

- matriculated at Christ Church in 1838. He was elected MP for Newcastle-on-Tyne as a Liberal in 1852.
48. Henry Cotton (1821–1892) became a barrister and was nominated Lord Justice of Appeal in 1877. He was also made a Privy Councillor.
 49. The rule stood: ‘No motion, if rejected, shall be brought forward a second time in the same Term, but the repeal of any motion may be moved in the same Term in which it has been carried’ (OUS rules 1839, 11).
 50. The motion to suspend a rule could be made without prior notice, but it needed a majority of three-fourths of the members present (CUS laws 1826, 4–5). At first, only the president had the right to move for a suspension of a rule, but in 1853 standing committee members also gained the privilege to propose it.
 51. Joseph Francis Thrupp (1827–1867) was educated at Winchester School and was admitted to Trinity College in 1845. He was elected President of the Union Society in 1848.
 52. Arthur Garfit (b. unknown–1884) became a clergyman.
 53. Joseph Dacre (b. unknown–1868) was educated at Rugby School and admitted to Trinity College in 1843. He was called to the Bar in 1854 and subsequently became a magistrate for Cumberland.
 54. Edward Prest (1824–1882) was educated at Uppingham and admitted at St John’s College in 1843. He became a clergyman.
 55. Thomas Frederick Wetherell (1831–1908) became a civil servant and a journalist. He served as a clerk in the War Office in 1856–1878 and, in early 1859, acted as editor of the *Weekly Register* run by Henry Wilberforce, a fellow Catholic convert.
 56. Edward Kedington Bennet (1834?–1890) became a clergyman and, in 1885, rector of Bunwell, Norfolk.
 57. John Oakley (1834–1890) had been the secretary of the revising committee. During his later career he became Dean of Carlisle.
 58. Horace Davey (1833–1907) became a judge and was elected a Liberal MP 1880–1885 and 1888–1892.
 59. ‘LXIII. Amendments on such Motions [referring to motions that have been announced beforehand in writing], or Riders to such Motions or Amendments, may be moved without notice in the course of the Debate; and at any time during the Meeting any Member may bring forward a Motion which has reference solely to the Conduct or Adjournment of the then Meeting, and the Mover

of such Motion shall have precedence of all other speakers' (OUS rules 1856, 40–41).

60. The rules of October 1856 further complicated president's use of power, as they prohibited him making decisions against the established rules or from interpreting a rule in contradiction to another.
61. See also the Cambridge Union Society's rule in Chapter XII, col. 2: 'Notices of motions must be given into the Clerk's office before five p.m. on the third day previous to that on which they are to be discussed; except such motions as shall be proposed in the Standing Committee' (CUS laws 1859, 13). The House of Commons had certain weekdays for handling government business. The so-called order days were constituted already in the seventeenth century, but their significance grew over the course of the nineteenth century. From 1806 onwards the House began reserving one to two weekdays for the business of government, which prioritised governmental 'orders of the day'. This custom led to the notion that the government's duty was to 'lead the House' (Redlich 1908, vol. 1, 70–71). Additionally, some motions were dealt with unannounced if they were unopposed, such as questions of privilege and motions concerning unexpected contingencies (May 1844, 169).
62. Henry Stewart Byrth (1831–1895) became a clergyman.
63. Alfred Hyman Louis (1829–1915) was named as the first Jewish president of Cambridge Union. Louis was called to the Bar in 1855 and was one of the editors of the *Spectator*.
64. Frederic William Maitland (1850–1906) became a lawyer and England's greatest historian of law. He was elected Downing Professor of the Laws of England in 1888 after having practised as a Reader in English law at Cambridge since 1884.
65. A chair of the Committee of the whole House was usually a professor or other visitor specifically called to the meeting.
66. Henry Jackson (1839–1921) had been a president of the Union in 1864. He was chosen to take the chair probably due to his seniority and his experience in office. Jackson was a Fellow of Trinity College at the time.
67. Charles Edward Eardley Childers (1851–1931) was educated at Eton. After matriculating at Trinity College in 1869 he was admitted at the Inner Temple in 1871. He was called to the Bar in 1874.
68. John Fletcher Moulton (1844–1921) was a Fellow of Christ's College. He was also Lecturer in Mathematics and assistant tutor.

During his long career, he became not only a barrister and Fellow of the Royal Society, but also a Liberal Party member of Parliament and Judge of the Court of Appeal. He was created a life peer as Lord Moulton of Bank in 1912.

69. Donald Matheson (1852–1930) had been educated at Harrow. He also studied in Tübingen and New College, Edinburgh. During his career he entered the ministry of the Presbyterian Church.
70. George Philip William Scott (1834–1876) became a clergyman.
71. Charles Sygne Christopher Bowen (1835–1894) was elected the President of the Oxford Union Society the following term. He was Fellow of Balliol College in 1858. Bowen pursued a career in law and became a judge.
72. Thomas Robert Halcomb (1833–1880) was elected Fellow of Lincoln College 1860–1880.
73. Thomas Welbank Fowle (1835–1903) entered Oriel College as a scholar in 1854. He was a vicar of St Luke in London 1868–1875 and rector of Islip, Oxfordshire, from 1881 to 1901.

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Conclusion: Transfer of the Rhetoric of Procedure to British Debating Societies

In Thomas Conley's overview of the European rhetorical tradition English nineteenth-century rhetoric is portrayed as having followed much along the lines of the eighteenth-century theories (Conley 1990, 240). From the point of view of written treatises on eloquence and speech-making, Conley's description of nineteenth-century rhetoric as 'backward' and uninteresting is quite understandable. The majority of them had very little appreciation for the contemporary rhetorical practices. British oratory was conceived as belonging to a tradition of eloquence stemming from antiquity, and the concept of eloquence itself was understood in terms of former ages (Potkay 1994, 31). However, if we turn our attention to the actual debating practices of the English debating societies, the story of the rhetorical tradition unfolds in a much more intriguing way.

Richard Whately, one of the most influential nineteenth-century authorities on rhetoric of the Anglophone tradition, recognised debating societies as the best *fora* in providing practical knowledge of rhetoric. But he maintained that 'true eloquence' was not found in debating societies as their aim is to 'learn to speak well, and to show how well one can speak; not, to establish a certain conclusion, or effect the adoption of a certain measure' (Whately 1828/1846, 26–27). Whately's argument is that 'true eloquence' is only found in assemblies that debate in order to come to a joint decision. Indeed, the majority of debating societies did not operate for that purpose. But the Union minutes show that they were debating societies whose aim was not just to provide an arena for the show of skill

and talent. As I have sought to show, the members were interested in the political issues of the day and followed the changing constitutional and parliamentary practices in their own organisation and debating practices.

Throughout this study my main aim has been to illustrate in what ways the Unions were forerunners in the adoption of parliamentary procedure among British debating societies. By showing the applications of the formalised setting of parliamentary procedure in the Union practices, the historical and political significance of these debating societies is highlighted. Compared to other debating societies the Unions were the most 'parliamentary' regarding their proceedings. They accommodated to the parliamentary political culture of debate by adjusting their activities to the newly established constitutional context of 'parliamentary government'. Largely due to the adoption of parliamentary procedure, their debates were adversarial, and, therefore, political as well. As Gronbeck notes, parliamentary rules of debate are not only regulative but can be used rhetorically, as 'their "competent" or "effective" use depends upon knowledge of their rhetorical effects on others' (Gronbeck 1982, 52). The rhetoric of procedure becomes visible when rules are skilfully used for political purposes. Read rhetorically, parliamentary debate is not about the strict following of procedure. It is about competent interpretation of the rules to find ways to promote one's own cause.

The rhetorical use of parliamentary procedure benefited the establishment and later fame of the Union Societies. The Unions were followed and imitated in other debating societies. In 1835 the Durham Union Society (named after the Cambridge and Oxford models) adopted the parliamentary way of putting motions from the Oxford Union that used the same practice, while Cambridge followed in 1842. In the University of London Debating Society, established in 1828, the parliamentary way of formulating motions was adopted in 1858 and only used in their private business meetings.

Eventually the interchange of debate practices between Parliament and the debating societies gathered more ground and created a unique political culture. In the 1880s it resulted in the emergence of parliamentary debating societies that further emulated parliamentary proceedings. By the twentieth century debating was not only trained by academics or the political elite but it also reached the working classes. In 1926 the Glasgow Parliamentary Debating Society celebrated its fifty years of existence. Founded in 1876 its members were mostly workers, which

distinguished it from many other such societies at the time. The Glasgow society endorsed the Scottish tradition of self-improvement, just like so many debating societies had promoted before. However, the society also recognised the importance of political debate and the training of public speakers. As Mossman (1926) noted, it saw no harm in the increase of the ‘knowledge of politics’ and argumentative skills among its members (*ibid.*, 5). The societies in other cities, in Liverpool, Edinburgh and London, had members with more diverse backgrounds, some being Members of Parliament themselves. They were large assemblies that emulated not only the procedure, but also many parliamentary conventions, such as holding seats for constituencies. The Liverpool Parliamentary Debating Society, which was the first of its kind, had 1,200 members in 1882 (*ibid.*, 2).

Even after the Second World War, British debating societies had distinctly parliamentary qualities. A US debating team made a tour to Britain in 1948 and reported in the *Quarterly Journal of Speech* of the debating styles in British universities, the Union Societies in particular: ‘There is no doubt in our minds that the British student with political aspirations regards the University Union as the training ground for, and the spring-board to, national politics’ (Temple and Dunn 1948, 50). Comparing the American debating style to the British, the writers noted that the Union debates carefully followed parliamentary procedure. They commented on the high quality of debate, even though no speech departments or instructors of public speaking were to be found in the universities visited, unlike what was the case in the United States (*ibid.*, 52–53). This indicates that the Unions played a significant role in British debate and rhetorical instruction well into the twentieth century as well.

The Unions were not the first to promote adversarial debate. The eighteenth-century debating societies already distinguished themselves from other political clubs with their formal debates. Parliamentary procedure and rules of debate were, however, less known and adopted than a century later. Many eighteenth-century debating societies taught oratory and declamation rather than parliamentary-style debate. In 1795 popular debating societies became affected by the Tory government’s restrictions on the establishment and operation of popular movements and associations by which it attempted to diminish the extra-parliamentary support of the Whig party. Tighter control meant that many societies and associations were forced to operate privately.

The oldest student debating society, the College Historical Society in Dublin, was established for the practical exercise of civic engagement in

1747. Its records show that the students trained, for example, by mimicking parliamentary politics. Although their debates were conducted from both sides of a question, they did not attempt to adopt other procedures of the House of Commons. In 1783 the Society formed a mutual membership agreement with the Speculative Society of Edinburgh. The Speculative Society was one of the most prestigious debating societies in the United Kingdom. Its members were part of the political and literary elite. By promoting literary and oratorical pursuits the Speculative had similar self-educational aims. Francis Horner, who was elected to the House of Commons after having attended the Speculative Society, described the method of speech-making as imitation of various ‘models of eloquence’. For the purposes of his future career, he practised public speaking in terms of declamation, not parliamentary debate. The rhetorical treatises of the period dismissed party strife and parliamentary politics as source of sophistry and uncontrolled passions. Parliament was seen more in terms of an institution guarding the liberties of Englishmen rather than as a *locus* for political debate.

The eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century treatises on parliamentary eloquence often focused on leading parliamentary speakers and considered them as examples to be followed. Both Francis and Hawthorne presented collections of portraits of the political leaders they saw as the best models of parliamentary eloquence. In the treatises, there were also differences, even contradictions, between such concepts related to parliamentary speaking as ‘eloquence’, ‘debate’, ‘rhetoric’ and ‘oratory’. Hugh Blair and David Hume, for instance, discussed parliamentary oratory in their works but they did not focus on the actual use of rhetoric. Blair’s take on parliamentary eloquence highlights Parliament as one of the practical models of public speaking but he accentuates reasoning over the use of rhetoric and procedure. His view resembles that of Whately in that any attempt to show skill or talent is considered unsuitable for the *ethos* of a public speaker.

Restrictions concerning the reporting of the Commons debates made it difficult for the public to make sense of parliamentary politics. As they were unable to attend or write notes, reporters made up speeches of the leading parliamentarians for their own purposes, of which some ended up in the *Parliamentary Debates* and were used as examples of oratory of the ‘Golden Age’. The idealisation of the past is shown, for example, in Francis’s concept of parliamentary oratory. He intentionally separated it from current party politics, arguing that the increasing outside influence

on the House of Commons caused a decline in oratory. However, the ideals of the past became increasingly difficult to attain. In the House of Commons, there was very little time left for ‘full-dress debate’, unlike in the ‘Golden Age’ (Curzon 1913, 13). It was not enough to imitate the speeches of leading politicians or respond to them by writing letters to local newspapers. The ‘combating’ skills practised in the Unions became useful in the actual political practices of the period (cf. Grainger 1969, 15). Former members commonly praised Unions for providing training in the practical uses of the ‘forms’ that guided debate. The new demand to understand the procedural way of conducting parliamentary debates was also illustrated in the publication of a new genre of handbooks designed to educate the nation on parliamentary rules of debate (e.g. Palgrave 1869; Willett 1880; Gray 1896).

The *ethos* of a parliamentarian was affected by the constitutional context and reforms of the nineteenth century. A serious parliamentarian would direct his efforts towards acquiring debating skills and securing a position in a ministry. The character of a parliamentarian was increasingly related to the showing of debating skills in party political struggles. Long and artful parliamentary speeches gave way to interventions in ‘parliamentary contests’ that were seen as contributing to the instruction of ‘the Nation at large on all the subjects most deeply concerning its interests, and to form and guide public opinion’ (Grey 1858/1864, 37).

The shift in constitutional thought was one of the main reasons for the newly acquired appreciation for debate even though it was not without opposition. In the 1830s and 1840s Conservative governments were inclined to emphasise order and executive independence over formation of party alliances through public debate. But the tenets of parliamentary government became useful for them as well. Peel supported the royal prerogative to form ministries, while being aware of the benefits of forming alliances inside Parliament. The Whig interpretation of the constitution prevailed by the mid-nineteenth century and resulted in the increased importance of the lower chamber. The main reasons for the expansion of the constitutional role of the House of Commons were, first, the attainment of cabinet government and, second, the increased use of parliamentary procedure for political purposes. Both factors contributed to the revision of the procedure to accommodate government initiatives and, eventually, resulted in the Commons’ duty to oversee and criticise the government that comprised of the leading members of the lower chamber. In other words, the procedural adjustments affected the debates and the parliamentary institution as a whole.

The attempts to revise the procedure of debate in the House of Commons between 1837 and 1861 showed that the publicity of the Commons debates was becoming less controlled and more seen as part of the cabinet system. While Parliament had to change its attitudes towards publicity and the press, the Unions did not have to confront such issues on a similar scale or with such urgency. This used to be the case also in the House of Commons prior to the reform period. Curzon (1913) contrasted the oratory of the early twentieth-century Parliament to that which he attributes to a century before while noting that prominent MPs were fully aware of not addressing ‘a private club, but a gathering that may embrace the whole nation’. Therefore, they could not afford to ‘frisk and frolic in the flowery meads of rhetoric’ (ibid., 14).

The growth in the amount of legislation also contributed to a change in British parliamentary speech. In comparison, the Unions were not affected by such drastic changes. Despite the lack of urgency, they adopted certain key parliamentary references both in how they operated and argued for various procedural changes of their own. I have shown that the formulations of motions in their public debates had distinctive, repeated patterns (Chapter 4). The analysis of the private meetings also showed that rules were not only followed but interpreted and applied to the users’ advantage (Chapter 5). Drawing from these findings, I presented two typologies concerning political activity in the Union Societies: a typology of the political agenda setting and of the politicisation of debate. This division also reflects the model of parliamentary procedure presented in many treatises on the Commons’ rules of debate where attention is paid, first, to the way motions are formulated and, second, how they are proposed in order to get a joint decision.

The analysis shows that the *topos* of character rhetorically focuses the attention on certain political conduct and ‘principle’ takes distance from it, proposing value judgments without a clear connection to the context of political action. In the Union Societies ‘expediency’ was commonly used to argue for national benefit. The national political context became more and more apparent as, from the late 1840s onwards, motions were explicitly drafted in the form of joint resolutions (e.g. ‘That in the opinion of this house’). The ‘vote of confidence’ motions were already a sign of the Unions’ accommodation to the current parliamentary system. But it was used for different purposes than in the House of Commons where votes of censure were used for the evaluation of government action. In the Union debates, in contrast, it seems that the proposals including the *topos* of vote

of confidence considered the question *on behalf* of the Commons. ‘Vote of confidence’ was a rhetorical appeal to public opinion, an evaluation of representation in a more general sense. Once the questions started to be proposed in the form of joint statements of the house, motions relating to ‘principle’ were also beginning to be very direct in their expression of approval or disapproval. Personification of political action, however, was more clearly illustrated with the *topos* of ‘character’ which was related to the evaluation of political performance, not in terms of representation as such.

Whereas ‘principle’ would involve rhetorical distance from a specific context, ‘expediency’ would direct attention to the advantageousness of certain action. ‘Principle’ and ‘expediency’ correspond to the classical commonplaces of *honestas* and *utilitas*. In late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century England humanist schoolmasters taught their students the rhetorical commonplaces in the form of letter-writing and public oration. Debate and adversarial politics were generally considered to belong together (Peltonen 2013, 62). In the Unions a similar idea was transferred through the adoption of parliamentary procedure. The main difference is that the Unions did not expect their members to memorise or practise the use of rhetorical conventions. In classical rhetoric *loci communes* or *topoi* refer to conventions that are learnt and used in appropriate circumstances in order to win favour of an audience. According to my reading of the Unions’ debating practices, the use of *topoi* is linked to how political agency was rhetorically construed. This is further argued in the section ‘A Typology of Political Agenda Setting in the Union Debates’ in Chapter 4 where I put forward a typology of the politicisation of the rules in the Unions. Moreover, I noted that it was possible to identify the same *topoi* in use in the Unions’ private meetings. The *topos* of expediency, for instance, was utilised in connection to the attempt to create permanent rules for the Cambridge Union. At the same time, the revision of procedure in the House of Commons was ongoing. Despite outside pressure to adjust the rules the Commons resisted in adopting radical reforms. In contrast, the Unions were more eager to make adjustments to their rules.

As the cabinet government system became more established, the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons increased. This was seen, for example, in the way the Speaker took a prominent role in the committee work relating to procedure revision. By the 1850s, the Speaker’s role became depoliticised by becoming a neutral representative of the House. Union presidents, in contrast, remained actively involved in debates. Their

powers augmented even further as they became heads of standing committees. While Oxford had been first to adopt the parliamentary way of putting motions, the Cambridge Union seems to have accommodated the features of cabinet government earlier. In 1845 the Cambridge Union, and in 1849 the Oxford equivalent, standing committee was given the initiative to propose motions in private business meetings. Moreover, the committees were in charge of the revision of rules in both Unions. The rules were under constant scrutiny as the members made efforts to try and use the rules for their own benefit and challenge the authority of the president.

In contrast to previous studies on British rhetorical culture I have not focused on the role of speech as such, or the style or performance of MPs, but put forward an interpretation of the formalised way of conducting politics in a parliamentary setting. By highlighting the role of procedure in Union debates I have also shown that a conceptual transfer between the House of Commons and debating societies took place. The concept of debate in the parliamentary manner is seen as embedded in the procedures and practices the Unions adopted for their own use. The *topoi* I have illustrated having been used in Union politics form the basis of my argument of rhetoric of procedures. They are seen as the key rhetorical conventions used in debates that applied the parliamentary procedure and vocabulary in this period of British political history. Not all the conventions are new but they can be interpreted as representative of the nineteenth-century political context. As such, they provide a new way to understand the role of the House of Commons, not just in terms of a deliberative arena, but as a *locus* for formalised debate in a more general sense. From this perspective, the Union Societies are more than debating societies; they are interpreters of parliamentary debate.

The findings of this study suggest that late nineteenth-century British debating culture benefited from the transfer of parliamentary procedure in terms of developing and extending respect for the following of rules to extra-parliamentary organisations. To take a broader view, this opens up new fields of inquiry in terms of comparative historical research on parliamentary procedure. Although a special connection was formed between debate and parliamentary procedure in nineteenth-century Britain, it is possible that similar transfers took place in other European countries. The British Parliament was also widely respected and imitated. Transnational transfers of procedure were attempted in France (Roussellier 2005) and Finland (Pekonen 2014), to mention a few examples. Although it is

worth keeping in mind that each parliament has its own characteristics and rules of debate which have been moulded through political practices and choices, the transfers of procedure will enable studies of the reasons why certain rules were valued over others.

This study has also shown that research on parliamentary history should not be limited to parliaments only. There are other sites of political rhetoric and debate that could well serve as sources for studies on parliamentary and debating cultures. In a more general sense, debates can be understood as a form of political activity that can be found in a variety of places and situations (see Wiesner et al. 2017). They often reveal disagreements and matters of dispute that are very useful in finding out where political issues arise, providing excellent sources for the study of politics. By focusing on the political aspects of debates we can detect uses of rhetoric and procedure, the ways in which arguments are expressed in a way that is legitimated by certain rules. Numerous assemblies, such as municipal or city councils, county courts as well as party meetings could well prove to be fruitful sites of debate. Moreover, they could show that conducting political debates is not necessarily a privilege for the few. By the transfer and adoption of common sets of rules it becomes possible to share debating practices and empower those who have previously been left out.

Furthermore, it seems to me that there could be analogous training grounds in other European universities that also had active student debating cultures in the nineteenth century. In her study on the student life and politics in the Wilhelmine period, Lisa Fetheringill Zwicker has demonstrated how German university students became politically active and took part in debating clubs. The nationwide student movement called the Academic *Kulturkampf* advocated for student councils which they called 'student parliaments' (Zwicker 2011, 177). Although the movement ended, the student councils persisted. In France, a good number of the leading parliamentarians were educated in l'École Normale Supérieure. According to a former student, l'École Normale was turning into 'un séminaire de politiciens' during the Third Republic (cf. Bourgin 1938). A few studies have compared British and German student cultures in the decades leading to the First World War. Both Sonja Levens's and Thomas Weber's contributions have put emphasis on the education of political elites (see e.g. Levens 2006; Weber 2007). They have presented with what kinds of issues and debates students were engaged. The contribution of my study has been to show that to investigate the political aspects of student politics involves also the analysis of debating practices. In order to

learn what kind of training student politics can provide, one needs to use sources such as minute books and meeting proceedings to get a sense of how disagreements were handled and to what extent rules were respected. This will also contribute to finding out the extent to which parliamentary ideas were adopted and used in the pursuit of civic liberties.

As said in the introductory chapter of this book, my approach here emphasises the political value and historical importance of debating societies in the formation of parliamentary cultures. The results of my study show that the adopted rules of debate became instrumental in the justification of political decisions in the Union Societies. They ensured that debates were conducted in a legitimate manner, from the beginning to the final vote. And, they did not just give legitimacy to the Union debates but helped the members to obtain and use tools that were also adopted in other assemblies. This widespread adoption of parliamentary procedure suggests that it was generally accepted that political debate must follow certain rules. It remains to be further studied whether this is a significant factor in what makes the British parliamentary culture stand out from its continental counterparts.

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APPENDIX A: UNION PUBLIC DEBATES CONTAINING THE *TOPOS* OF PRINCIPLE

<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1830 January		That the purity and independence of Parliament is better secured at present than it would be under any system of reform (motion: Sir John Hanmer)
1830 February	Is the Principle of the Salique Law worthy of adoption in Hereditary Monarchies? (motion: Morrison)	That the conduct of Mr Fox and his party in reference to the Treason and Sedition Bills, which were passed in the year 1795, deserved the admiration and gratitude of their country (motion: Moncrieff) (Principle and Character)
1830 March	Is a Severe Code of Laws, executed with lenity, or a Lenient Code with severity preferable? (motion: Matthew)	That Leeds, Manchester, and Birmingham, ought to be represented in Parliament (motion: Lyall)
1830 March	Is a Taste for Oratory desirable? (motion: Carne)	
1830 March	Had Corruption in the Representation of the People previous to the year 1810 increased, and ought it to have been diminished? (motion: Dupuis)	

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1830 March	Was the Union with Ireland in 1800, a justifiable measure, or conducive to the welfare of that Country? (motion: Warburton) (Principle and Expediency)	
1830 April		That the Battle of Navarino was unjustifiable, and that its consequences have proved prejudicial to the interests of England and France, the two principal powers engaged in it (motion: Lord C. Osborne) (Principle and Expediency)
1830 May	Ought some heavier punishment to be adopted in lieu of a pecuniary fine for the crimes of Seduction and Adultery? (motion: Matthew)	That the disabilities of the Jews ought to be removed (motion: Lyall)
1830 May	Is the Literary Character or the Military Hero more deserving of the applause of mankind? (motion: Price) (Principle and Character)	
1830 May	Was the English Government justified in going to War with France in 1790? (motion: Dupuis)	
1830 November	Can the extended Education of the lower Orders be dangerous to a good Government? (motion: Matthew) (Principle and Expediency)	That Free Trade is essential to the prosperity of the country (motion: Denison)
1830 December	Was the conduct of Ministers during the Trial of the late Queen, constitutional? (motion: Shillito) (Principle and Character)	
1831 January		That it behoves all lovers of their country to unite against the spirit of democracy, which is tending to destroy the constitution in church and state (motion: Allies)
1831 February	Ought Church and State to be separated? (motion: Yorke)	
1831 February	Is an early and entire abolition of Slavery in the British Colonies desirable? (motion: Dupuis)	

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1831 March	Is it consistent with sound policy, for Great Britain to interfere in favour of Poland, in the contest between that country and Russia? (motion: Dupuis)	
1831 April	In case of an immediate War in Europe, would it be good policy in England to unite with France? (motion: Law)	
1831 May	Is the cultivation of English Literature worthy of admission into an Academical Education? (motion: Blenkinsopp)	
1831 November	Was the conduct of Warren Hastings, Esq. deserving of impeachment? (motion: Layton) (Principle and Character)	That the King ought to create new Peers to pass the Reform Bill (motion: Lowe)
1831 November		That Triennial Parliaments ought to be restored (motion: Massie)
1831 November		That the recognition of the Birmingham Political Union by Lord Althorp and Lord John Russell was highly imprudent and unconstitutional (motion: Doyle) (Principle and Character)
1831 December	Has the immediate interference hitherto exercised by many Peers in the return of the Members to the lower House, been in accordance with the principles of the English Constitution? (motion: Gardiner)	
1832 May	Is it desirable that legal provision should be made for the supply of anatomical objects, and is the bill at present before parliament calculated to effect that object? (motion: Davidson) (Principle and Expediency)	That an absolute monarchy is a more desirable form of government than the constitution proposed by the Reform Bill of Lord John Russell (motion: Ward)
1832 May		That a creation of Peers for the purpose of carrying the Reform Bill would be an unconstitutional exercise of the Prerogative of the Crown (motion: Goldsmid)

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1832 June		That the recent attempt of the Duke of Wellington to form an administration with the view of carrying a modified measure of reform was justifiable (motion: Hussey)
1832 November	Would a War with Holland under existing circumstances be either politic or justifiable? (motion: Ellis)	That the complete abolition of slavery should be immediately enforced (motion: Alston)
1832 November		That the conduct of the present ministry as regards the King of Holland has been unjustifiable (motion: De Visme) (Principle and Character)
1832 December	Is a separation between Church and State desirable? (motion: Fearon)	
1833 February	Is a Repeal of the Union between England and Ireland desirable? (motion: Warburton)	
1833 March	Was England justified in going to war with America, in 1775? (motion: Myers)	
1833 March	Is the immediate emancipation of the Slaves in the West Indies desirable? (motion: Fearon)	
1833 March	Have the proceedings of the Common's House of Parliament, during the present session, been such as to warrant a belief that its Reform was a salutary measure? (motion: Kempe)	
1833 March	Should the present System of Corn Laws be continued? (motion: Laing)	
1833 April	Is it desirable to place restrictions on the Press of a Free Country? (motion: White)	That an hereditary aristocracy is an evil (motion: Thomas)
1833 April	Was the conduct of Warren Hastings deserving of impeachment? (motion: Hon. W. C. Henniker) (Principle and Character)	
1833 May	Is the Ambition of Russia dangerous to Europe? (motion: Creasy)	

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1833 June		That the reign of George the Third up to the year 1811 is to be considered a disastrous period in English History (motion: Woollcombe)
1833 October	Was the conduct of Queen Elizabeth, in signing the warrant of the execution of Mary Queen of Scots, justifiable? (motion: Hon. W. C. Henniker) (Principle and Character)	That in the event of a general movement in Europe, the ascendancy of popular principles is to be ardently desired (motion: Pearson)
1833 November	Has the conduct of the English Government towards Ireland, been consistent with sound policy or justice? (motion: White) (Principle and Character)	
1833 November	Whether Triennial Parliaments be an institution contrary to the British Constitution or not? (motion: Johnson)	
1833 December		That the civilisation of Europe is at present in its infancy (motion: Thomas)
1834 January		That the measures taken for the suppression of the rebellion in 1745 were disgraceful to the government of that period (motion: Lowe) (Principle and Character)
1834 February	Would the abolition of Capital Punishments, be a measure either just or politic? (motion: G. Ferguson)	That the reign of Charles 2nd was a less disastrous period of English History than the Commonwealth (motion: Faber)
1834 February	Whether the principle of Non-interference, as advocated by his Majesty's Government, is calculated to promote the best interests of Europe? (motion: J. Ellis) (Principle and Expediency)	
1834 March	Can the conduct of the English government towards Ireland from the time of the first invasion of the English upon the latter country be considered consistent either with sound policy or with justice? (motion: White) (Principle and Character)	

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1834 March	Should there be a Dramatic censorship? (motion: Burke)	
1834 May	Would the abrogation of the Bishops privilege to sit in the House of Peers, be either just or polite? (motion: Watson)	
1834 May	Is the Law of Primogeniture worthy of our approbation? (motion: Jones)	
1834 June		That the late separation between the members of Earl Grey's administration is deeply to be deplored; and that no ministry can hope to carry on the government of the country, which is not formed as well upon a principle of extensive practical reform, as of preserving the established rights of property (motion: Cardwell)
1834 November	Was the principle of the late English poor law system consistent with sound policy? (motion: Johnstone)	That the policy of Lord Grey's administration was opposed to the first principles of sound practical reform (motion: Trevor)
1834 November	Has the Army or Navy of England contributed most to its glory? (motion: Walmesley)	
1834 December	Is there not every reason to rejoice that the Whig Administration has ceased to exist? (motion: Watson)	That the conduct of the majority of the House of Lords during the last session of Parliament was highly noble and patriotic; and that the formation of a strong government by that party under the Duke of Wellington, is an event to be hailed with satisfaction by every well-wisher to the country (motion: Cornish) (Principle and Character)
1834 December	Does the system of flogging in the Army or Navy tend to degrade the character of our soldiers and sailors? (motion: Drake) (Principle and Character)	

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1835 February	Whether the office of Lord Chancellor ought to be separated from political duties ex officio? (motion: Burke)	That the hopelessness and absurdity of attempting to construct a Cabinet upon Tory principles have been satisfactorily demonstrated; and that no administration can hope to carry on the government of the country except upon the principles of extensive practical reform (motion: Hussey)
1835 March	Whether a strict political connection with France is desirable for England? (motion: Ferguson)	That the conduct of the opposition to Sir Robert Peel's Ministry since the meeting of Parliament has been factious and unjustifiable in the extreme (motion: Capes) (Principle and Character)
1835 March	Is the analogy which has been attempted to be established between the state of England at the present day; & that of France before the first revolution borne out by the actual circumstances of the two countries? (motion: Williamson)	
1835 March	Would emigration and free trade afford any prospect of relief from our present financial embarrassment? (motion: Truman)	
1835 May	Is one nation justified in interfering in the domestic policy of another? (motion: Redington)	That in the present state of Parties, it is the duty of the Conservatives in Parliament to give their disinterested support to Lord Melbourne's Administration, wherever they can do so without a sacrifice of principle (motion: Hussey)
1835 May	Does the present state of Political Affairs in this Country tend towards a Republic? (motion: Timins)	
1835 May	Does a Republican or a Monarchical form of Government tend most to the political freedom of the people? (motion: Townsend)	

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1835 November	Does the formation of Tory Political Unions commonly called Orange Lodges merit our approbation or not? (motion: Drake)	
1835 November	Does the principle of Lord John Russell's Irish Church Resolution meet our approbation? (motion: Townsend)	
1835 December	Does the conduct of ministers in permitting and encouraging Col. De Lacy Evans to raise a body of men for the service of the Spanish Government merit our approbation? (motion: Waldegrave) (Principle and Character)	That restrictions upon the freedom of commerce are indefensible in theory and injurious in practice (motion: Cardwell (President))
1836 February		That an administration formed upon the principles of Earl Grey's cabinet, would be best calculated to meet the present exigencies of the country (motion: Cripps) (Principle and Expediency)
1836 April		That the measure of the Duke of Wellington's administration for removing the Civil Disabilities of the Roman Catholics was in itself dangerous and unjustifiable, and has proved highly prejudicial to the welfare of the country (motion: Hodson) (Principle and Expediency)
1836 May	Whether imprisonment for debt should not be abolished? (motion: R. B. Seale)	
1836 May	Was Queen Elizabeth justified in signing the warrant for the execution of Mary Queen of Scots? (motion: Spranger)	
1836 May	Whether the House of Commons in 1649 was justified in proposing the following resolution: That the House of Lords is a nuisance, and therefore should be abolished (motion: Mackenzie)	

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1836 October		That the evils of American Society are to be traced to the pernicious form of government existing in that country (motion: Ridley)
1836 November	On the demise of Ferdinand 7th was Don Carlos or Donna Isabella the rightful successor to the Throne of Spain? (motion: Hopwood)	That the disgraceful alliance which exists between the Government and the Radical Party, fully justifies their former supporters in separating from them (motion: Phillott)
1837 January	Is the introduction of the ballot advisable in Parliamentary elections? (motion: Christie)	
1837 February	Had William of Nassau any just claim to the sovereignty of Ireland before the surrender of Limerick? (motion: Tower)	That the execution of King Charles the Martyr is to be esteemed an act of atrocious and sacrilegious murder (motion: Tate)
1837 February		That the recent political agitation by the Conservative Party throughout the country has been productive of the greatest evil, & cannot be justified on the principle of self-defence (motion: Moncreiff) (Principle and Expediency)
1837 April	Is the maintenance of the Established Church in Ireland in its present condition consistent with justice and good policy? (motion: Ball)	That it is the duty of the legislature to endeavour by the Political Education of the people to render the inevitable extension of the suffrage desirable and safe (motion: Brodie)
1837 April	Is the existence of Corporate bodies beneficial and desirable? (motion: Philipps) (Principle and Expediency)	
1837 May	Is the payment of Church Rates by Dissenters consonant with justice? (motion: C. Orme)	That those statesmen who refuse to make their principles conform to the spirit of the reform bill are unfit to be at present called to take a part in the government (motion: Fowler)
1837 May		That that doctrine which represents the King merely as the Chief Magistrate of the people is in direct opposition to the spirit of the British Constitution (motion: Fagan)

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1837 November		That while national education if conducted on solid principles must be hailed as a valuable boon, it is to be feared that any scheme of that nature proposed by the present ministry would fail of producing a desirable effect (motion: Poynder)
1837 November		That the Roman Catholic Relief Bill has been as ruinous in its effects as it is dangerous in principle and ought immediately to be repealed (motion: Tate)
1837 December	Was the Parliament justified in taking up arms against Charles I? (motion: Newell)	That the Athenian Government, from the time of Pericles, was conducted on principles most injurious to Society, and affords a practical illustration of the evil influence of democracy (motion: Campbell)
1838 February		That the proceedings of the convention on the retreat of James II were unjustifiable (motion: Tate)
1838 March		That the present system of transportation is deserving of strong condemnation (motion: Highton)
1838 April	Was the conduct of the House of Commons in voting that Daniel O'Connell, Esq., MP, be reprimanded, either justifiable or expedient? (motion: Kirwan) (Principle, Character and Expediency)	
1838 May	Was the ministerial measure of 1833 for the emancipation of the slaves in the West Indies consistent with justice and humanity? (motion: Hopwood)	That votes for Members of Parliament ought to be taken by ballot (motion: Moncreiff)
1838 May	Is it desirable that dissenters should be admitted to the degree of B. A. in the universities of Oxford and Cambridge? (motion: Vaughan)	
1838 May	Is the abolition of rotten boroughs desirable? (motion: White)	

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1838 October	Did the conduct of James II, and his abdication of the throne justify the revolution of 1688? (motion: Weightman) (Principle and Character)	
1838 November	Is the Ecclesiastical Commission as at present constituted, either expedient or legal? (motion: A. B. Hope) (Principle and Expediency)	
1838 November	Is the conduct of the present Ministry towards Lord Durham justifiable? (motion: Thackeray) (Principle and Character)	
1839 February	Was Charles I justified in endeavouring to re-establish Episcopacy in Scotland? (motion: Thackeray) (Principle and Character)	
1839 February	Does England really owe a great debt of justice to Ireland? (motion: T. Frere)	
1839 February	Is Phrenology a science entitled to our belief? (motion: Neale)	
1839 March	Is Astrology a science entitled to our credit? (motion: Ellicott)	
1839 April		That the present system of Corn Laws is based on sound principles of politics and justice (motion: Northcote)
1839 April	Is the practice of Flogging in the Army deserving of our approbation? (motion: Craufurd)	
1839 May		That by the desertion of true Tory principles, the so-called Tory party fully merited and partly caused their precipitation from power in 1831 (motion: Rawlinson) (Principle and Character)
1839 May		That in the present state of the Empire, it is the duty of an enlightened Government to propose a free and liberal measure of National Education (motion: Blackett) (Principle and Expediency)

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1839 June		That the return of Lord Melbourne to office was fully justified by the circumstances under which it took place (motion: Forster)
1839 November	Ought Instruction in the National Religion to be made the basis of any system of National Education? (motion: J. Pearson)	
1839 December	Whether the nomination of Lord Normanby to the Office Of Home Secretary, was an unwise and mischievous appointment? (motion: M. Ware) (Principle, Expediency and Character)	
1840 February	Has the House of Commons been justifiable in its pretensions in the matter of Stockdale v. Hansard? (motion: B. Shaw)	That the recent proceedings of the House of Commons in professed vindication of their privileges, are utterly subversive of the true principle of the Constitution (motion: Rawlinson)
1840 March	Is the theory of Apparitions consonant with wisdom and experience? (motion: Sheringham)	That an hereditary legislative body is an essential element of a good form of Government, and is well calculated to preserve the Constitution against the inroads of popular interference (motion: Lempriere)
1840 March	Is the Education of Women sufficiently carried out in this country? (motion: J. W. Sheringham)	
1840 April	Was the Roman Catholic Relief Bill of 1829, a measure of wisdom, justice, and expediency? (motion: Bullock)	
1840 May	Ought the Crusades to be viewed in a favourable light among Christian Nations? (motion: J. Slade)	
1840 May	Is the democratic principle suitable to the genius of the British Nation? (motion: C. P. Shepherd)	

(continued)

<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1840 June	Is the present declaration of War against China justifiable or expedient? (motion: J. R. Stock) (Principle and Expediency)	That bribery and intimidation at Parliamentary Elections are mainly attributable to the system of open voting; and that the opposite, or secret system, commonly called the vote by ballot, affords the only efficient remedy for the evils complained of (motion: Sanderson)
1840 November	Would the Abolition of Capital punishments in this Country be consistent with justice and morality? (motion: Hewitt)	That the rise of Chartism was natural, and that its increase is to be expected (motion: Coleridge)
1840 December	Should England have interfered in behalf of the Poles in the war of independence, in 1830–31? (motion: G. Crawshay)	
1841 February	Is the present generation likely to witness the dismemberment of the United States of America? (motion: J. C. Conybeare)	
1841 February	Was the dissolution of Monasteries in the reign of Henry the Eighth, consistent with justice? (motion: J. Slade)	
1841 March	Was the conduct of the Americans in asserting their independence justifiable? (motion: T. S. Western)	
1841 March	Was the conduct of the House of Commons towards Wilkes, constitutional and proper? (motion: T. H. Bullock) (Principle and Character)	
1841 March	Are Dissenters from Established Church entitled to an exemption from liability to support that Church? (motion: H. L. Young)	
1841 May	Ought Capital Punishments to be retained in the English Law? (motion: J. Slade)	That the imperfections and anomalies in the Representative and Elective systems at present employed in the formation of the House of Commons are such as to deserve the attentive consideration of every Statesman (motion: Parnell)

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1841 May		That our system of Colonisation is defective in principle, and most injurious in tendency (motion: Frith)
1841 June		That the present Corn Laws are alike impolitic and unjust, and that the best interests of the country, more especially with reference to commerce and manufactures, require an immediate alteration of them (motion: Townend) (Principle and Expediency)
1841 October		That as the principles upon which the British Constitution is based are essentially opposed to the spirit of Romanism and since therefore Romanists are not fit persons to be put into offices of trust, it is necessary for the safety and welfare of the Country that the Roman Catholic Emancipation Act should be repealed (motion: Tate) (Principle and Expediency)
1841 November	Were the Penal Laws passed against the Papists calculated to be beneficial to the country? (motion: J. Slade)	That the gratitude of the nation is due to the successive administrations of Lords Grey and Melbourne, for having, by timely concessions and vigorous course of policy, checked the course of revolutionary principles, and that tendency to organic changes, which was manifesting itself in the country on the retirement of the preceding administration (motion: James) (Principle, Character and Expediency)
1842 February	Are Capital Punishments inhuman & impolitic? (motion: Cox)	
1842 March	Was Archbishop Laud legally executed? (motion: Farr)	That the British Government were justified in their treatment of Napoleon Buonaparte after the Battle of Waterloo (motion: John E. Gladstone)

(continued)

<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1842 March	Would the method of voting by ballot in returning members to Parliament be an improvement upon the present system? (motion: T. S. Western)	
1842 April	Ought the dissenters to be excluded from degrees in the Universities? (motion: Chisholm)	
1842 May	Ought corporal punishment to be discontinued in the Army and Navy? (motion: Cox)	That the income tax proposed by Sir Robert Peel is in principle a salutary measure (motion: Parnell)
1842 May	Is prize-fighting deserving of couragement? (motion: J. Armitage)	
1842 October		That while we condemn the Norman Invasion, as in principle unjust, with reference to its effects we must pronounce it highly beneficial (motion: Tickell) (Principle and Expediency)
1842 November	Was the Long Parliament of 1642 justified in taking up arms? (motion: Chisholm)	
1842 November	That the Poor Law amendment Bill was a wise and humane measure (motion: Cox)	
1842 November	That the Penal Laws which existed against the Roman Catholics were in the highest degree unjustifiable; and that the Emancipation Bill of 1829 was a wise and expedient measure; but that its earlier adoption would have been beneficial to the interests of the country? (motion: George M. W. Peacocke) (Principle and Expediency)	
1842 December		That the Reform Bill of 1831 was in itself a just and salutary measure, and that the evils attendant on it are to be ascribed partly to the circumstances of the country and partly to the reprehensible conduct of a section of its supporters (motion: Chase) (Principle, Expediency and Character)

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1843 February	That the mass of the population of England are in a state of destitution inconsistent with the resources of the country, that those evils are caused chiefly by the restriction on the importation of corn (motion: Cox)	That no system of religious education however extensive can be really efficient till the social condition of the poorer classes be improved (motion: Arnold)
1843 March	Was the Long Parliament justified in taking up arms against King Charles the First? (motion: G. W. King)	
1843 March	That the late government were justified in the invasion of Affganistan (motion: Ogier)	
1843 March	That the war between England & China was justifiable and that its results will prove conducive to the prosperity of both countries (motion: J. C. H. Ogier) (Principle and Expediency)	
1843 May	That the Salique Law was a proper measure (motion: G. E. Pattenden)	That the present Government deserves the gratitude of the nation (motion: West)
1843 May	That Capital Punishments are inexpedient, and ought to be abolished (motion: G. W. King) (Principle and Expediency)	
1843 June		That the condition of France since the Revolution of 1789 has not been so favourable as it was before (motion: Bowen)
1843 October	That the Drama has a tendency to improve Society in general (motion: Hon. A. R. Spring-Rice)	That in a system of national education, the doctrine of the established Church ought to be taught as the foundation of all other knowledge (motion: Seymour)
1843 November	That the proceedings of the present Government towards Ireland, are disgraceful to it as an executive, and absurd in policy (motion: T. H. Tooke) (Principle and Character)	That the study of oratory is too little valued and insufficiently cultivated at the present day, more particularly in this University (motion: J. C. Higgin)
1843 December	That the principles of Democracy has been, and is encroaching on the British Constitution (motion: J. L. Fitzpatrick)	That the Roman Catholic Bill is just, expedient, and in strict accordance with the principles of the British Constitution (motion: Cumin) (Principle and Expediency)

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1844 February	That the exclusion of Dissenters from the University is just and politic (motion: J. Brame)	That a Barrister is not necessarily bound to regard the moral guilt of his client (motion: Cumin)
1844 April		That Queen Elizabeth was by no means justified in putting to death Mary Queen of Scots (motion: Simpson)
1844 May		That the profession of an advocate as at present practised, impedes justice, and is injurious to public morality (motion: Chase) (Principle and Expediency)
1844 June		That the conduct of those Members of Parliament who voted against the government in March, and with them in May, upon the Factory Bill, is perfectly justifiable (motion: Sandford) (Principle and Character)
1844 June		That the practice of duelling is unjustifiable, and cannot be defended on any grounds (motion: Fripp)
1844 October	That Inheritance is a necessary and fundamental principle of the Peerage (motion: E. F. Fiske) (Principle and Expediency)	That the Secretary of State was justified in exercising the power given him by Act Parliament to open Mr Mazzini's letters (motion: Pott)
1845 January		That the contemplated increase of the Parliamentary grant to Maynooth College is opposed both to right and expediency, and ought to be strenuously resisted (motion: Conington) (Principle and Expediency)
1845 February	That states, like individuals inevitably tend, after a certain period of maturity, to decay (motion: H. B. Smyth)	That the unprincipled tone of the Times newspaper, as shown in its violent attempts to foment agitation, as well by inflammatory articles as by the artifices of correspondents, is a serious evil to the country (motion: Sandford) (Principle and Expediency)

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1845 April	That the (so-called) Rebellion of 1745 was a justifiable and praiseworthy attempt to upset the 'Revolution Settlement' of 1688 (motion: H. Lindsay)	
1845 April	That the abolition of the civil disabilities of the Jews is a good and Christian measure (motion: H. W. Thomson)	
1845 April	That the plan of the Government for the Endowment of Maynooth is unconstitutional and dangerous to the country (motion: J. Brame) (Principle and Expediency)	
1845 May	That a suitable provision for the Irish Roman Catholic Priesthood, ought to be made by the State (motion: Hon. W. F. Campbell)	
1845 November	That Queen Elizabeth was not justified in putting to death Mary, Queen of Scots (motion: T. Dealtry)	That the principles advocated in the later writings of Dickens are of a prejudicial tendency (motion: Sellar) (Principle and Expediency)
1845 November	That a Barrister is not necessarily bound to regard the moral guilt of his client (motion: H. W. Thomson)	
1845 December	That the alleged principles of Mesmerism are contrary to reason (motion: A. Codd)	
1846 February		That the present system of Union Workhouses is to be condemned (motion: Hunt)
1846 March	That the agitation carried on by the Anti-Corn Law League has not been unconstitutional (motion: R. D. Baxter)	That the generality of newspapers at the present time are conducted on principles which render them prejudicial to the best interests of the country (motion: Thornton) (Principle and Expediency)
1846 March	That the circumstances of the present age tend amply to prove the great evils of the Democratic Principles embodied in the Reform Bill (motion: R. A. Barlow) (Principle and Expediency)	

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1846 April		That the timely dispatch of assistance from England at the outbreak of the Vendean war might have materially checked the rise of Napoleon's power (motion: Browning)
1846 May		That the present cry for the Repeal of the Union with Ireland has arisen from our neglect of that country (motion: Blackett)
1846 May	That the most equitable division of the Oregon Territory, would be one based on the parallel of 49. <i>not</i> on the Columbia River (motion: C. A. Bristed)	
1846 October		That Landlords are justified in influencing the votes of their tenants (motion: G. W. Hunt)
1846 November	That our present knowledge of Ireland would not justify the endowment (as proposed by some reasoners) of the Roman Catholic Religion in that country (motion: Hon. W. F. Campbell)	That the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act in 1794 was a just and necessary measure (motion: Hulme) (Principle and Expediency)
1846 November	That the annexation of Scinde to our Empire in India is a measure at once just and expedient (motion: D. J. Vaughan) (Principle and Expediency)	That at the present juncture, England would not be justified in interfering with the affairs of Spain (motion: Morgan)
1846 December	That the recent abolition of the Corn Laws in consequence of the conversion of Sir Robert Peel, from the principles on which he came into power, was not a triumph of sound opinion; or a boon to the Public (motion: Hon. W. F. Campbell) (Principle, Expediency and Character)	

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1847 February	That the annexation of Cracow to the Empire of Austria—combined with the previous destruction of the Kingdom of Poland—affords us just grounds of apprehension as to the ultimate results of the policy pursued by the three allied powers of Russia, Prussia, and Austria (motion: W. P. Hale) (Principle and Expediency)	That the Occupation of Cracow, by the three absolute powers of Europe, renders a war on the part of England and France justifiable in principle, and not inexpedient in policy, when we consider the state of liberal principles throughout Europe (motion: Congreve) (Principle and Expediency)
1847 February	That the assertion that by some law of re-action the laxity of the Restoration naturally succeeded the strictness of the Puritanical period is not founded upon facts (motion: J. Ll. Davies)	
1847 March	That any attempt at the joint education of Churchmen and Dissenters would be founded in error and must be injurious in its results (motion: A. Garfit) (Principle and Expediency)	
1847 April	That the democratic principle is unsuited to the genius of the British Nation (motion: Edward Prest) (Principle and Character)	
1847 May	That the light Literature of the present day, (as for instance the works of Mr Dickens) is in a great measure vicious in taste, and unhealthy in tone (motion: R. D. Baxter) (Principle, Character and Expediency)	That the proposed interference of the legislature in university matters is uncalled for, unconstitutional, and highly detrimental to the interests of this university (motion: Temple) (Principle and Expediency)
1847 December		That an appointment of a bishop without a seat in the House of Peers involves the breach of a constitutional principle, and is a precedent tending to subvert the Union of Church and State (motion: Hayman) (Principle and Expediency)

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1848 February	That the existing relations between the Church and State of England are anomalous and unsatisfactory, and should be modified (motion: H. C. E. Childers)	That the admission of Jews and Dissenters into Parliament involves a separation of Church and State (motion: Portal)
1848 February	That the House looks with alarm upon the probable admission of the Jews into Parliament (motion: W. R. Wroth)	
1848 March	This House regards with sympathy and satisfaction the liberal and progressive tendencies of the movement at present going on in different parts of the Continent of Europe (motion: R. Sedgwick)	That however we may rejoice in the abdication of the late King of the French, still we must anticipate the most serious evils both for France and Europe from the establishment of the Republic (motion: Latham) (Principle and Expediency)
1848 March	That the Establishment of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Ireland as at present constituted, is just and impolitic; and requires immediate and extensive alterations (motion: R. Temple)	
1848 April	That the primary object of punishment is the prevention of crime, not the reformation of the criminal (motion: J. Ll. Davies)	
1848 May		That while the introduction of Universal or Household Suffrage is to be deprecated, a considerable extension of the franchise is imperatively called for by the present circumstances of the country (motion: Shirley) (Principle and Expediency)
1848 May	That the Game Laws are unjust in principle, injurious in operation, and ought to be repealed (motion: W. V. Harcourt) (Principle and Expediency)	

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(continued)

<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1848 June		That the so-called Glorious Revolution of 1688 was not a popular but oligarchical measure, and has been the primary cause of the defects in the representation of this country (motion: Bedford) (Principle and Expediency)
1848 October	That the means adopted by Great Britain for the suppression of the Slave Trade, defeat their object, increase the horrors of the traffic, cause an unnecessary waste of life and money, and ought to be abandoned (motion: Hon. A. Gordon) (Principle and Expediency)	That the amelioration of the social and moral conditions of the working classes is the only means of preserving the present constitution of this country (motion: Latham)
1848 November	That this House looks with disapprobation upon all attempts to introduce voting by ballot at the election of Members for Parliament (motion: C. Piffard)	
1848 November	That it is alike our duty and interest to pay the Roman Catholic Clergy of Ireland (motion: W. G. Saurin) (Principle and Expediency)	
1849 February	That the Revolution of 1688, does not deserve the name of glorious; but is rather to be considered inglorious and unjustifiable (motion: J. N. Luxmoore)	
1849 February	That the policy of Ministers during the last few years, towards our West Indian Colonies, has proved prejudicial, alike to the interests of those colonies, and to the advancement of the great principles of Liberty and Emancipation (motion: R. Stuart Lane) (Principle and Expediency)	
1849 February	That the provision for the education of the people is totally inadequate; and that a large measure of State Education, ought to be immediately adopted (motion: W. V. Harcourt) (Principle and Expediency)	

(continued)

<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1849 March	That this House regards with satisfaction, the bill brought into the House of Commons by Lord John Russell, for the Reform of Parliamentary Oaths (motion: R. Temple)	That whatever its partial defects, the new Poor Law has successfully remedied the evils with a view to which it was devised, and is as a whole deserving of our commendation (motion: Stowe)
1849 March	That this House does not regard with any satisfaction the prospect of constitutional development held out by the Royal Charter lately granted to Austria (motion: A. H. Louis)	That as Free trade has been recognised as a principle of legislation, it is the duty of Conservatives to unite in carrying it out, so that all classes may share equally its benefits and its disadvantages (motion: Whately)
1849 April	That the principle which asserts that education is a necessary previous condition of the conferring of the Suffrage, is unsound (motion: A. H. Louis)	That this House, while it is of opinion that the re-establishment in all its strength of the Austrian Empire is to be hoped for as advantageous to Europe, nevertheless sympathises with the revolted Hungarians (motion: Grant Duff) (Principle and Expediency)
1849 May	That it is the opinion of this House, that the democratic principle of the British Constitution is best preserved, by the present civil position and formation of our Parliamentary Aristocracy (motion: H. Philips)	That our present system of Colonial government is fundamentally bad (motion: Shirley)
1849 May		That the dissolution of monasteries in the reign of Henry VIII was politically speaking a most injurious measure, and one which deserves our utmost condemnation (motion: Robins) (Principle and Expediency)
1849 June		That the Jewish disabilities ought to be removed (motion: Whately)
1849 October	That we consider the present system of indirect taxation as unjust in principle and injurious in practice; and therefore regard it as highly expedient that a system of direct taxation should be substituted in its stead (motion: H. Crookenden) (Principle and Expediency)	

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1849 November	That this House, while recognising the sound judgment of the Hungarians in discontinuing a hopeless struggle, sympathises with their efforts to preserve their national existence and constitution (motion: J. Westlake)	
1849 November	That the policy pursued by Lord Elgin, and the English Government in Canada, is alike impolitic and unjustifiable (motion: H. Bramley) (Principle and Character)	
1849 November	That it is the opinion of this House, that the late armed French intervention in Italy, was alike unwarrantable and impolitic (motion: H. Leach)	
1849 December	That the exclusion of the inferior clergy from Parliament is unconstitutional; and that the admission of a certain number of clerical representatives of that body into the House of Commons, would be a measure of sound policy (motion: J. Ll. Davies)	
1850 February	That we heartily sympathise with Mr Whiston in his endeavours to obtain an equitable distribution of Cathedral property; and we believe that the Church of England will be considerably strengthened by the inevitable consequences of these endeavours (motion: H. C. E. Childers) (Principle and Expediency)	That the dismissal of the Earl of Roden from the commission of the peace was an uncalled for and arbitrary act (motion: Ralph) (Principle and Expediency)
1850 February	That in the opinion of this House, the present ministry has culpably neglected the commercial as well as the social interests of our colonies (motion: H. Leach) (Principle and Character)	

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1850 February	That the agitation in favour of Protectionist reaction is shortsighted and mischievous (motion: R. Temple) (Principle and Expediency)	That the state of the nation imperatively requires a return to the principles of protection (motion: Lygon) (Principle and Expediency)
1850 March	That in the opinion of this House, the present condition of the suffrage requires alteration (motion: R. Stuart Lane) (Principle and Expediency)	
1850 April	That it is the opinion of this House, that the principles promulgated by Mr Carlyle, in his 'Latter-day Pamphlets', are judicious; and their practical adoption would be beneficial to the country (motion: H. Leach) (Principle and Expediency)	
1850 April	That in the opinion of this House, the dismissal of Lord Roden, from the Irish Magistracy, was not justified by the circumstances of the case (motion: R. Stuart Lane)	
1850 May	That a property qualification is an unfit basis for the electoral franchise; and that the suffrage should be extended – excluding only such persons as have been convicted of crime, or are in receipt of parochial relief (motion: W. V. Harcourt)	That the State is bound to enforce on its members a system of education neither purely secular, nor exclusively inculcating the views of any one religious body (motion: Pearson, amendment: Lygon)
1850 October		That Eclecticism is the only sound philosophy (motion: Girdlestone)
1850 November	That this House is of opinion, that the System of Education proposed by Mr Fox, is contrary to the principles of true national education (motion: H. Morris)	That any attempt to interfere by Act of Parliament with the management of university or collegiate property would be a perilous violation of the principles upon which all rights of property are based (motion: Lord R. Cecil)
1850 November	That this House coincides with the House of Lords, in condemning Lord Palmerston's policy on the Greek Question (motion: H. Leach)	

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1850 November	That it is the opinion of this House, that the restoration of the legitimate line of princes to the throne, can alone restore stability to the government, and security to the people of France (motion: H. Leach) (Principle and Expediency)	
1850 December		That the spirit of the age is wholesome, hearty, and vigorous (motion: Blackburne)
1851 February	That this House regards with deep indignation the late Papal Aggression; and heartily approves of Lord John Russell's conduct in the present crisis (motion: P. Laurence) (Principle and Character)	
1851 March	That Lord Stanley's proposal to remove the Income Tax for the purpose of imposing a duty upon the subsistence of the people, violates every principle of sound taxation and good government; by relieving the rich at the expense of the poor; and is calculated—by alienating the confidence of the industrious classes in the justice of Parliament—to endanger the institutions of the country, which can only rest with safety upon the confidence and good will of the great masses of the people (motion: W. Vernon Harcourt) (Principle and Expediency)	
1851 March	That the withdrawal of the British Squadron, for the suppression of the African Slave Trade, would be inconsistent, impolitic, and unjust (motion: W. C. Bromehead)	
1851 April	That the present state of our trade, renders the principle of co-operation amongst workmen not only expedient, but absolutely necessary (motion: A. Turner) (Principle and Expediency)	

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1851 May	That this House regards the conduct of the State, in withholding from the Church of England her ancient right of self-government (by Convocation) as arbitrary, unconstitutional, and unwise (motion: R. J. Livingstone) (Principle and Character)	
1851 May		That the admission of the Jews into Parliament is demanded by the principles of political justice (motion: Oxenham)
1851 June		That the State endowment of the College of Maynooth is inconsistent and impolitic (motion: Stowell)
1851 June		That a National system of secular education, based upon liberal and comprehensive principles, is urgently required by the circumstances of the times and the present state of the country (motion: Coleman)
1851 October		That France cannot hope to regain permanent prosperity and order without a return to the ancient principles of hereditary monarchy (motion: Lygon)
1851 November	That the Policy of an Annual Grant to Maynooth College, is neither wise nor conciliatory (motion: S. P. Butler)	That the evils of Ireland are generally attributable to the unjust and unworthy policy pursued by England towards that country, not least to the Established Church having been placed in a position alike prejudicial to its own interests, and injurious to the welfare of the people as the Church of the minority (motion: Fitzgerald) (Principle and Expediency)
1851 November	That this House is of opinion, that the public manifestations in favour of M. Kossuth, are alike impolitic and ridiculous (motion: H. Leach)	That the French Revolution of 1789 was justifiable, and has conferred the greatest benefits on mankind (motion: Göschen) (Principle and Expediency)

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1851 November	That this House regards our present system of transportation as opposed to the dictates of enlightened policy, morality, and justice (motion: R. J. Livingstone)	
1852 January		That the adoption of Universal suffrage is urgently needed, as alone realising the ancient idea of our representative system (motion: Wetherell) (Principle and Expediency)
1852 February	That the Colonial policy of this country – as at present administered – is in principle and detail opposed to the true interests of Great Britain (motion: R. J. Livingstone) (Principle and Expediency)	
1852 March		That the accession of the Earl of Derby to power is an event to be hailed with unmingled satisfaction by the nation at large (motion: Griffith)
1852 March		That the Coup-d'état of December 2nd was in itself justifiable, and is likely, in its results, to promote the best interests of France (motion: Collier) (Principle and Expediency)
1852 March	That the intellectual capacities of both sexes are equal (motion: W. E. Littlewood)	
1852 March	That it is the duty of the State to provide for the education of the people; and that that education—while not disassociated from religion—can only be conducted irrespectively of religious sects (motion: A. W. Pearson)	

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1852 April	That the Conservative is the only true and safe policy for Englishmen; and that the theories of Reformers—whether called Radicals, Chartists, or Christian-Socialists—are fraught with the greatest danger to the welfare and dignity of the country (motion: C. T. Swanston) (Principle, Expediency and Character)	
1852 May	That this House views with much satisfaction the present government scheme for a Militia; and firmly believes in the expediency, the propriety, and the efficiency of that measure (motion: Sydney Gedge) (Principle and Expediency)	That association is the only principle by which the welfare of the people can be secured and the true ideal of a state attained (motion: Wetherell)
1852 May	That the line of policy pursued by Mr Cobden and the leaders of the independent party in the House of Commons, is upright, consistent, and commendable (motion: James Payn) (Principle and Character)	
1852 October	That it is desirable the British possessions at the Cape of Good Hope be abandoned (motion: L. Stephen)	That the principles of the Union between Church and State, demand the restoration of independent action to the former (motion: Rogers)
1852 October		That the increasing praise of the Peak Towns is opposed to the idea of the English Constitution (motion: unknown author)
1852 November	That the revival of Convocation is undesirable (motion: F. V. Hawkins)	That the result of Pitt's policy with regard to France, is a warning against interference with foreign states (motion: Butler)
1852 November	That a speedy emancipation of their slaves by the Americans would be right, practicable, and politic (motion: Sydney Gedge) (Principle and Expediency)	That any religious test whereby Englishmen are excluded from the university is an unnecessary evil (motion: Lushington)

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1852 November	That the Roman Catholic Emancipation Bill was founded on principles of justice no less than demanded by necessity; and has been productive of beneficial consequences to Great Britain (motion: Vernon Lushington) (Principle and Expediency)	
1853 February	That this House regards the projects of the Peace Society as visionary and dangerous (motion: Vernon Lushington)	
1853 February	That all legislation for the Colonies should have in view the unity of the British Empire (motion: G. Bulstrode)	
1853 March	That the Principles of Democracy are most conducive to the intellectual and material advancement of a Nation (motion: S. P. Butler) (Principle and Expediency)	
1853 March	That the Foreign Policy of the English Government ought to be exerted in favour of Constitutional Government abroad; and ought not to be merely neutral, or inactive (motion: A. Cohen)	
1853 April	That this House is of opinion, that the introduction of Vote by Ballot is desirable, as a means of securing the purity of elections (motion: E. Dicey)	
1853 April	That such an alteration be made in the Oath administered to Members of Parliament, as to permit a conscientious Jew to take his seat (motion: G. Bulstrode)	
1853 May	That the principles of competition, assailed by the Christian Socialists, is the natural and necessary principle of commercial dealing; and, therefore, also, the basis of all commercial prosperity (motion: Vernon Lushington) (Principle and Expediency)	That all religious communities have a right to participate in the advantages of a State endowment (motion: Lathbury)

(continued)

<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1853 May		That the existence of a Jesuit Society is incompatible with the due security of a Kingdom (motion: Bartrum)
1853 May	That in the present condition of England, may be traced signs of National Decay (motion: F. Kelly)	
1853 November	That the demands of Russia upon Turkey are inadmissible; and that it is the duty—and for the interest—of England to oppose them, even at the hazard of war (motion: H. M. Butler) (Principle and Expediency)	That the present classical system is wholly unfit to be the general standard of education at the present day (motion: Watson)
1853 November	That the number of recent strikes amongst all classes of workmen requires careful investigation, and some firm measure for their repression (motion: C. S. Grubbe)	
1853 December		That no religious differences should be suffered to exclude any persons from the privilege of a National Secular Education (motion: Lushington)
1854 February	That our present system of education, whereby classical literature is generally required as the first and chief knowledge, is unwise; and should be reformed (motion: Vernon Lushington)	That it is just and expedient that the Jews should be admitted to Parliament (motion: Lushington) (Principle and Expediency)
1854 February	That in the English Universities, as national institutions, Academical Tests ought to be abolished (motion: G. Alston)	
1854 March	That the principles of Toryism are essentially adapted to the government of the British Empire (motion: G. Bulstrode)	That the principles on which the new Reform Bill is based are sound, wise, and practical (motion: Göschen)
1854 March	That the Crown should be empowered to confer Peerages for life (motion: A. G. Marten)	
1854 March	That any scheme for the restoration of a Christian Empire in European Turkey, must be at once impolitic and chimerical (motion: J. W. Wilkins)	

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1854 May	That England should look, for her future greatness, rather to her agricultural than to her manufacturing industry (motion: G. Bulstrode)	That the intention of government to re-constitute, reform, and extend the University of Oxford demands our sympathy and support (motion: Brodrick)
1854 May	That this House views with pleasure the introduction of a bill into Parliament, for the abolition of Church Rates (motion: E. G. Alston)	
1854 June		That the Monitorial System, as at present existing in our Public Schools, is right in principle and beneficial in its results (motion: Bartlett) (Principle and Expediency)
1854 October	That the Allies should make the reconstruction of the Kingdom of Poland a condition of peace (motion: A. G. Marten)	That a complete system of popular education must ever form the basis of all national philanthropy (motion: Turner)
1854 November	That it is the duty of Austria and Prussia to give active support to England and France during the present struggle (motion: Fitzroy Kelly)	That the existing influence of the newspaper press in this country shews that the taking off of the so-called 'taxes on knowledge' is a very undesirable measure (motion: Wilberforce)
1854 November	That this House views the proposed admission of Dissenters to the Universities as an act of wisdom and justice (motion: Fitzroy Kelly)	That the Political Works of Thomas Carlyle are visionary and unpractical (motion: Dunlop) (Principle, Expediency and Character)
1854 December	That it is the duty of Her Majesty's Ministers, at the earliest possible opportunity, to attempt the carrying out of a system of national education, entirely freed from all sectarian conditions (motion: H. Fawcett)	
1855 January		That our Foreign Policy as dictated by the Governing Classes is selfish, shortsighted, and unworthy of a Free People (motion: Beesly)

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1855 February	That it is desirable to impose some check upon the power of the Press in Great Britain; which has now reached a dangerous height (motion: W. D. Maclagan)	That the principle of Free Competition established in the East India Civil Service is in itself highly beneficial, and furnishes a salutary precedent to all other branches of the Public Service (motion: Turner) (Principle and Expediency)
1855 February	That the principle of hiring foreign troops, subjects of neutral government, is wrong (motion: H. M. Butler)	
1855 March	That a new system of promotion by merit should be substituted in the British Army, for the present system of promotion by interest and money (motion: W. C. Gully)	That the Whig party has done good service to its country, but is now come to a timely dissolution (motion: Lushington) (Principle and Character)
1855 March	That the Public Parliamentary Inquiry into the state of the Army before Sebastopol is desirable; and will, probably, be highly beneficial (motion: A. G. Marten) (Principle and Expediency)	
1855 May	That, judging from present appearances, the results of the war will not be satisfactory, unless the 'Independence of Poland' is restored (motion: H. Fawcett) (Principle and Expediency)	That the Endowment of Maynooth is erroneous in principle and injurious to the interests of the country (motion: Thompson) (Principle and Expediency)
1855 October	That the projected alliance of the Court of England with that of Prussia, would be dishonourable to the Crown (motion: H. E. F. Tracey) (Principle and Character)	
1855 November	That the present time is so favourable for the re-establishment of Peace, that it is the duty of the Western Powers to shew themselves ready to negotiate with Russia for that object (motion: E. E. Bowen) (Principle and Expediency)	
1855 November	That the present attitude of Sardinia affords the best hope for the freedom of Italy (motion: H. W. Elphinstone)	

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1855 November	That the House views with dissatisfaction the operations in the Baltic during the past summer (motion: E. Latham)	
1855 November	That the conduct of the 'Times' Newspaper since the commencement of the present war, has been most unprincipled and unpatriotic (motion: J. E. Gorst) (Principle and Character)	
1855 December	That this House fully approves of the late expulsion of the French Refugees from Jersey (motion: E. H. Fisher)	
1855 December	That an immediate and considerable extension of the Franchise is highly desirable (motion: W. C. Gully)	That the Patriotism of the day is the bane of England (motion: Eliot)
1856 February	That the proposals accepted by Russia contain the basis of an honourable peace (motion: A. C. Elliott)	That the Revolution of 1688 was wrong in principle and has been pernicious in its results (motion: Wilberforce) (Principle and Expediency)
1856 February	That the Income Tax is both unjust in theory, and absurd in practice (motion: A. L. Wyatt) (Principle and Expediency)	
1856 February	That the introduction of Life Peerages is a measure worthy of our approval (motion: C. Puller)	
1856 February	That it is highly desirable the term of tenure of Fellowships should be limited; that the restriction of celibacy should be abolished; that all who ever have been Fellows should have an equal claim with present fellows to College Livings, and should have a voice in the presentation to Church Patronage (motion: H. Fawcett)	
1856 April		That it is not desirable that the Oaths on admission to Parliament should be altered or repealed (motion: Thompson)
1856 May	That the Annexation of Oude, was a justifiable and laudable act on the part of the British Administration in India (motion: W. L. Heeley) (Principle and Character)	That every Englishman ought to possess the Franchise (motion: Byrth)

(continued)

<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1856 May	That the admission of Dissenters to the full privileges of the Universities would be a just and right measure (motion: J. W. Mellor)	
1856 October	That the true principles of international justice, forbid the threatened interference of England and France at Naples (motion: E. E. Bowen)	That any system of national education must, to be acceptable to the Country, be secular and unsectarian (motion: C. E. Turner)
1856 November	That a system of National Education on a compulsory basis is much to be desired (motion: R. O'Hara)	That the Austrian occupation of Lombardy is better adapted to its present condition than a State of Independence (motion: Daniel)
1856 November	That the Colonies should be represented in the Imperial Parliament (motion: J. J. Lias)	That the total suppression of the monasteries under Henry VIII was a wanton interference with the rights of property, from the evil consequences of which we are suffering at the present time (motion: Alabaster) (Principle and Expediency)
1856 November	That the present peace with Russia affords no security against her endangering, at a future time, the freedom and independence of Asiatic and European Nations (motion: E. Bell)	
1856 November	That it is the duty of government to legislate with a view to the prevention, rather than the punishment of crime (motion: E. Noel)	
1856 December	That the Jews ought not to be excluded from the British Parliament (motion: Hon. R. Noel)	That the abolition of Local Restrictions, and of the claims of indigent men in respect to Scholarships, is a flagrant injustice, and brings with it no advantage to the cause of Learning (motion: Wilberforce) (Principle and Expediency)
1856 December	That the interference of the King of Prussia with the affairs of Neufchatel is unwarrantable, and unjust (motion: W. S. Smith)	

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1857 February	That it is not desirable to return to the ancient method of disposing of the dead by cremation (motion: J. W. Dunning)	That the reformation of the criminal, rather than retribution for the crime, should be the aim of our penal laws, and that greater leniency of punishment would promote this end (motion: Lambert) (Principle and Expediency)
1857 February	That the present war with Persia is a just and necessary one (motion: W. S. Thomason) (Principle and Expediency)	
1857 February	That the recent conduct of the British Authorities at Canton, is inconsistent with justice (motion: C. Trotter) (Principle and Character)	
1857 March	That Sir John Pakington's Education Bill is a measure sound in principle, and at the present time expedient (motion: P. W. Bunting) (Principle and Expediency)	
1857 March	That the Franchise should be extended to ten-pound householders in the Counties (motion: E. Noel)	
1857 April	That this House would desire to see a measure of Parliamentary Reform passed by the New Parliament, either in the ensuing or in the subsequent session (motion: C. A. Jones)	
1857 May	That the present relations of Church and State are anomalous and unsatisfactory (motion: J. J. Lias)	
1857 May	That the Government of Louis Napoleon being founded on injustice, offers no security for the permanent welfare of France (motion: H. J. Matthew) (Principle and Expediency)	That the Opium Trade carried on with China is a disgrace to the English Nation (motion: Nihill) (Principle and Character)
1857 May	That this House would regret to see the Bill for the Admission of Jews to Parliament, again rejected by the House of Lords (motion: C. A. Jones)	

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1857 June		That the proposed scheme for extending Academic examinations to the Working classes is undesirable (motion: Penny)
1857 October	That any clemency shown to the mutineers now in arms in India, would amount to a national crime (motion: H. C. Raikes)	
1857 November	That the system of purchase in the army should be retained (motion: Hon. E. M. Ashley)	That the admission of Jews to Parliament ought to be no longer delayed (motion: Dickson)
1857 November	That Capital Punishment enforced uniformly and without appeal, would be a just and efficient check on the crime of murder (motion: G. O. Trevelyan) (Principle and Expediency)	That the recent Divorce Bill is in the main wise and just enactment (motion: Messenger)
1857 November	That the conduct of the government of India since the beginning of the mutiny has been most injudicious and improper (motion: J. J. Cowell) (Principle and Character)	That Conservative principles are fallacious and Conservatism a failure (motion: Daniel) (Principle and Expediency)
1857 December	That Currer Bell [i.e. pseudonym of Charlotte Brontë] is not justly entitled to the great popularity her works enjoy (motion: W. S. Thomason) (Principle and Character)	
1858 February	That this House would regret to see the abolition of the political power of the East India Company (motion: C. Trotter)	That the evils arising from the present political position of Clergymen should be remedied by the revival of Convocation, and by special representation of the clergy in the House of Commons (motion: Fowle (President))
1858 February	That the late suppression of public journals by the Emperor of the French, is an impolitic and tyrannical measure (motion: T. J. Clarke) (Principle and Character)	That the country is bound, under present circumstances, to protest against any alteration in the Laws relating to refugees on conspiracy (motion: Green)
1858 March	That Juvenile Reformatories are likely to be affective in repressing crime and are worthy of support (motion: S. E. Bartlett) (Principle and Expediency)	

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1858 March	That Parliamentary Reform on the principles of 1832, is not required by the interests of the Country (motion: Sir G. Young) (Principle and Expediency)	
1858 April	That this House having considered both bills that have been submitted to Parliament for the transfer of the government of India from the East India Company to Her Majesty, considers that neither of them is sufficient to insure the better government of India (motion: R. O'Hara)	
1858 April	That this House considers the present condition of France to be very lamentable (motion: J. J. Cowell)	
1858 May	That this House regrets that Bernard escaped punishment (motion: H. C. Raikes)	That any change in the system of Indian government ought to tend to strengthen the power of that government (motion: Butler—Johnstone)
1858 May	That it is the duty of England to afford a firm support to Sardinia, in the event of a war between her and Naples (motion: O. Browning)	
1858 May	That Her Majesty's Government were bound to signify to Lord Canning their disapproval of his Oude Proclamation (motion: H. J. Matthew)	
1858 June	That the principles of the Pre-Raffaelites are true, and worthy of imitation (motion: W. S. Thomason)	
1858 October	That Homeopathy recommends itself to our reason, and is not irreconcilable with experience (motion: H. Hanson)	That it is just and expedient that vote by ballot should be employed in the election of Members of Parliament (motion: Dicey) (Principle and Expediency)
1858 November	That England should have protected Portugal from the demands of France respecting the ship 'Charles-et-Georges' (motion: H. Geary)	

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1858 November	That this House would regret to see any measure again introduced into Parliament having for its object the total and unconditional abolition of Church Rates (motion: R. D. Pierpoint)	That the principles of Foreign policy recently enunciated by Mr Bright, demand the support of the nation (motion: Green) (Principle and Character)
1858 November	That this House views with disapprobation and distrust the principles enunciated by Mr Bright (motion: H. C. Raikes) (Principle and Character)	
1858 November	That this House would regard with satisfaction the introduction of the system of voting by ballot at the election of Members of Parliament (motion: J. J. Cowell)	
1858 December	That this House disapproves of any interference with the internal affairs of foreign nations (motion: H. Brandreth)	That no Reform Bill can be accepted by the Country which does not provide for a liberal extension of the franchise and a further redistribution of representatives according to the ratio of population (motion: Fowle)
1859 February	That the recent demand of the inhabitants of the Ionian Islands for union with Greece was founded on justice (motion: H. Sidgwick)	That French interference in Italy is not only objectionable in itself, but prejudicial to the cause of liberty in Italy (motion: Hon. E. L. Stanley) (Principle and Expediency)
1859 February	That the position taken for England by the present government with reference to the Italian Question, is the only one tenable (motion: E. H. Fisher) (Principle and Character)	
1859 March	That this House would rejoice to see the Nursing in our hospitals entrusted to religious sisterhoods (motion: H. J. Matthew)	That there is no urgent necessity for an Extension of the Franchise, and that the provisions of Mr Bright's proposed Reform Bill are too sweeping (motion: Crawford) (Principle and Expediency)
1859 March	That the Bill of parliamentary reform introduced by Lord Derby's government, is not satisfactory to this House (motion: M. C. Buszard)	

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1859 March	That this House condemns Lord John Russell's amendment on the reform bill (motion: H. C. Raikes)	
1859 April	That this House strongly disapproves of the Bill for legalising marriage with a deceased wife's sister (motion: F. Ll. Bagshawe)	
1859 May	That it is the duty of England immediately to make preparations for war (motion: J. J. Cowell)	
1859 May	That Non-interference is a principle of British policy (motion: H. Hanson)	
1859 June		That the hasty execution of Tania Topee [Indian freedom fighter] was impolitic and unnecessary (motion: Webb) (Principle and Expediency)
1859 June		That John Graham of Claverhouse, Viscount Dundee, is worthy of our highest admiration, alike for his inviolable loyalty, his constancy, and consummate excellence as a leader, and that the cruelties laid to his charge were no more than acts which the necessity of the times and his duty to the Crown, fully justified and required of him (motion: Urquhart) (Principle, Expediency and Character)
1859 October	That the present system of anonymous journalism is by no means satisfactory (motion: F. Ll. Bagshawe)	That England being indebted for her present greatness to the excellence of her manufactures, all interests should be held subservient to the manufacturing interest (motion: Cutler)
1859 November	That the only way to check bribery at elections, is punishment of the bribed (motion: H. C. Raikes)	That Universal Suffrage is desirable, and that, while it may be questioned whether we are ripe for it at present, this House will never regard Reform as completed until it is carried (motion: Tollemache)

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1859 November	That this House finds it impossible to justify the conduct of the working classes in the recent strikes (motion: M. C. Buszard) (Principle and Character)	
1859 November	That it is the duty of the English Government to insist at all risks upon the evacuation of the Island of San Juan, before consenting to any discussion of their title with the Government of the United States (motion: J. J. Cowell)	
1859 December	That it is the opinion of this House that it is necessary for the true administration of justice that a Criminal Court of Appeal be instituted (motion: W. Savory) (Principle and Expediency)	
1860 February	That this House would strongly disapprove of the abolition of the system of flogging in our Public Schools (motion: E. Huxtable)	That a belief in supernatural appearances is not wholly inconsistent either with our natural instincts or an enlightened reason (motion: Smith)
1860 February	That the power of the third estate in England ought to be diminished (motion: R. C. Lush)	That the Budget of the Chancellor of the Exchequer merits the cordial approbation of the House (motion: Farrell) (Principle and Vote of Confidence)
1860 February	That the Government have been guilty of neglect in not adopting more vigorous measures for the suppression of the Outrages in St George's in the East (motion: F. Ll. Bagshawe) (Principle and Vote of Confidence)	
1860 February	That the study of Politics is unduly neglected in this University (motion: H. Sidgwick)	
1860 March		That any extension of the franchise should tend to give increased influence to education and separate representations to the learned professions (motion: Cutler)

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1860 March	That the Great Powers ought to make the annexation of Savoy to France a 'Casus Belli' (motion: C. Trotter)	
1860 March	That the abolition of the compulsory celibacy of Fellows of Colleges would be an undesirable innovation (motion: H. Geary)	
1860 April	That every possible means ought to be taken to put a stop, by law, to Prize-fights (motion: F. L. Bagshawe)	That the dissolution of the Monasteries and other religious houses in the reign of King Henry VIII was as impolitic as it was unjust (motion: Jackson)
1860 May	That the Bill now before the House of Commons for the better representation of the people, ought not to pass into Law (motion: A. Rogers)	That in the opinion of this House the War with the French Republic in 1793 was wise, just, and necessary (motion: Hon. R. C. E. Abbot) (Principle and Expediency)
1860 May	That Lord Derby, as the leader of English Conservatives, will be justified in using all his influence to prevent the repeal of the Paper Duty (motion: R. C. Lush)	
1860 October	That the Garibaldi volunteer movement is deserving of confidence (motion: Geary) (Principle and Vote of Confidence)	
1860 November	That the general tone of the 'Saturday Review' is subversive of the principles of true criticism (motion: C. Dalrymple)	That the tendency of the stage is immoral (motion: Robinson)
1860 November	That the Dissolution of the English Monasteries was justifiable and beneficial (motion: R. F. Woodward) (Principle and Expediency)	
1860 November	That the Colonists in New Zealand are engaged in iniquitous war (motion: Sir G. Young)	
1860 December	That so-called 'Spiritualism' deserves a more serious consideration than it has hitherto received (motion: W. S. Coward)	

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1860 December	That the better Education of Women is now desirable in this Country (motion: A. H. Hill)	
1861 January		That in elections to Fellowships, it is very undesirable that regard should be had solely to intellectual qualifications (motion: Robinson)
1861 February	That this House sees no cause for regret in the probable separation of the United States (motion: Sir G. Young)	That the final dismemberment of the United States of America is an event greatly to be desired (motion: Butler)
1861 February		That this House, considering the National Church should be an integral part of the British Constitution, is opposed to the abolition of Church Rates on grounds of principle as well as of expediency (motion: Hon. R. C. E. Abbot) (Principle and Expediency)
1861 February	That Mr Carlyle is not justified in stigmatising the present age as peculiarly an age of Shams (motion: R. H. Wilson)	That England is bound at all hazards to check the slave trade in America (motion: Blair)
1861 March	That, in the opinion of this House, Fellowships ought to be held exclusively by Members of the Church of England (motion: F. Ll. Bagshawe)	
1861 March	That this House sees no reason to despair of the Regeneration of the Austrian Empire; and considers its permanence important to the welfare of Europe (motion: C. Trotter) (Principle and Expediency)	
1861 April	That this House is of opinion that the concessions lately made by Russia to Poland are for the present sufficient (motion: N. G. Armytage)	That the Poles, in the event of their endeavouring to regain their independence, will be entitled to the sympathy of this country, and that the re-establishment of the kingdom of Poland is greatly to be desired (motion: Vidal) (Principle and Character)

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1861 April	That the recent spread of Periodical Literature in this country is prejudicial to the promotion of true taste (motion: V. W. Hutton)	
1861 May	That it is the opinion of this House that, for the prevention of corruption practices in elections, the ballot is desirable (motion: W. Savory)	That this House, on account of the unsettled state of Europe, does not think the present a fitting time to remit taxes, and is of opinion that the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his budgets pays too much attention to beauty of language, and too little to the best interests of the country (motion: Curtis) (Principle and Expediency)
1861 May		That it is desirable that the qualification for the Franchise in towns should be education not property (motion: Webb)
1861 October	That this House sees reason to doubt the efficiency of competitive examinations, as applied to the Civil Service of this country (motion: W. Everett)	That the organisation of the trade unions is necessary, and their policy on the whole justifiable (motion: Simcox) (Principle and Expediency)
1861 November	That the remarks made on the 'Cambridge Proctorial System' in the ultra-radical <i>Daily Telegraph</i> , of Monday, November 4th, 1861, were impertinent and uncalled for (motion: G. F. Radford) (Principle and Expediency)	That the so-called Conservative Reaction in England is a Conservative Delusion (motion: Beesly)
1861 November	That this House views with satisfaction the policy pursued by Lord Palmerston's government (motion: Beard) (Principle and Vote of Confidence)	
1861 November	That the idea of national unity, or common nationality with another people, does not justify revolutionary proceedings either in governors or governed (motion: Sir G. Young)	
1861 November	That the time has now arrived when the European Powers should interfere in affairs of America (motion: J. Greatheed)	

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1861 December	That it is the opinion of this House that the abolition of the system of Commission-Purchase in the Army is an undesirable measure (motion: W. G. Wrightson)	That this House approves of that part of the Constitution lately granted by the Emperor of Austria to his subjects which confers the Franchise on Women (motion: Lister)
1861 December	That the seizure of Messrs. Slidell and Mason, by the American ship 'San Jacinta', was a breach of international law, and demands immediate reparation (motion: V. W. Hutton)	
1862 February	That the present position of Church and State in this country calls for a reform, which shall give a greater independency of action to the Church (motion: G. Body)	That England's colonies and foreign dependencies are the main elements of England's strength and that to emancipate them or give them up would be most dangerous (motion: Gribble)
1862 February	That the tone adopted by the 'Times' newspaper with reference to the American Crisis, has been hasty and impolitic (motion: E. H. McNeile)	
1862 February	That the other University pursuits ought, as little as possible, to interfere with the efficiency of the Volunteer Corps (motion: J. Greatheed)	
1862 February	That a revision of the Common Prayer-Book of the Church of England would be an undesirable measure (motion: E. L. O'Malley)	
1862 March	That the step proposed in the Revised Code of making the government grant to Elementary Schools dependent on an examination, is unsatisfactory (motion: C. S. Isaacson)	That such reforms in the University are wanted, as will make it more accessible generally to the nation (motion: Hon. E. L. Stanley)
1862 March	That it is impossible for a Civil Government to maintain strict impartiality towards all forms of religion (motion: E. H. McNeile)	That Universal Suffrage, so graduated as to leave the Middle Classes supreme, should be the great aim of modern English Statesmen (motion: Reade)
1862 March	That the expenses incurred by the English troops in the war in New Zealand, ought to be paid by the inhabitants of New Zealand (motion: W. M. Lane)	

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1862 April	That the theory of Absolute Monarchy is totally alien to the spirit of the age (motion: W. Everett)	
1862 May	That the principles of Homeopathy deserve our confidence and support (motion: E. H. McNeile)	
1862 June		That the state of pauperism in London calls for interference on the part of the government (motion: Hon. A. E. W. M. Herbert)
1862 June		That no scheme of parliamentary reform can be regarded as final which leaves the system of representation on an exclusively local basis (motion: Berkley)
1862 October	That the cause of the Northern States of America is the Cause of Humanity and Progress: and that the wide spread sympathy for the Confederates is the result of ignorance and misrepresentation (motion: S. R. Calthrop)	That a public inquiry ought to be held to decide whether it be politic and just to retain Gibraltar (motion: O'Hanlon)
1862 November	That the French occupation of Rome justifies the recent attempt of General Garibaldi (motion: R. D. Bennett)	That a state of comparative barbarism is preferable to one of advanced civilisation (motion: Babington)
1862 November	That there is no sufficient ground, in the present relations of the English Colonies to the mother country, for proposing to put an end to them (motion: J. B. Payne)	
1862 December	That the present Ticket-of-Leave system is unjustifiable in theory and unsuccessful in practice (motion: B. Champneys) (Principle and Expediency)	
1862 December	That Prince Alfred should be permitted to accept the throne of Greece (motion: A. G. Shiell)	That in any Society or Body, a perception of its faults should lead members to endeavour to reform, and not to secede from that society (motion: Girdlestone)

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1863 February	That it is the duty of England to maintain her protectorate over the Ionian Islands (motion: E. G. Wood)	That it is the duty of England to use every endeavour to prevent for the future the importation of slave-grown produce (motion: Rogers)
1863 February		That a study of the Classics ought to form the basis of every Lady's education (motion: Black)
1863 April	That this House regrets the prosecution, on the grounds of non-conformity, of Professor Jowett and others: and this House cannot in general approve of the infliction of social penalties, as a means for suppressing the utterance of conscientious opinion (motion: E. W. Chapman)	That the abolition of religious tests in the University would be neither unjust nor prejudicial to the University (motion: Benett) (Principle and Expediency)
1863 October	That too much favour has been shewn by the public opinion of the country, to the cause and conduct of the Confederate States (motion: H. N. Mozley)	
1863 November	That a change in our system of Coinage, Weights, and Measures is much needed (motion: C. W. Dilke)	
1863 November	That the seizure of the steam rams 'El Tousin' and 'El Monnassir' by the government is an act to be deprecated (motion: A. G. Shiell)	
1863 November	That the government of this country ought to use all its influence in order to secure the liberties of Poland; but it would not be justified in making war with Russia on behalf of that country (motion: H. Peto)	
1863 December	That Mr Darwin's 'Theory of the Origin of Species' is more consistent with the facts of natural history than any other (motion: N. Goodman)	
1863 December	That, in the opinion of this House, women should be admitted to University Degrees, and to Professional Diplomas (motion: W. H. Winterbotham)	

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1864 February	That the efforts of the members of the French Opposition, in the cause of liberty, are deserving of our warmest sympathy (motion: H. M. Hyndman) (Principle and Character)	That in the opinion of this Society the Established Church of Ireland should be Roman Catholic and not Protestant (motion: Reade)
1864 February	That this House disapproves of the foreign policy of Lord Palmerston's government (motion: Jones) (Principle and Vote of Confidence)	
1864 March	That it is the opinion of this House, that the English Church, as established in Ireland, is an injustice to the Irish people (motion: N. Goodman)	
1864 April	That Great Britain ought not to part with any of her colonies at present (motion: H. N. Mozley)	That this House would view with regret any considerable changes in the systems of our Public Schools (motion: Acland)
1864 May		England ought to go to war with Germany, should the latter persist, after the Conference, in occupying Jutland, or in demanding of Denmark payment of the German war-expenses (motion: Girdlestone)
1864 October	That this House would view without regret the voluntary separation of Australia from England (motion: C. W. Dilke)	
1864 November	That the conditions of the Franco-Italian Convention meet with the approbation of this House (motion: H. Peto)	
1864 November	That the House views with disapproval the amount of hostility which has been directed against the efforts of 'Brother Ignatius' (motion: C. Greene)	
1864 December	That this House disapproves of the compulsory attendance at the College Chapels as at present enforced (motion: J. R. Hollond)	That the abolition of religious tests in the University ought to be no longer delayed (motion: Strachan-Davidson)

(continued)

<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1865 February	That in the opinion of this House, there is no sufficient reason to believe that spiritual agency is concerned in the manifestations of the so-called Mediums (motion: S. Colvin)	
1865 February	That this House would view with regret the success of the Confederates in the present American War, as a fatal blow to the cause of freedom, and to the stability of all government (motion: F. T. Payne)	
1865 March	That in the opinion of this House, the Established Church in Ireland ought to be maintained as an endowed establishment by our government (motion: F. A. Mather)	That it is unjust that woman should be excluded from any political or social rights (motion: Tinné)
1865 March	That the outcry against sensation literature, is illiterate and illiberal (motion: H. N. Grimley)	That the frequency of strikes is due to the superficial education of the working classes (motion: Girdlestone)
1865 May	That in the opinion of this House, the adoption of the ballot in parliamentary elections, would be unadvisable (motion: H. L. Anderton)	That this house deeply regrets the late successes of the Federal arms and believes the triumph of the government at Washington to be fatal to the freedom of America (motion: MacKinnon)
1865 May		That every man, not morally or intellectually disqualified, ought to have a voice in the representation of the country (motion: Russell)
1865 May		That in the choice of a University Representative regard should be paid rather to character and attainments than to adhesion to a party creed (motion: Geldart) (Principle and Character)
1865 June		That an ample justification of Liberalism in Politics is to be found in the history of the last half-century (motion: Duggan)

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1865 October	That while this House condemns the recent Fenian Conspiracy, it nevertheless considers that the disaffection in Ireland has been produced by English mis-government (motion: H. L. Anderton) (Principle and Character)	
1865 October	That this House views with satisfaction the result of the late general election (motion: H. Peto)	That this House sees no reason to regret the introduction of the Great Western Company's works into Oxford (motion: E. E. Morris)
1865 November	That this House would view with approval a moderate extension of the Franchise, in both Counties and Boroughs (motion: Lord E. Fitzmaurice)	That the disgraceful way in which Parliamentary elections are conducted affords a main argument against any extension of the franchise (motion: S. Theodore Wood)
1865 November	That this House views with satisfaction the present course of affairs in America; and the Re-construction Policy of President Johnson (motion: S. Colvin) (Principle and Character)	
1865 November	That this House views with satisfaction the recent rejection of Mr Gladstone as Member for the University of Oxford (motion: W. A. Lindsay) (Principle and Character)	
1865 November	That this House would disapprove any alteration in the Game Laws, which would make Game the property of the Tenant (motion: C. Woodrooffe)	
1865 December	That this House believes the existing connexion between the State and the Church to be wrong in points of morality and public policy (motion: F. T. Payne)	That the extension of the University by the removal of the qualification of college residence for a degree is highly desirable (motion: Cockin)
1866 February	That this House would view with satisfaction the abolition of Church Rates (motion: H. A. Rigg)	That this House is of opinion that the severities lately practised in Jamaica were unnecessary and unjustifiable (motion: Phillimore) (Principle and Expediency)

(continued)

<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1866 February	That the generous offer of Mr Thompson to endow an American Lectureship for this University, meets with the approval of this House (motion: F. A. Mather)	
1866 March	That this House would view with satisfaction, the abolition of all Religious Tests and Subscriptions, now required for admission to fellowships in this University (motion: A. S. Wilkins)	
1866 March	That, in the opinion of this House, the principle embodied in the bill proposed by Mr Clay, M. P. for Hull, placing the Electoral Franchise on an intellectual basis, is the scheme of Reform that will best promote the welfare of the nation (motion: S. J. Rice) (Principle and Expediency)	
1866 April	That this House disapproves of the system of enforced attendance at the College Chapels in this University (motion: H. L. Anderton)	That an extension of the franchise is highly undesirable (motion: Nash)
1866 April	That this House accepts the Government Reform Bill (motion: C. W. Dilke)	That whenever all classes of the community are adequately represented in Parliament it will be the duty of government to propose a system of compulsory education (motion: Duggan)
1866 May	That with reference to the recent election for the Borough of Cambridge, this House – first, Expresses itself satisfied with the result; secondly, Is of opinion that, in future, every resident Master of Arts should have a vote for the Borough (motion: J. W. Tipping)	
1866 May	That the election of one who is not a Member of the Church of England to a teaching office in this University, is a precedent in the highest degree dangerous (motion: M. J. Sutton)	

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1866 October	That this House views with regret the late substitution of a Conservative Government for a Liberal Government (motion: F. T. Payne)	
1866 November	That the total exclusion of women from the Franchise, who are otherwise qualified, is an insult to the sex, an injustice to the claims of property, and a loss to the Country (motion: G. C. Whiteley) (Principle and Expediency)	
1866 November	That this House looks back with grief and shame upon the Act of Uniformity of 1662 (motion: A. S. Wilkins)	
1866 November	That this House would disapprove of a purely secular system of national education (motion: W. R. Kennedy)	
1866 December	That this House views with satisfaction the late Reform Demonstration; and is thereby confirmed in the opinion that the desire of the Working-man for the Franchise, has been greatly exaggerated (motion: C. Greene)	
1866 December	That this House regrets the issue of recent events in Germany, and desires particularly to express its sympathy with the misfortunes of Austria and Saxony (motion: W. A. Lindsay)	
1867 February	That in the opinion of this House the maintenance of the Irish Established Church on its present footing, is an injustice to the people of that country (motion: H. L. Anderton)	That the establishment of a system of compulsory education in this country is both desirable and practicable (motion: Brown) (Principle and Expediency)
1867 February	That, in the opinion of this House, the present lamentable state of the British Drama is owing to the want of dramatic talent on the part of writers of plays, and not to any falling off in public taste (motion: G. A. Critchett)	

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1867 February	That in the opinion of this House the prosecution of Ex-Governor Eyre is unjust and uncalled for (motion: W. Vincent) (Principle and Expediency)	
1867 March	That in the opinion of this House the Hebdomadal Council at Oxford have neglected an opportunity of adding fresh lustre to their University by the refusal of an honorary degree of Mr R. Browning; and that this House would view with marked approbation the conferring that honour on so distinguished a poet by our own University (motion: G. W. Forrest) (Principle and Character)	
1867 March	That this House while strongly disapproving of the Mormon Institution, yet thinks any attempt to repress it forcibly, unjustifiable (motion: W. R. Kennedy)	
1867 March	That in the opinion of this House, some system of compulsory education should be adopted in England (motion: E. Armitage)	
1867 May	That this House would view with regret the passing of Mr Fawcett's Bill for admitting Dissenters to Fellowships (motion: N. Moore)	That the condition of the English agricultural labourers is a disgrace to the classes above them (motion: Coles)
1867 May	That in the opinion of this House, women should be admitted to University Degrees and Professional Diplomas (motion: G. C. Whiteley)	That international morality demands from England the future relinquishment of India (motion: Cotton)
1867 October	That this House desires to record its satisfaction at the Reform Bill lately introduced by the Conservative Government, and its admiration at the brilliant leadership of Mr Disraeli, in the House of Commons (motion: E. A. Owen) (Principle and Character)	That this House has no sympathy with the Italian insurrection (motion: Copleston)

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1867 October		That the passing of the Reform Bill by Mr Disraeli has ruined the character of the Conservative Party for consistency and principle (motion: Cotton) (Principle and Character)
1867 November	That this House disapproves the French intervention in Rome (motion: A. S. Wilkins)	That the circumstance of sex ought not to be a bar to the possession of the electoral franchise (motion: Duggan)
1867 November	That, in the opinion of this House, the British Museum and other similar institutions should be opened on Sunday, in order the better to bring the people of this Country in contact with national works of art (motion: W. A. Lindsay)	That it is the opinion of this House that horse racing, as at present carried on, is unworthy the support of Englishmen (motion: Brooke) (Principle and Character)
1867 November	That this House would view with satisfaction the abolition of religious tests in the university (motion: H. D. Warr)	That the abolition of capital punishment for crimes other than treason is demanded by expediency and morality (motion: Nicholson) (Principle and Expediency)
1867 November	That, in the opinion of this House, any party legislation against the Ritualists is unadvisable (motion: C. Greene)	
1867 December	That, in the opinion of this House, the enthusiasm and energy of the present day are equal to the enthusiasm and energy of any previous age (motion: N. Moore)	That this house dissents from the doctrine of culture taught by Mr Matthew Arnold (motion: Ward)
1867 December	That this House considers that the Middle Classes of our Country are, in the main, responsible for the great existing national evils (motion: R. T. Wright) (Principle and Character)	That the laws at present acting in restraint of trade combinations are unjust and mischievous (motion: Scott) (Principle and Expediency)
1868 February	That, in the opinion of this House, the educational system of this University does not meet the educational wants of the times (motion: H. G. Seeley)	That in the opinion of this House Education ought to be made compulsory in this country (motion: Dale)

(continued)

<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1868 February	That this House would approve of the extension of the Franchise to Women, who are otherwise qualified (motion: G. C. Whiteley)	That in the opinion of this House, the nineteenth century has not advanced much faster than its predecessors (motion: Bathe)
1868 February	That this House would regard with satisfaction the Abolition of Capital Punishment (motion: W. R. Kennedy)	That all the present projects of University Reform are inadvisable (motion: Cornish)
1868 March	That the state of Ireland justifies the use of extraordinary conciliatory measures (motion: J. F. Moulton)	
1868 March	That this House considers the existence of any Political Constituency from which Dissenters are excluded, to be discreditable to the country (motion: W. Wiles) (Principle and Character)	
1868 March	That this House disapproves of the system of compulsory chapels existing in the University (motion: J. E. Symes)	
1868 May	That this House approves of the proposal to admit to the University students not connected with any college (motion: A. S. Wilkins)	That this House cordially approves of Mr Coleridge's Bill for abolishing University tests (motion: Reith)
1868 May		That this House disapproves of the excessive spread of periodical literature in the present day (motion: Dale)
1868 June	That this House views with admiration, the efforts of women to establish for themselves colleges, on the principles of those existing for men (motion: H. G. Seeley)	
1868 October	That, in the opinion of this House, anonymous journalism is a thing to be discouraged (motion: W. K. Clifford)	That the spread of Trades-Unionism is desirable (motion: Harrison)
1868 November	That, in the opinion of this House, no modern scheme of reform in this University would be so efficacious as the restoration of those ancient principles of its constitution which have been unnecessarily abandoned (motion: N. Moore) (Principle and Expediency)	That the first duty of a Statesman is to preserve his own honour (motion: Morice)

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1868 November	That, in the opinion of this House, the present College Kitchen System in this University is execrable; and no permanent improvement is possible until irresponsible cooks exchange their practical monopoly for the position of college servants (motion: Frank Watson)	
1868 November	That, in the opinion of this House, the recent charges of reckless expenditure brought against the present Government, are unjust; and deserving of the strongest censure (motion: J. Adam) (Principle and Character)	
1868 November	That this House watches with interest the progress of the scheme by which students not connected with any college have been admitted members of the University of Oxford, and looks forward with approval to the introduction of a similar scheme in our own University (motion: S. Thackrah)	
1868 December	That this House views with satisfaction the result of the General Election (motion: J. D. Fitzgerald)	That the time was come for England to begin the emancipation of the colonies (motion: Cross)
1868 December	Believing that the Artisans are the hope of the Country, this House would view with admiration the passing of an Education Bill (motion: H. G. Seeley)	That this House views with apprehension and regret the accession of the self-styled 'Liberal' party to power, and earnestly hopes that the exclusion of Mr Disraeli and the Tory party from office will be of short duration (motion: Beaven)
1869 February	That this House would view with dissatisfaction the use of the Ballot at Parliamentary Elections (motion: D. Campbell)	That the time is now come for separation of Church and State (motion: Jeans)

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1869 March	That this House would approve of the opening of the British Museum and National Institutions on Sunday (motion: I. Davis)	That all tests ought to be abolished in this University (motion: A. H. Turner)
1869 March	That this House would view with satisfaction the abolition of Triposes (motion: R. J. Watson)	
1869 April	That in the opinion of this House the increase of convents in this Country requires some immediate check (motion: S. Lecke)	That the present generation of young men & women is not at all inferior to preceding ones (motion: Nash)
1869 April		That the admission of women to the suffrage is desirable (motion: J. Cross)
1869 May	That in the opinion of this House the Colonies of British North America and Australia, when ready for independent government, should be separated from the mother Country (motion: C. H. Pierson)	That Toryism in England is defunct and deservedly so (motion: S. Dawes)
1869 May	That this House would approve of legislative checks on the increase of Population (motion: H. G. Seeley)	That any system of education to be truly national must be based on thoroughly unsectarian principles (motion: MacChymont)
1869 May	That in the opinion of this House the settlement of the Land Question in Ireland is of far greater importance than any measure in connexion with the Church (motion: A. C. P. Coote)	That in the opinion of this House discontent in Ireland can never be allayed until the principles of nationality is recognised in the constitution of that country (motion: J. G. S. MacNeill)
1869 October	That there is no truth in the statement that England is becoming a second-rate power (motion: I. Davis)	That the House of Lords should cease to exist (motion: Richards)
1869 November	That a re-organisation of the policy of the Conservative party is desirable (motion: Hon. C. H. Strutt)	That the French Revolution was a blessing to mankind (motion: Sinclair)
1869 November	That, in the opinion of this House, the power at present possessed by Trades-Unions is dangerous to the commercial interests of the Country, and any undue use of this power ought to be checked by Legislation (motion: J. E. Johnson) (Principle and Expediency)	

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(continued)

<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1869 November	That this House would view with satisfaction the Abolition of Religious Tests in the University (motion: J. E. Symes)	That clubs open to working men should be established at the public expense (motion: Higgs)
1869 November	That, in the opinion of this House, it is desirable that the connection at present existing between the Church and the State in this Country, should be dissolved (motion: A. Foster)	That the proposal to alter the academical year does not meet with the approval of this House (motion: Brooke)
1869 December		That it is desirable and expedient to abolish capital punishment (motion: Carrington) (Principle and Expediency)
1869 December		That the present Land Laws ought to be reformed, as being pernicious in their social, economical, political results (motion: Doyle)
1870 February	That this House would strongly condemn any Irish Land-bill which in the least degree violated the rights of existing proprietors (motion: J. De Soyres)	That a comprehensive scheme of secular national education is urgently demanded of the present Government (motion: Earwater)
1870 February	That, in the opinion of this House, the scheme of the Educational League is worthy of the support of the nation (motion: A. W. Dilke)	That vote by ballot violates the true principles of political freedom and ought to form no part of the programme of the Liberal government (motion: C. R. MacChymont)
1870 February	That this House approves of the extension of the Franchise to women (motion: T. O. Harding)	That Journalism & Periodicalism has been carried to a mischievous excess (motion: Higgs)
1870 March	That this House would view with satisfaction the abolition of Compulsory Chapels (motion: E. K. Purnell)	That Mr Gladstone's Irish Land Bill is a satisfactory measure (motion: Dale)
1870 March	That this House supports the Church Establishment in this Country; but is of opinion that its basis should be enlarged (motion: C. H. Pierson)	That Government is bound to propose some system of free Emigration for the relief of crowded districts (motion: Elliott)

(continued)

<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1870 March	That this House would view with satisfaction the abolition of Capital Punishment (motion: W. B. Odgers)	That any scheme for the promotion of female suffrage is absurd and impracticable (motion: Mowbray) (Principle and Expediency)
1870 March	That this House views with regret the present unsatisfactory state of the English Drama (motion: H. F. Dickens)	
1870 April		That the increase of democratic principles in England is to be deeply regretted (motion: Ellis Ashmead Bartlett)
1870 May	That this House would view with gratification the abolition of the Office of Master in the Colleges of this University (motion: H. I. Owen)	That all Religious Associations of a Monastic kind with whatever Church connected should be open to Government Inspection (motion: Bryce)
1870 May	That the present Colonial Policy of the Government deserves the condemnation of the Nation, as tending to the ultimate disintegration of the Empire (motion: Locke) (Principle and Vote of Confidence)	
1870 May	That, in the opinion of this House, Conventual Establishments of every kind, and irrespective of sects, ought to be under Government inspection (motion: J. Adam)	
1870 June		That extensive reforms in the system of university education at Oxford are desirable (motion: J. R. Sturgis)
1870 June		That field sports are morally defensible (motion: Ducat)
1870 October		That all religious restrictions in the University ought to be removed (motion: D. F. Schloss)
1870 November		That it is desirable that the Bishops should retain their seats in the House of Lords (motion: Forbes)

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1870 November		That in the re-organisation of the English Army the principle of expulsion ought to be introduced (motion: S. H. Grose)
1870 November		That this House desires the restoration of the French Republic (motion: H. P. Richards)
1870 December		That in the opinion of this House any infraction by Russia of the Treaty of 1856 demands a policy of armed resistance on the part of the co-signatories (motion: I. A. Bryce)
1870 December		That this House deprecates the growing tendency in this country towards administrative centralisation (motion: Dawes)

APPENDIX B: UNION PUBLIC DEBATES CONTAINING THE *TOPOS* OF EXPEDIENCY

<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1830 February	Has the Increase of Education been productive of an Increase of Crime? (motion: Law)	
1830 February	Is it expedient that a restraint should be placed upon the Public Press in a free Country? (motion: Roberts)	
1830 March	Would it have enhanced the glory or welfare of England to have substituted in the year 1810, a Republican form of Government for that virtually established in these Dominions? (motion: Symons)	
1830 March	Was the Union with Ireland in 1800, a justifiable measure, or conducive to the welfare of that Country? (motion: Warburton) (Expediency and Principle)	
1830 April		That the Battle of Navarino was unjustifiable, and that its consequences have proved prejudicial to the interests of England and France, the two principal powers engaged in it (motion: Lord C. Osborne) (Expediency and Principle)

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1830 June		That the establishing of Colleges in London for the education of the Middle Classes, is beneficial to the interests of the society (motion: Chamberlain)
1830 October		That the foreign policy of the Duke of Wellington has been derogatory to the dignity, and injurious to the best interests, of the country (motion: Gaskell) (Expediency and Character)
1830 November	Would it be expedient to adopt the Ballot in Elections? (motion: Law)	
1830 November	Can the extended Education of the lower Orders be dangerous to a good Government? (motion: Matthew) (Expediency and Principle)	
1831 February	Would the Abolition of Capital Punishments in all cases, except for Murder, be productive of an increase or a diminution of Crime? (motion: Law)	That the Catholic Relief Bill has not justified by its results the expectations which were held out by its supporters (motion: Jelf)
1831 February		That the extent to which the liberty of the Press is now carried is injurious to the peace and welfare of Society (motion: Ward)
1831 March		That a reform in the system of parliamentary representation will ultimately prove destructive of the constitution, and consequently of the prosperity of this country (motion: Hon. Sidney Herbert)
1831 May	Would it be expedient to adopt legal measures for affording to the art of Surgery an adequate supply of Anatomical subjects? (motion: Gardiner)	
1831 November	Has the Study of Political Economy been productive of benefit to the best interests of society? (motion: Blenkinsopp)	

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1831 November	Is the custom of Duelling beneficial to Society? (motion: Kennedy)	
1831 November	Have the two French Revolutions been a benefit or an evil to mankind? (motion: Creasy)	
1831 November	Has the agitation of the Reform Question been productive of good to the country? (motion: Mereweather)	
1831 December	Would a Republican form of Government be better adapted towards the forwarding of the prosperity of England, than that which she now enjoys or labours under? (motion: Warburton)	
1832 February	Would a Republican form of government be better adapted to the forwarding of the prosperity of England than that which she now enjoys or labours under? (motion: Warburton)	
1832 March	Should prose works of Fiction be withheld from youth, as compositions injurious to the youthful mind generally? (motion: Johnstone)	
1832 March	Have the poor laws been beneficial to England (motion: C. Kennedy)	
1832 May	Is it desirable that legal provision should be made for the supply of anatomical objects, and is the bill at present before parliament calculated to effect that object? (motion: Davidson) (Expediency and Principle)	
1832 November	Have continental wars been on the whole beneficial to England? (motion: R. C. Kennedy)	That there being at present no hope of the establishment of any permanent Tory Ministry, the Conservative party will best consult the interest of the country by firmly supporting the present Government (motion: Ward)
1832 November	Is a monarchical or republican form of Government the more favourable to the advancement of literature? (motion: Alford)	

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1832 November	Is the System of Emigration likely to prove Beneficial to this Country? (motion: Hon. W. Henniker)	
1833 February	Has the Revolution of 1688, been beneficial to this Country? (motion: Matthew)	That vote by ballot is an unnecessary expedient, unlikely to effect the objects which are professedly designed by its supporters (motion: Cother)
1833 March		That the Six Acts of Lord Castlereagh were highly conducive to the peace and tranquillity of the country, without any too great infringement on the liberty of subject (motion: Mayow)
1833 March		That a Cordial Union between Great Britain and France would be highly conducive to the welfare of both countries, as well as to the happiness and peace of Europe (motion: Barne)
1833 May	Whether vote by Ballot in the election of Members of the Commons House of Parliament is beneficial? (motion: Burke)	That the general conduct pursued by Sir Robert Peel, since the passing of the Reform Measure, has been in the highest degree creditable to him and beneficial to the country (motion: Lyall) (Expediency and Character)
1833 May	Would the Resignation of his Majesty's Ministers, on their late defeat, have been advantageous to the country? (motion: Stocks)	
1834 February	Whether the principle of Non-interference, as advocated by his Majesty's Government, is calculated to promote the best interests of Europe? (motion: J. Ellis) (Expediency and Principle)	
1834 February	Was not the Puritanical Spirit of the Fanatical Strictness, prevalent in the time of the Stuarts, productive of great evils to the Country? (motion: Fearon)	

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1834 April	Is it expedient that Dissenters should be permitted to graduate in Arts, Law or Physic in this University? (motion: Ellis)	
1834 May	Is it expedient that a Charter for granting degrees be given to the London University? (motion: Townsend)	
1834 November	Would the introduction of vote by ballot in parliamentary elections be productive of good to, or would it entail evil on, the country? (motion: Watson)	
1835 March	Is a systematic opposition to an administration conducive to the happiness of a country? (motion: Mackinnon)	
1835 May	Is or is not the permission to entail property advantageous to Great Britain? (motion: Latham)	
1835 November	Is an Hereditary Peerage beneficial to this country? (motion: H. Roberts)	That the suppression of the Foreign Enlistment Act in favour of the Queen of Spain was injurious to the honour and true interests of this country (motion: Mellish) (Expediency and Character)
1835 December	Have the benefits which were expected from the Roman Catholic Emancipation been realised? (motion: H. Bullock)	
1836 February	Has the conduct of the House of Lords during the last five years been beneficial to the country (motion: Ball)	That an administration formed upon the principles of Earl Grey's cabinet, would be best calculated to meet the present exigencies of the country (motion: Cripps) (Expediency and Principle)
1836 February	Have the measures of the Whig Government since passing of the Reform Bill been such as to promote the interests of the lower classes? (motion: Pollard)	That in the present state of affairs, Sir R. Peel's speedy return to Office is absolutely necessary (motion: Ridley)
1836 March	Is it probable that a measure for the separation of Church and State would either secure more extended toleration of religious belief or be productive of any beneficial result to the nation at large? (motion: A. J. Watson)	

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1836 March	Is the monopoly of the patent theatres calculated to advance the interests of the drama? (motion: A. J. Ellis)	
1836 April	Is the existence of party feeling in a state productive on the whole of injury or benefit? (motion: Goldfinch)	That the measure of the Duke of Wellington's administration for removing the Civil Disabilities of the Roman Catholics was in itself dangerous and unjustifiable, and has proved highly prejudicial to the welfare of the country (motion: Hodson) (Expediency and Principle)
1836 November	Does the past conduct of the Roman Catholics of Ireland justify an expectation that further concessions on the part of the Protestants of England will be productive of any beneficial result? (motion: Watson) (Expediency and Character)	
1836 December	Is Mr O'Connell a benefactor to this country? (motion: Cochrane) (Expediency and Character)	
1837 February	Does the existence of the established Church of England in Ireland conduce to the moral happiness of the people? (motion: A. Watson)	
1837 February	Is the Law of Primogeniture as established in this country conducive to the interests of Society? (motion: Weightman)	That the recent political agitation by the Conservative Party throughout the country has been productive of the greatest evil, & cannot be justified on the principle of self defence (motion: Moncreiff) (Expediency and Principle)
1837 March	Would the presence of ladies at parliamentary debates refine the language used by Honourable Members, and check the brawls which are so frequent in the discussions of the House? (motion: Tower)	That the conduct of the present government towards Ireland is contrary to the best interests of that country (motion: Anderson) (Expediency and Character)
1837 April	Is the existence of Corporate bodies beneficial and desirable? (motion: Philipps) (both Expediency and Principle)	

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1837 May	Is the present system of providing for the Clergy by the payment of Tithes beneficial to the Clerical as well as Lay interests of the Country? (motion: Weightman)	
1837 October	Has the foreign policy of the Melbourne Ministry been conducive to the honour and interests of this Country? (motion: Hopwood) (Expediency and Character)	
1837 November	Has the introduction of the New Poor Law been beneficial to the pauper population of this Country? (motion: Maitland)	
1838 March	Is the occupation of Algiers by the French, likely to be detrimental to the general interests of Europe or not? (motion: Lord Napier)	
1838 April	Was the conduct of the House of Commons in voting that Daniel O'Connell, Esq., MP, be reprimanded, either justifiable or expedient? (motion: Kirwan) (Expediency, Principle and Character)	
1838 May		That the present facilities of acquiring knowledge through the medium of the press are on the whole productive of more harm than benefit (motion: Ridley)
1838 November	Is the Ecclesiastical Commission as at present constituted, either expedient or legal? (motion: A. B. Hope) (Expediency and Principle)	That the circumstances of the present times demand more than ever the immediate repeal of the Catholic Emancipation Bill (motion: Highton)
1838 November	Will the provisions of Serjeant Talfourd's Copy-right Bill prove beneficial? (motion: T. Frere)	
1838 December	Is the universal extension of education a national benefit? (motion: Hon. G. Smythe)	
1839 March	Whether laws for the regulation and restriction of the Press be not to the furtherance of good government? (motion: Hope)	

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1839 May	Is the connection of Church and State advantageous to the Constitution, or not? (motion: Wright)	That in the present state of the Empire, it is the duty of an enlightened Government to propose a free and liberal measure of National Education (motion: Blackett) (Expediency and Principle)
1839 November	Would it be to the advantage of Britain, to support the policy assumed by Mehemet Ali, towards the Ottoman Empire? (motion: T. H. Galton)	
1839 December	Whether the nomination of Lord Normanby to the Office Of Home Secretary, was an unwise and mischievous appointment? (motion: M. Ware) (Character, Principle and Expediency)	
1839 December	Did Mirabeau confer a benefit upon his country, by abolishing the law of Primogeniture? (motion: T. H. Galton)	
1840 March	Would the repeal of the Corn Laws be conducive to the interests of the country? (motion: Brooks)	
1840 March	Whether the passing of Sir Robert Inglis' motion for Church Extension prove beneficial to the nation at large? (motion: Christian)	
1840 May	Is the Progress of the System of Railroads likely to prove of advantage to the Country? (motion: J. A. Beaumont)	
1840 May	Has Secretary Stanhope's Limitation Peerage Bill received the sanction of Parliament, would it have proved prejudicial to the interests of the State? (motion: J. R. Stock)	
1840 June	Is the present declaration of War against China justifiable or expedient? (motion: J. R. Stock) (Expediency and Principle)	
1840 December	Is the Establishment of Political Societies a legitimate method of opposing Opinions prejudicial to the State? (motion: M. Ware)	

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1841 May	Would the method of voting by ballot in the election of Members of Parliament be an improvement upon the present system? (motion: E. Rudge)	
1841 June		That the present Corn Laws are alike impolitic and unjust, and that the best interests of the country, more especially with reference to commerce and manufactures, require an immediate alteration of them (motion: Townend) (Expediency and Principle)
1841 October		That as the principles upon which the British Constitution is based are essentially opposed to the spirit of Romanism and since therefore Romanists are not fit persons to be put into offices of trust, it is necessary for the safety and welfare of the Country that the Roman Catholic Emancipation Act should be repealed (motion: Tate) (Expediency and Principle)
1841 November	Would a Repeal of the Corn Laws be beneficial to the country? (motion: J. Hardcastle)	That the gratitude of the nation is due to the successive administrations of Lords Grey and Melbourne, for having, by timely concessions and vigorous course of policy, checked the course of revolutionary principles, and that tendency to organic changes, which was manifesting itself in the country on the retirement of the preceding administration (motion: James) (Expediency, Principle and Character)
1842 February	Are Theatrical representations conducive to the benefit of the country? (motion: T. H. Bullock)	

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1842 March	Is it for the best interests of this University that its members should be compelled to take Mathematical honours before competing for Classical? (motion: Cox)	
1842 April	Are the financial measures proposed by Sir R. Peel such as will tend to the prosperity of the country? (motion: Galton)	
1842 October		That while we condemn the Norman Invasion, as in principle unjust, with reference to its effects we must pronounce it highly beneficial (motion: Tickell) (Expediency and Principle)
1842 November	That the Penal Laws which existed against the Roman Catholics were in the highest degree unjustifiable; and that the Emancipation Bill of 1829 was a wise and expedient measure; but that its earlier adoption would have been beneficial to the interests of the country? (motion: George M. W. Peacocke) (Expediency and Principle)	
1842 November	That the modern political movement is to democracy; and that there are no visible means of staging it; and that its results have been, are, and will be in the highest degree beneficial (motion: Tooke)	
1842 December		That the Reform Bill of 1831 was in itself a just and salutary measure, and that the evils attendant on it are to be ascribed partly to the circumstances of the country and partly to the reprehensible conduct of a section of its supporters (motion: Chase) (Expediency, Principle and Character)
1843 March	That the war between England & China was justifiable and that its results will prove conducive to the prosperity of both countries (motion: J. C. H. Ogier) (Expediency and Principle)	

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1843 May	That Capital Punishments are inexpedient, and ought to be abolished (motion: G. W. King) (Expediency and Principle)	
1843 December		That the Roman Catholic Bill is just, expedient, and in strict accordance with the principles of the British Constitution (motion: Cumin) (Expediency and Principle)
1844 February	That the policy of Sir Robert Peel, has been beneficial to the country (motion: T. H. Jones)	That the cultivation and encouragement of the language of Ireland are necessary for the enlightenment and conciliation of its people (motion: Alexander)
1844 February	That the suppression of Monasteries by Henry VIII has been most injurious to this Country; and the circumstances of the present times imperatively demand the restoration of similar institutions (motion: J. Brame)	
1844 March	That capital punishments are not beneficial to the country (motion: W. M. Cooke)	That a repeal of the present Corn Laws would be highly beneficial to all classes of society (motion: Banner)
1844 April	That the Drama is beneficial to the morals of the People (motion: J. Brame)	
1844 May		That the profession of an advocate as at present practised, impedes justice, and is injurious to public morality (motion: Chase) (Expediency and Principle)
1844 May		That to require candidates for a seat in Parliament to pledge themselves before election to support or oppose particular measures is on the whole injurious to the interests of the State (motion: Chermiside)
1844 October	That Inheritance is a necessary and fundamental principle of the Peerage (motion: E. F. Fiske) (Expediency and Principle)	

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1844 November	That the limitation, by legislative enactment, of the hours of labour for the Operatives in this country, would be attended by beneficial effects (motion: H. B. Smyth)	
1844 November	That the party in the House of Commons, which has been designated 'Young England', will be productive of effects, in the main, beneficial to the Country at large (motion: C. Babington)	
1844 November	That the present system of Game Laws is generally prejudicial to the Country (motion: H. Lindsay)	
1844 December	That the institution of the Jesuits has been mischievous to Society (motion: T. H. Tooke)	
1845 January		That the contemplated increase of the Parliamentary grant to Maynooth College is opposed both to right and expediency, and ought to be strenuously resisted (motion: Conington) (Expediency and Principle)
1845 February		That the system of transportation, in whatever light we view it, is fraught with the greatest evil (motion: Simpson)
1845 February		That the unprincipled tone of the Times newspaper, as shewn in its violent attempts to foment agitation, as well by inflammatory articles as by the artifices of correspondents, is a serious evil to the country (motion: Sandford) (Expediency and Principle)
1845 March	That a modification of the existing Corn Laws would be beneficial to the Lower and Middle classes of the country (motion: Hon. W. F. Campbell)	

(continued)

<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1845 April	That the plan of the Government for the Endowment of Maynooth is unconstitutional and dangerous to the country (motion: J. Brame) (Expediency and Principle)	That vote by ballot is eminently calculated to produce a beneficial effect on the present state of the country, and ought to be adopted (motion: Harvey)
1845 November	That the Commonwealth's men of the 17th century endeavoured to model the 'British Constitution' after the 'Republic of Venice', and their efforts have been attended with partial success (motion: Churchill Babington)	That the principles advocated in the later writings of Dickens are of a prejudicial tendency (motion: Sellar) (Expediency and Principle)
1846 February	That the introduction of the New Poor Law has been beneficial to this country (motion: A. Garfit)	That a dissolution of Parliament, in the present position of affairs, would be inexpedient (motion: Stanton)
1846 February	That our present system of Transportation is fraught with much evil (motion: A. Codd)	
1846 March	That a pacific policy towards the surrounding states in ordinary circumstances, is best calculated to promote the interests of India (motion: J. F. Thrupp)	That the generality of newspapers at the present time are conducted on principles which render them prejudicial to the best interests of the country (motion: Thornton) (Expediency and Principle)
1846 March	That the circumstances of the present age tend amply to prove the great evils of the Democratic Principles embodied in the Reform Bill (motion: R. A. Barlow) (Expediency and Principle)	
1846 April	That it would be for the interests of Great Britain to afford increased facilities for extensive emigration (motion: A. Garfit)	
1846 May	That the most effectual remedy for our excessive population and its accompanying evils, is to be found in the efficient extension of the parochial system (motion: J. Ll. Davies)	
1846 November	That the annexation of Scinde to our Empire in India is a measure at once just and expedient (motion: D. J. Vaughan) (Expediency and Principle)	That the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act in 1794 was a just and necessary measure (motion: Hulme) (Expediency and Principle)

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1846 November	That the Crusades were productive of wholesome effects upon European Civilisation (motion: J. Ll. Davies)	
1846 December	That the recent abolition of the Corn Laws in consequence of the conversion of Sir Robert Peel, from the principles on which he came into power, was not a triumph of sound opinion; or a boon to the Public (motion: Hon. W. F. Campbell) (Expediency, Principle and Character)	
1847 February	That the annexation of Cracow to the Empire of Austria—combined with the previous destruction of the Kingdom of Poland—affords us just grounds of apprehension as to the ultimate results of the policy pursued by the three allied powers of Russia, Prussia, and Austria (motion: W. P. Hale) (Expediency and Principle)	That the Occupation of Cracow, by the three absolute powers of Europe, renders a war on the part of England and France justifiable in principle, and not inexpedient in policy, when we consider the state of liberal principles throughout Europe (motion: Congreve) (Expediency and Principle)
1847 March	That any attempt at the joint education of Churchmen and Dissenters would be founded in error and must be injurious in its results (motion: A. Garfit) (Expediency and Principle)	
1847 May	That the light Literature of the present day, (as for instance the works of Mr Dickens) is in a great measure vicious in taste, and unhealthy in tone (motion: R. D. Baxter) (Expediency, Principle and Character)	That a more stringent and direct censorship of the public press than is at present exercised would be expedient (motion: Hardy)
1847 May	That the Policy pursued by Cicero, was the best calculated to preserve the Roman Commonwealth, from the peculiar dangers which threatened it, during his public life (motion: Hon. W. F. Campbell)	That the proposed interference of the legislature in university matters is uncalled for, unconstitutional, and highly detrimental to the interests of this university (motion: Temple) (Expediency and Principle)

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1847 October		That the present condition of parts of Ireland requires the adoption of martial laws in those districts (motion: Portal)
1847 November	That the abolition of Jewish disabilities would not prove injurious to the State (motion: W. Finnie)	
1847 November	That it is inexpedient to abolish the punishment of Death (motion: C. B. Locock)	
1847 December	That from the present state of political of parties in Parliament, we cannot reasonably expect that its legislation will prove beneficial to the Country (motion: J. F. Thrupp)	That an appointment of a bishop without a seat in the House of Peers involves the breach of a constitutional principle, and is a precedent tending to subvert the Union of Church and State (motion: Hayman) (Expediency and Principle)
1848 March		That an hereditary peerage is not conducive to the best interests of a country (motion: Ward)
1848 March		That however we may rejoice in the abdication of the late King of the French, still we must anticipate the most serious evils both for France and Europe from the establishment of the Republic (motion: Latham) (Expediency and Principle)
1848 March		That Ireland has a claim to the restoration of its national legislature, and that it is simply a question of expediency whether that claim should be allowed (motion: Waters)
1848 May	That the Game Laws are unjust in principle, injurious in operation, and ought to be repealed (motion: W. V. Harcourt) (Expediency and Principle)	That while the introduction of Universal or Household Suffrage is to be deprecated, a considerable extension of the franchise is imperatively called for by the present circumstances of the country (motion: Shirley) (Expediency and Principle)

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1848 June		That the so-called Glorious Revolution of 1688 was not a popular but oligarchical measure, and has been the primary cause of the defects in the representation of this country (motion: Bedford) (Expediency and Principle)
1848 October	That the means adopted by Great Britain for the suppression of the Slave Trade, defeat their object, increase the horrors of the traffic, cause an unnecessary waste of life and money, and ought to be abandoned (motion: Hon. A. Gordon) (Expediency and Principle)	
1848 November	That it is alike our duty and interest to pay the Roman Catholic Clergy of Ireland (motion: W. G. Saurin) (Expediency and Principle)	
1848 November	That the Graces which have this day, (the 31st of October,) passed the Senate, are highly deserving of approbation, and are likely, in their results, to be beneficial to the University (motion: G. W. Hastings)	
1848 December		That the state of our present electoral system calls for a speedy reform, and especially the disfranchisement of some of the smaller boroughs no longer entitled to the privilege of returning Members to the House of Commons (motion: Money—Kyrle)
1849 February	That the policy of Ministers during the last few years, towards our West Indian Colonies, has proved prejudicial, alike to the interests of those colonies, and to the advancement of the great principles of Liberty and Emancipation (motion: R. Stuart Lane) (Expediency and Principle)	

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1849 February	That the provision for the education of the people is totally inadequate; and that a large measure of State Education, ought to be immediately adopted (motion: W. V. Harcourt) (Expediency and Principle)	That any endowment of the Romanist priesthood, or of any Romanist place of education, will prove an insuperable obstacle to the social or political improvement of Ireland (motion: Lord R. Cecil)
1849 April		That this House, while it is of opinion that the re-establishment in all its strength of the Austrian Empire is to be hoped for as advantageous to Europe, nevertheless sympathises with the revolted Hungarians (motion: Grant Duff) (Expediency and Principle)
1849 May		That the dissolution of monasteries in the reign of Henry VIII was politically speaking a most injurious measure, and one which deserves our utmost condemnation (motion: Robins) (Expediency and Principle)
1849 October	That we consider the present system of indirect taxation as unjust in principle and injurious in practice; and therefore regard it as highly expedient that a system of direct taxation should be substituted in its stead (motion: H. Crookenden) (Expediency and Principle)	That the present want of restraint on the liberty of the press is highly injurious to the interests of the country (motion: Mitchell)
1849 November		That an extensive financial reform is highly necessary for the welfare of this country (motion: Clements)

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1849 November		That the past policy of this country, as carried out towards the Church, renders it imperative on Churchmen to demand either a total and immediate severance of the connection between Church and State, or an entire change of the ecclesiastical policy of our governments (motion: Dimsdale)
1850 February	That we heartily sympathise with Mr Whiston in his endeavours to obtain an equitable distribution of Cathedral property; and we believe that the Church of England will be considerably strengthened by the inevitable consequences of these endeavours (motion: H. C. E. Childers) (Expediency and Principle)	That the dismissal of the Earl of Roden from the commission of the peace was an uncalled for and arbitrary act (motion: Ralph) (Expediency and Principle)
1850 February	That the agitation in favour of Protectionist reaction is shortsighted and mischievous (motion: R. Temple) (Expediency and Principle)	That the state of the nation imperatively requires a return to the principles of protection (motion: Lygon) (Expediency and Principle)
1850 March	That in the opinion of this House, the present condition of the suffrage requires alteration (motion: R. Stuart Lane) (Expediency and Principle)	
1850 April	That it is the opinion of this House, that the principles promulgated by Mr Carlyle, in his 'Latter-day Pamphlets', are judicious; and their practical adoption would be beneficial to the country (motion: H. Leach) (Expediency and Principle)	
1850 May		That to sever, as has been suggested, the tie between England and her colonies, would be the first step towards her becoming a second rate empire (motion: Sotheby)

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1850 October	That it is the opinion of this House, that the 'Exhibition of the Industry of All Nations', to be held in 1851, will not be conducive to the true interests of this country (motion: H. Leach)	
1850 November	That it is the opinion of this House, that the restoration of the legitimate line of princes to the throne, can alone restore stability to the government, and security to the people of France (motion: H. Leach) (Expediency and Principle)	That Debating societies are on the whole injurious to their members (motion: Ogle)
1851 February		That the recent appointment of a Papal hierarchy in this country, has produced an unnecessary excitement (motion: Harrison)
1851 March	That Lord Stanley's proposal to remove the Income Tax for the purpose of imposing a duty upon the subsistence of the people, violates every principle of sound taxation and good government; by relieving the rich at the expense of the poor; and is calculated—by alienating the confidence of the industrious classes in the justice of Parliament—to endanger the institutions of the country, which can only rest with safety upon the confidence and good will of the great masses of the people (motion: W. Vernon Harcourt) (Expediency and Principle)	That a considerable and speedy extension of the Franchise is necessary for the securing the efficiency of the House of Commons and satisfying the demands of the country (motion: Stapley)
1851 March	That Vote by ballot would fail to accomplish its intended object; and would be productive of great injury to the National Character (motion: P. A. Smith) (Expediency and Character)	
1851 April	That the present state of our trade, renders the principle of co-operation amongst workmen not only expedient, but absolutely necessary (motion: A. Turner) (Expediency and Principle)	

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1851 May		That the present state of England imperatively calls for a remedy against the concentration of large masses of capital in the hands of a few individuals (motion: Pearson)
1851 June		That the writings of Thomas Carlyle have proved injurious to the literary tastes of the present day (motion: Shirley)
1851 November		That the evils of Ireland are generally attributable to the unjust and unworthy policy pursued by England towards that country, not least to the Established Church having been placed in a position alike prejudicial to its own interests, and injurious to the welfare of the people as the Church of the minority (motion: Fitzgerald) (Expediency and Principle)
1851 November		That the French Revolution of 1789 was justifiable, and has conferred the greatest benefits on mankind (motion: Göschen) (Expediency and Principle)
1851 December	That the existence of an hereditary Aristocracy is inimical to the best interests of all political communities (motion: James Payn)	That any legislative moments [<i>sic</i>] toward Liberalism or Reform would, at the present time, rather aggravate than remedy our existing social evils (motion: Godson)
1852 January		That the adoption of Universal suffrage is urgently needed, as alone realising the ancient idea of our representative system (motion: Wetherell) (Expediency and Principle)
1852 February	That a large and comprehensive extension of suffrage would be both expedient and advantageous (motion: James Payn)	

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1852 February	That the Colonial policy of this country—as at present administered—is in principle and detail opposed to the true interests of Great Britain (motion: R. J. Livingstone) (Expediency and Principle)	
1852 March	That this House is of opinion, that the punishment of death—especially in its public infliction—is injurious to the community, and inefficient in its prevention of crime (motion: James Payn)	That the Coup-d'état of December 2nd was in itself justifiable, and is likely, in its results, to promote the best interests of France (motion: Collier) (Expediency and Principle)
1852 April	That the Conservative is the only true and safe policy for Englishmen; and that the theories of Reformers—whether called Radicals, Chartists, or Christian-Socialists—are fraught with the greatest danger to the welfare and dignity of the country (motion: C. T. Swanston) (Expediency, Principle and Character)	
1852 May	That this House views with much satisfaction the present government scheme for a Militia; and firmly believes in the expediency, the propriety, and the efficiency of that measure (motion: Sydney Gedge) (Expediency and Principle)	
1852 November	That the Roman Catholic Emancipation Bill was founded on principles of justice no less than demanded by necessity; and has been productive of beneficial consequences to Great Britain (motion: V. Lushington) (Expediency and Principle)	
1852 November	That a speedy emancipation of their slaves by the Americans would be right, practicable, and politic (motion: Sydney Gedge) (Expediency and Principle)	
1852 November	That the establishment of the empire is likely to prove decidedly beneficial to the interests of France (motion: L. Stephen)	

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1852 December	That the division of this country into Equal Electoral Districts, and a further extension of the franchise, would not be conducive to the interests of this country (motion: G. Bulstrode)	That the newspaper press of England has on the whole contributed beneficially to social and political progress (motion: Göschen)
1853 March	That the Principles of Democracy are most conducive to the intellectual and material advancement of a Nation (motion: S. P. Butler) (Expediency and Principle)	
1853 April		That the institution of the ballot is demanded by the necessity of the times (motion: Lushington)
1853 May	That the principles of competition, assailed by the Christian Socialists, is the natural and necessary principle of commercial dealing; and, therefore, also, the basis of all commercial prosperity (motion: Vernon Lushington) (Expediency and Principle)	
1853 May	That the recent letters of Mr Cobden have wholly failed in their attempt to ascribe the origin of the French Revolutionary War to the policy of Mr Pitt's 'First Administration' (motion: J. W. Wilkins)	
1853 October	That the present existing Game Laws are injurious to the Agriculturist, as well as detrimental to the morality and well-being of the lower classes (motion: J. E. Hill)	
1853 November	That an extensive measure of Parliamentary Reform is, at present, uncalled for, unnecessary, and would probably be injurious (motion: A. G. Marten)	
1853 November	That the demands of Russia upon Turkey are inadmissible; and that it is the duty—and for the interest—of England to oppose them, even at the hazard of war (motion: H. M. Butler) (Expediency and Principle)	

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1853 November	That the suppression of Monasteries by Henry VIII was highly beneficial to the country; and that their restitution, in the present day, would be inexpedient (motion: C. T. Swanston)	
1854 February		That it is just and expedient that the Jews should be admitted to Parliament (motion: Lushington) (Expediency and Principle)
1854 May	That a Representative Government would be conducive to the healthy action of the Established Church (motion: H. R. Droop)	
1854 May	That a system of compulsory education is imperatively required by the condition of the country (motion: A. G. Marten)	
1854 June		That the Monitorial System, as at present existing in our Public Schools, is right in principle and beneficial in its results (motion: Bartlett) (Expediency and Principle)
1854 November	That the acquisition of Cuba by the United States, would be advantageous to the interests, both of Europe and of that island (motion: W. C. Gully)	That the Political Works of Thomas Carlyle are visionary and unpractical (motion: Dunlop) (Expediency, Principle and Character)
1854 December		That the conduct of Lord Aberdeen in retaining office at the present crisis is prejudicial to the country (motion: Montgomerie) (Expediency and Character)
1855 February	That the restoration of conventual system, in a modified form, would be useful to the Church, and advantageous in the spread of religion (motion: G. Bulstrode)	That the principle of Free Competition established in the East India Civil Service is in itself highly beneficial, and furnishes a salutary precedent to all other branches of the Public Service (motion: Turner) (Expediency and Principle)

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1855 March	That the Public Parliamentary Inquiry into the state of the Army before Sebastopol is desirable; and will, probably, be highly beneficial (motion: A. G. Marten) (Expediency and Principle)	That the proposed establishment of Halls for Dissenters in Oxford would be detrimental to the interests of the University and of the Dissenters themselves (motion: Bartlett (President))
1855 May	That the opening of the Crystal Palace on Sundays would not promote the welfare or the happiness of the people (motion: H. E. F. Tracey)	That the Endowment of Maynooth is erroneous in principle and injurious to the interests of the country (motion: Thompson) (Expediency and Principle)
1855 May	That, judging from present appearances, the results of the war will not be satisfactory, unless 'Independence of Poland' is restored (motion: H. Fawcett) (Expediency and Principle)	
1855 October	That the 'Crystal Palace Company' might, probably with advantage both to themselves and the public, open a gallery of such works of art, as they could collect for sale, in aid of different charities (motion: R. C. Burra)	That all continuance of the present war is inconsistent with the interests of Europe (motion: Bridges (President))
1855 November	That the present time is so favourable for the re-establishment of Peace, that it is the duty of the Western Powers to shew themselves ready to negotiate with Russia for that object (motion: E. E. Bowen) (Expediency and Principle)	
1856 February	That the Income Tax is both unjust in theory, and absurd in practice (motion: A. L. Wyatt) (Expediency and Principle)	That the Revolution of 1688 was wrong in principle and has been pernicious in its results (motion: Wilberforce) (Expediency and Principle)
1856 April	That the system of National Education embodied in the resolutions put forward by Lord John Russell, seems most likely to conduce to the moral welfare of the country (motion: E. H. Fisher)	

(continued)

<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1856 November		That the total suppression of the monasteries under Henry VIII was a wanton interference with the rights of property, from the evil consequences of which we are suffering at the present time (motion: Alabaster) (Expediency and Principle)
1856 December		That the abolition of Local Restrictions, and of the claims of indigent men in respect to Scholarships, is a flagrant injustice, and brings with it no advantage to the cause of Learning (motion: Wilberforce) (Expediency and Principle)
1857 February	That the establishment, under proper supervision, of religious brotherhoods and sisterhoods, would be advantageous (motion: J. J. Lias)	That the reformation of the criminal, rather than retribution for the crime, should be the aim of our penal laws, and that greater leniency of punishment would promote this end (motion: Lambert) (Expediency and Principle)
1857 February	That the present war with Persia is a just and necessary one (motion: W. S. Thomason) (Expediency and Principle)	
1857 March	That Sir John Pakington's Education Bill is a measure sound in principle, and at the present time expedient (motion: P. W. Bunting) (Expediency and Principle)	That the establishment of colleges for working men would materially conduce to the social welfare of the community (motion: Messenger)
1857 May	That the Government of Louis Napoleon being founded on injustice, offers no security for the permanent welfare of France (motion: H. J. Matthew) (Expediency and Principle)	

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1857 June		That a Second Reform Bill is called for by the circumstances of the times (motion: Le Poer Wynne)
1857 October		That a more general and equal distribution of wealth (though not to be attempted by any violent or artificial means) is of great importance to the social and commercial welfare of the country (motion: Green)
1857 November	That 'Punch' is a public benefactor (motion: W. T. Edwards)	That Conservative principles are fallacious and Conservatism a failure (motion: Daniel) (Expediency and Principle)
1857 November	That Capital Punishment enforced uniformly and without appeal, would be a just and efficient check on the crime of murder (motion: G. O. Trevelyan) (Expediency and Principle)	
1858 February	That the measure proposed by Lord Palmerston for the alteration of the Law against Conspiracy is inopportune and uncalled for (motion: H. J. Matthew)	
1858 March	That Juvenile Reformatories are likely to be affective in repressing crime and are worthy of support (motion: S. E. Bartlett) (Expediency and Principle)	
1858 March	That Parliamentary Reform on the principles of 1832, is not required by the interests of the Country (motion: Sir G. Young) (Expediency and Principle)	
1858 May		That the University Commission was greatly wanted, has conferred many benefits on Oxford, and may profitably extend its functions (motion: Hon. E. L. Stanley)

(continued)

<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1858 June		That Lord Macaulay, whether viewed as an Essayist or as a Historian, has conferred great benefits on the Country (motion: Tollemache) (Expediency and Character)
1858 October		That it is just and expedient that vote by ballot should be employed in the election of Members of Parliament (motion: Dicey) (Expediency and Principle)
1858 November	That the present system of Examination for the Civil Service of the Crown is likely to interfere with the prosperity of the great educational establishments of this country (motion: R. O'Hara)	That the political, social, and literary influence of Mr Carlyle has been most important and beneficial (motion: Morley) (Expediency and Character)
1859 February		That French interference in Italy is not only objectionable in itself, but prejudicial to the cause of liberty in Italy (motion: Hon. E. L. Stanley) (Expediency and Principle)
1859 March	That the Resolutions of Sir A. H. Elton seem to point to the best practicable solution of the Church-Rate Question (motion: C. Trotter)	That there is no urgent necessity for an Extension of the Franchise, and that the provisions of Mr Bright's proposed Reform Bill are too sweeping (motion: Crawford) (Expediency and Principle)
1859 May	That the Policy of Sardinia is injurious to the true interests of Italy (motion: T. W. Beddome)	
1859 June		That the hasty execution of Tantia Topce [Indian freedom fighter] was impolitic and unnecessary (motion: Webb) (Expediency and Principle)

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1859 June		That John Graham of Claverhouse, Viscount Dundee, is worthy of our highest admiration, alike for his inviolable loyalty, his constancy, and consummate excellence as a leader, and that the cruelties laid to his charge were no more than acts which the necessity of the times and his duty to the Crown, fully justified and required of him (motion: Urquhart) (Expediency, Principle and Character)
1859 November	That the existence of parties in a state is favourable to the public welfare (motion: C. Dalrymple)	
1859 December	That it is the opinion of this House that it is necessary for the true administration of justice that a Criminal Court of Appeal be instituted (motion: W. Savory) (Expediency and Principle)	
1860 March	That it is incumbent on us to refuse adherence both to the Liberal and Conservative factions (motion: Sir G. Young)	
1860 May		That in the opinion of this House the War with the French Republic in 1793 was wise, just, and necessary (motion: Hon. R. C. E. Abbot) (Expediency and Principle)
1860 November	That the Dissolution of the English Monasteries was justifiable and beneficial (motion: R. F. Woodward) (Expediency and Principle)	That the general policy of England towards China has been unworthy of so great a nation; but that the present war was rendered necessary by the conduct of the Chinese themselves (motion: Bassett-Key) (Expediency and Character)

(continued)

<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1861 February	That, so far as expediency alone is concerned, this House sees no reason for the abolition of capital punishment (motion: R. C. Lush)	That this House, considering the National Church should be an integral part of the British Constitution, is opposed to the abolition of Church Rates on grounds of principle as well as of expediency (motion: Hon. R. C. E. Abbot) (Expediency and Principle)
1861 March	That this House sees no reason to despair of the Regeneration of the Austrian Empire; and considers its permanence important to the welfare of Europe (motion: C. Trotter) (Expediency and Principle)	
1861 April	That the interests of Europe demand the speedy termination of the Pope's residence in Rome (motion: W. Everett)	
1861 May	That the introduction of military studies into this University would be prejudicial to the present system of university education (motion: G. A. Skinner)	That this House, on account of the unsettled state of Europe, does not think the present a fitting time to remit taxes, and is of opinion that the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his budgets pays too much attention to beauty of language, and too little to the best interests of the country (motion: Curtis) (Expediency and Principle)
1861 June	That this House is of opinion that the fall of the Government during the present session would be prejudicial to the true interests of Conservatism (motion: F. Ll. Bagshawe)	
1861 October		That the organisation of the trade unions is necessary, and their policy on the whole justifiable (motion: Simcox) (Expediency and Principle)
1861 November	That the remarks made on the 'Cambridge Proctorial System' in the ultra-radical <i>Daily Telegraph</i> , of Monday, November 4th, 1861, were impertinent and uncalled for (motion: G. F. Radford) (Expediency and Principle)	

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1862 February		That the use of euphemisms, inasmuch as they tend to conceal the deformity of vice, is highly prejudicial to morality (motion: Bazely)
1862 February		That the opposition of Dissenters to the Church of England has been of late years malicious and unreasonable (motion: Moore) (Expediency and Character)
1862 March	That it is necessary for the welfare of the Church that the Pope should not be possessed of temporal power (motion: N. G. Armytage)	
1862 May	That it is expedient to open college fellowships to the University (motion: H. Lee Warner)	
1862 November	That it would be expedient to legalise Marriage with a deceased wife's sister (motion: Lord Amberley)	
1862 December	That the present Ticket-of-Leave system is unjustifiable in theory and unsuccessful in practice (motion: B. Champneys) (Expediency and Principle)	
1863 March	That it would be expedient to abolish capital punishment (motion: G. Shee)	
1863 March	That it is expedient that England should obtain the independence of Russian Poland by diplomatic intervention; and, if necessary, by force of arms (motion: R. Ramsden)	
1863 April	That the policy of the Emperor Napoleon III. has been beneficial to Europe (motion: H. Peto)	That the abolition of religious tests in the University would be neither unjust nor prejudicial to the University (motion: Benett) (Expediency and Principle)
1863 June	That it would be inexpedient to admit non-conformists to fellowships in the University (motion: H. D. Jones)	
1863 November	That this House has no expectation that any substantial benefits would accrue to the nations of Europe, from the deliberations of an International Congress (motion: E. W. Chapman)	That party administrations are fatal to the best interests of the nation (motion: Hatch)

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1863 November		That it is expedient that the votes at parliamentary elections be taken by way of ballot (motion: Strachan—Davidson)
1864 February	That the influence of the cheap Press has upon the whole been beneficial (motion: T. G. Osborn)	
1864 April	That the results of the Public Schools Commission will, in the opinion of this House, be materially beneficial to education (motion: F. Pollock)	
1864 October		That it is expedient that Mr Gladstone should continue to represent this University (motion: Maurice) (Expediency and Vote of Confidence)
1864 November	That the limitation of fellowships in the universities to members of the Established Church is inexpedient (motion: J. R. Hollond)	
1864 November	That this House would approve a moderate extension of the Franchise, as a measure likely to benefit the nation (motion: F. T. Payne)	
1865 February	That in the opinion of this House, capital punishment as at present administered is injurious to public morality (motion: H. L. Anderton)	That the restoration of the Monastic Orders would be beneficial to Society (motion: Bromby)
1866 February		That this House is of opinion that the severities lately practised in Jamaica were unnecessary and unjustifiable (motion: Phillimore) (Expediency and Principle)
1866 March	That, in the opinion of this House, the principle embodied in the bill proposed by Mr Clay, M. P. for Hull, placing the Electoral Franchise on an intellectual basis, is the scheme of Reform that will best promote the welfare of the nation (motion: S. J. Rice) (Expediency and Principle)	

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1866 October		That the late change of government is highly beneficial to the English nation (motion: Hardy)
1866 October		That the policy of Count Bismarck has been conducive to the best interests of Europe (motion: Hatch)
1866 November	That the total exclusion of women from the Franchise, who are otherwise qualified, is an insult to the sex, an injustice to the claims of property, and a loss to the Country (motion: G. C. Whiteley) (Expediency and Principle)	That in the opinion of this house there is urgent need for a large measure of University Reform (motion: C. S. D. Acland)
1866 November	That the suppression of Monasteries by Henry VIII, has been most injurious to this Country; and the circumstances of the present times imperatively demand the restoration of similar institutions (motion: W. Vincent)	
1866 December		That a more frequent discussion of literary and historical subjects would be advantageous to the public debates at the Union (motion: W. R. Anson)
1867 January		That the administration of Ireland requires a thorough reform (motion: E. Jacob)
1867 February	That in the opinion of this House the prosecution of Ex-Governor Eyre is unjust and uncalled for (motion: W. Vincent) (Expediency and Principle)	That the re-establishment of monasteries, though with some changes in their constitution, would be beneficial to the country (motion: W. S. Northcot)
1867 February		That the establishment of a system of compulsory education in this country is both desirable and practicable (motion: Brown) (Expediency and Principle)

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1867 March		That a generous concession on the Reform question will be a real benefit to the Conservative Party (motion: J. E. Stocks)
1867 March		That the extinction of Turkish rule in Europe will be a gain to the cause of Civilisation (motion: W. M. Hutch)
1867 April	That this House considers that it is expedient that, for the present, Candia should remain under the dominion of Turkey (motion: A. Colvin)	
1867 June	That, in the opinion of this House, the substitution of Stipendiary for Unpaid Magistrates would be beneficial to this Country (motion: J. W. Cooper)	That the events of the last 30 years render necessary the reconstruction of the Upper House of Parliament (motion: Stocks)
1867 November		That the abolition of capital punishment for crimes other than treason is demanded by expediency and morality (motion: Nicholson) (Expediency and Principle)
1867 December		That the laws at present acting in restraint of trade combinations are unjust and mischievous (motion: Scott) (Expediency and Principle)
1868 January		That the appointment of the Irish Church Commission is a move favourable to the interests of the established church in Ireland (motion: Vanbles)
1868 February		That the disadvantages of novel reading on the whole overbalance its advantages (motion: Cruttwell)
1868 March		That the government of Napoleon III has been prejudicial to the best interests of France (motion: Redington)

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1868 November	That, in the opinion of this House, no modern scheme of reform in this University would be so efficacious as the restoration of those ancient principles of its constitution which have been unnecessarily abandoned (motion: N. Moore) (Expediency and Principle)	That the welfare of England demands a Tory policy at home, abroad, & in the colonies (motion: Lewis)
1869 February	That the proposed abandonment of Gibraltar by the English is in every respect unnecessary and inexpedient (motion: R. Purvis)	
1869 April	That this House is of opinion that horse racing in its present state is injurious to the welfare of this Country (motion: R. T. Wright)	That the establishment of a system of compulsory education for the lower classes would be beneficial to the social and political condition of England (motion: A. C. Garbett)
1869 May		That the present Land Laws are adverse to the welfare of the people (motion: J. S. Cotton)
1869 November	That, in the opinion of this House, the power at present possessed by Trades-Unions is dangerous to the commercial interests of the Country, and any undue use of this power ought to be checked by Legislation (motion: J. E. Johnson) (Expediency and Principle)	
1869 December		That it is desirable and expedient to abolish capital punishment (motion: Carrington) (Expediency and Principle)
1870 March		That any scheme for the promotion of female suffrage is absurd and impracticable (motion: Mowbray) (Expediency and Principle)
1870 May	That the present Colonial Policy of the Government deserves the condemnation of the Nation, as tending to the ultimate disintegration of the Empire (motion: R. Rocke)	The policy of Free Trade has been carried to an extent prejudicial to the real interests of the country (motion: V. Fitzgerald)

APPENDIX C: UNION PUBLIC DEBATES CONTAINING THE *TOPOS* OF CHARACTER

<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1830 February		That the conduct of Mr Fox and his party in reference to the Treason and Sedition Bills, which were passed in the year 1795, deserved the admiration and gratitude of their country (motion: Moncrieff) (Character and Principle)
1830 April	Does Sir Walter Scott deserve the Reputation of a great Poet? (motion: Kemble)	
1830 May	Is the Literary Character or the Military Hero more deserving of the applause of mankind? (motion: Price) (Character and Principle)	
1830 October		That the foreign policy of the Duke of Wellington has been derogatory to the dignity, and injurious to the best interests, of the country (motion: Gaskell) (Character and Expediency)
1830 November	Do William Wordsworth's Poems entitle him to the Reputation of a great Poet? (motion: Kemble)	

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1830 December	Was the conduct of Ministers during the Trial of the late Queen, constitutional? (motion: Shillito) (Character and Principle)	
1830 December	Was the conduct of Thomas Wentworth, first Earl of Stafford, worthy the admiration of Posterity? (motion: Alford)	
1831 March	Is Sir John Moore's Campaign in the Peninsular deserving of our admiration? (motion: Sullivan)	
1831 November	Was the conduct of Warren Hastings, Esq. deserving of impeachment? (motion: Layton) (Character and Principle)	That the recognition of the Birmingham Political Union by Lord Althorp and Lord John Russell was highly imprudent and unconstitutional (motion: Doyle) (Character and Principle)
1832 February	Does the Character, Political and regal, of George the Fourth merit the approbation of his country? (motion: Johnstone)	
1832 June		That the political character of Mr Pitt is entitled to the highest approbation (motion: Tait)
1832 November		That the conduct of the present ministry as regards the King of Holland has been unjustifiable (motion: De Visme) (Character and Principle)
1833 April	Was the conduct of Warren Hastings deserving of impeachment? (motion: Hon. W. C. Henniker) (Character and Principle)	
1833 May		That the general conduct pursued by Sir Robert Peel, since the passing of the Reform Measure, has been in the highest degree creditable to him and beneficial to the country (motion: Lyall) (Character and Expediency)

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1833 October	Was the conduct of Queen Elizabeth, in signing the warrant of the execution of Mary Queen of Scots, justifiable? (motion: Hon. W. C. Henniker) (Character and Principle)	
1833 November	Has the conduct of the English Government towards Ireland, been consistent with sound policy or justice? (motion: White) (Character and Principle)	
1834 January		That the measures taken for the suppression of the rebellion in 1745 were disgraceful to the government of that period (motion: Lowe) (Character and Principle)
1834 March	Is the character of Lord Edward Fitzgerald entitled to approbation? (motion: Burke)	
1834 March	Can the conduct of the English government towards Ireland from the time of the first invasion of the English upon the latter country be considered consistent either with sound policy or with justice? (motion: White) (Character and Principle)	
1834 April		That the conduct of the present ministry, during the agitation of the Reform question, as regards the Political Unions is in the highest degree reprehensible (motion: Campbell)
1834 May		That Wordsworth is in every respect a superior poet to Lord Byron (motion: Faber)
1834 December		That the conduct of the majority of the House of Lords during the last session of Parliament was highly noble and patriotic; and that the formation of a strong government by that party under the Duke of Wellington, is an event to be hailed with satisfaction by every well-wisher to the country (motion: Cornish) (Character and Principle)

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1834 December	Does the system of flogging in the Army or Navy tend to degrade the character of our soldiers and sailors? (motion: Drake) (Character and Principle)	
1835 March		That the conduct of the opposition to Sir Robert Peel's Ministry since the meeting of Parliament has been factious and unjustifiable in the extreme (motion: Capes) (Character and Principle)
1835 November		That the suppression of the Foreign Enlistment Act in favour of the Queen of Spain was injurious to the honour and true interests of this country (motion: Mellish) (Character and Expediency)
1835 December	Does the conduct of ministers in permitting and encouraging Col. De Lacy Evans to raise a body of men for the service of the Spanish Government merit our approbation? (motion: Waldegrave) (Character and Principle)	
1836 February	Do the character and actions of Daniel O'Connell up to the year 1835 bear any resemblance to those of Maximillian Robespierre up to 1789? (motion: Townsend)	That Lord Stanley as a Statesman is entitled to our respect and admiration (motion: Phinn)
1836 March	Did the conduct of Napoleon Bonaparte viewed either in a military or civil light merit his banishment to St Helena? (motion: Trelawney)	
1836 March	Do the writings of Jeremy Bentham entitle their author to the gratitude of mankind? (motion: R. G. Latham)	
1836 April	Is the character of the Puritans of the time of Charles Ist deserving of our esteem? (motion: Morrison)	

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1836 November	Does the past conduct of the Roman Catholics of Ireland justify an expectation that further concessions on the part of the Protestants of England will be productive of any beneficial result? (motion: Watson) (Character and Expediency)	
1836 November	Do Alfred Tennyson's poems show a true poet? (motion: Heath)	
1836 November	Whether the conduct of James Graham of Clavesbourne has been truly appreciated by posterity? (motion: Waldegrave)	
1836 December	Is Mr O'Connell a benefactor to this country? (motion: Cochrane) (Character and Expediency)	
1837 March		That the conduct of the present government towards Ireland is contrary to the best interests of that country (motion: Anderson) (Character and Expediency)
1837 April	Does the political character of Mr Burke entitle him to the approbation of posterity? (motion: Hopwood)	
1837 October	Has the foreign policy of the Melbourne Ministry been conducive to the honour and interests of this Country? (motion: Hopwood) (Character and Expediency)	
1837 November	Is the political character of Fox deserving of our approbation? (motion: Christie)	
1838 February	Does the political conduct of Mr Pitt entitle him to the admiration of posterity? (motion: Hopwood)	
1838 February	Has the political conduct of the King of Hanover since his accession to the throne been such as to merit our approval? (motion: Bullock)	

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1838 February	Has the internal policy of the Whigs for the last seven years been such as to merit our approbation? (motion: A. C. Barrett)	
1838 April	Was the conduct of the House of Commons in voting that Daniel O'Connell, Esq., MP, be reprimanded, either justifiable or expedient? (motion: Kirwan) (Character, Principle and Expediency)	
1838 October	Did the conduct of James II, and his abdication of the throne justify the revolution of 1688? (motion: Weightman) (Character and Principle)	
1838 November	Is the conduct of the present Ministry towards Lord Durham justifiable? (motion: Thackeray) (Character and Principle)	
1838 December	Did the conduct of Nechar at the commencement of the French Revolution merit approbation? (motion: Williams)	
1839 February	Was Charles I. justified in endeavouring to re-establish Episcopacy in Scotland? (motion: Thackeray) (Character and Principle)	
1839 March	Has the political life of Daniel O'Connell been such as to entitle him to the gratitude of the Irish people? (motion: Bayley)	
1839 April	Was Sir F. B. Head, sufficiently supported by Her Majesty's Ministers in his government of Upper Canada? (motion: Baggallay)	
1839 May	Does the conduct of the Ministers for the last three years entitle them to the approbation of their country? (motion: A. Rudd)	That by the desertion of true Tory principles, the so-called Tory party fully merited and partly caused their precipitation from power in 1831 (motion: Rawlinson) (Character and Principle)

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1839 October		That from the renewal of the war with France in 1803 till its close in 1815 the direction of the resources of England was in the hands of men who were unequal to the task, & consequently that for the success of that war they deserve no credit (motion: Congreve)
1839 November	Is the Public Character of Dean Swift worthy of the grateful recollection of the British nation? (motion: J. Pearson)	
1839 November	Does the Philosophy of Locke deserve the approbation of posterity? (motion: W. J. Butler)	
1839 December	Whether the nomination of Lord Normanby to the Office Of Home Secretary, was an unwise and mischievous appointment? (motion: M. Ware) (Character, Principle and Expediency)	
1840 May		That of the various parties which divide the country, the conservative is the least entitled to our respect and confidence (motion: Congreve) (Character and Vote of Confidence)
1840 June		That the public life of Cicero is deserving of high admiration (motion: Powles)
1840 November	Does the general character and conduct of Archbishop Laud deserve the admiration of posterity? (motion: T. H. Bullock)	
1841 February		That the character of John Hampden entitles him to the veneration of Englishmen (motion: Tickell)
1841 March	Was the conduct of the House of Commons in the reign of Charles I. (up to their final breach with the King inclusive) such as to deserve our approbation? (motion: W. C. Brooks)	

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1841 March	Was the conduct of the House of Commons towards Wilkes, constitutional and proper? (motion: T. H. Bullock) (Character and Principle)	
1841 November	Are the writings of Wordsworth likely to exercise a greater influence than those of Byron on a future generation? (motion: J. Slade)	
1841 November		That the gratitude of the nation is due to the successive administrations of Lords Grey and Melbourne, for having, by timely concessions and vigorous course of policy, checked the course of revolutionary principles, and that tendency to organic changes, which was manifesting itself in the country on the retirement of the preceding administration (motion: James) (Character, Principle and Expediency)
1841 December	Are the Characters and Conduct of William the Third, deserving approbation? (motion: J. Slade)	That the Political character of Themistocles is not deserving of our esteem and admiration (motion: Karlake)
1842 February	Was the reign of Puritanism beneficial to the character of the English people? (motion: T. H. Galton)	That the character of John Hampden entitles him to the veneration of Englishmen (motion: Tickell)
1842 June		That the character of Algernon Sidney does not entitle him to the name of Patriot (motion: Pott)
1842 November		That the genius of Buonaparte was not greater than that of Cromwell, & that his character & conduct were more reprehensible (motion: Bowen)
1842 December		That the Reform Bill of 1831 was in itself a just and salutary measure, and that the evils attendant on it are to be ascribed partly to the circumstances of the country and partly to the reprehensible conduct of a section of its supporters (motion: Chase) (Character, Expediency and Principle)

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1843 May		That the present Government deserves the gratitude of the nation (motion: West) (Character and Vote of Confidence)
1843 November	That the proceedings of the present Government towards Ireland, are disgraceful to it as an executive, and absurd in policy (motion: T. H. Tooke) (Character and Principle)	
1843 November	That the existence of a body like the 'Anti-Corn Law League' is a sign of weakness and incapacity in the present Government (motion: Hon. A. Spring Rice)	
1843 November	That the English Nation are indebted to William III, Prince of Orange, for assisting them to assert their liberties by the just and glorious revolution of 1668 (motion: Hon. W. F. Campbell)	
1844 June		That the conduct of those Members of Parliament who voted against the government in March, and with them in May, upon the Factory Bill, is perfectly justifiable (motion: Sandford) (Character and Principle)
1845 January		That since the passing of the Reform Bill there has been the greatest falling off in the character of debates of the House of Commons (motion: Cholmondeley)
1845 February	That the public character of St Thomas à Becket was such as to merit our approbation (motion: J. Brame)	
1845 February	That the public character of Archbishop Cranmer, was such as to merit our approbation (motion: H. W. Thomson)	
1845 May		That the merits of Oliver Cromwell have not been sufficiently acknowledged (motion: Hon. P. Smythe)

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1845 November	That the character and conduct of Oliver Cromwell were not such as to entitle him to a place among the 'Eminent Men' in whose honour Statues are about to be erected in the New Palace of Westminster (motion: J. Ingle)	That Lord Ashley's uniform advocacy of a law to keep down the hours of labour, while supporting those laws whose object is to keep up the price of food, together with his recent letter to his constituents, entirely vitiates his claim to be considered a Statesman (motion: Fripp)
1846 November		That the public career of Sir Robert Peel is deserving of our warmest admiration and sympathy (motion: Burrows)
1846 December	That the recent abolition of the Corn Laws in consequence of the conversion of Sir Robert Peel, from the principles on which he came into power, was not a triumph of sound opinion; or a boon to the Public (motion: Hon. W. F. Campbell) (Character, Principle and Expediency)	
1847 February	That the Political opinions of the late Mr Pitt were not, as is frequently assumed, coincident with those of the Conservative or Tory Party (motion: Hon. W. F. Campbell)	That the miseries of Ireland may be attributed rather to the faults of its own people than to any mismanagement of government (motion: Latham)
1847 March		That Mr Carlyle's recent work confirms Oliver Cromwell's right to the title of the greatest of English Sovereigns (motion: W. Arnold)
1847 April	That the democratic principle is unsuited to the genius of the British Nation (motion: Edward Prest) (Character and Principle)	
1847 May	That the light Literature of the present day, (as for instance the works of Mr Dickens) is in a great measure vicious in taste, and unhealthy in tone (motion: R. D. Baxter) (Character, Principle and Expediency)	

(continued)

<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1847 November	That Tennyson is inferior to no English poet of the present century (motion: A. A. Van Sittart)	That Mr O'Connell's merits and services are not sufficiently appreciated in this country; and that however we may differ from him in some of his political opinions, the memory of so great a man is entitled to our respect (motion: Waters)
1847 November	That the public character and merits of King Henry VIII., have not been generally appreciated (motion: J. F. Thrupp)	
1847 November	That there are causes in operation which threaten the decline of the greatness of Britain (motion: F. H. Colt)	
1848 March		That the political conduct of Lord Stafford merits the admiration of posterity (motion: Boyle)
1848 May	That to all human appearance we are warranted in tracing for our country, through the dim perspective of coming time, an exalted and glorious destiny (motion: R. Sedgwick)	
1848 June		That the discouragement of dramatic representations must always be attended with loss to the moral and literary character of the nation (motion: Vance)
1848 December	That Byron is not entitled to rank as a poet of a very high order (motion: J. F. Stephen)	
1849 May	That the two first volumes of Mr Macaulay's 'History of England' are utterly wanting in the most essential characteristics of a great history (motion: F. J. A. Hort)	
1849 November	That the policy pursued by Lord Elgin, and the English Government in Canada, is alike impolitic and unjustifiable (motion: H. Bramley) (Character and Principle)	

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1849 November	That this House considers Mr Cobden and his party to represent the rising good sense of the nation (motion: R. Sedgwick)	
1849 December		That with the exception of Lord Byron, Percy B. Shelley is the greatest English Poet of the last half century (motion: Austin)
1850 February	That in the opinion of this House, the present ministry has culpably neglected the commercial as well as the social interests of our colonies (motion: H. Leach) (Character and Principle)	
1850 March		That the recent behaviour of the Foreign Office towards Greece calls for grave censure (motion: Howard)
1850 November		That the conduct of Thomas à Becket in resisting the aggressions of the State on the Church is, especially at this time, deserving of our sympathy (motion: Lygon)
1851 January		That the merits of Oliver Cromwell have not been sufficiently acknowledged (motion: Johnstone)
1851 February	That in the opinion of this House, the conduct of the Government in appointing a Royal Commission to examine into the state of the Universities, is both ungenerous and unwise (motion: S. Gedge)	That the conduct of Lord John Russell, towards the Church in general, and this University in particular, is unworthy the Prime Minister of England (motion: B. B. Rogers)
1851 February	That this House regards with deep indignation the late Papal Aggression; and heartily approves of Lord John Russell's conduct in the present crisis (motion: P. Laurence) (Character and Principle)	That the conduct of the promoters of the Revolution of 1688 deserves our disapprobation (motion: Lygon)
1851 March	That this House believes the lasting gratitude of the country is due to those, who—in the great Rebellion by their opposition to an unjust King—secured the Civil and Religious Liberties of this Realm (motion: H. A. Bright)	

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1851 March	That Vote by ballot would fail to accomplish its intended object; and would be productive of great injury to the National Character (motion: P. A. Smith) (Character and Expediency)	
1851 May	That this House, lamenting the death of Sir Robert Peel, considers that the country has lost in him a wise legislator, an honest statesman, and a true patriot (motion: P. Laurence)	
1851 May	That this House is of opinion, that the 'Society for the Promotion of Universal Peace' deserves the support of all Christian men (motion: James Payn)	
1851 May	That this House regards the conduct of the State, in withholding from the Church of England her ancient right of self-government (by Convocation) as arbitrary, unconstitutional, and unwise (motion: R. J. Livingstone) (Character and Principle)	
1851 November	That the Foreign Policy of the present government has been conducive to the honour and dignity of this country; and deserves the approbation of this House (motion: Cust) (Character and Vote of Confidence)	
1851 December	That the political and social history of England, since the peace of 1815, has been one of real and great improvement; and that there is reason to trust—unless by the wilful fault of the present generation—the future will be still happier than the past (motion: P. A. Smith)	

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1852 February	That this House considers the conduct of Louis Napoleon, since the 2nd of December, 1851, utterly indefensible; and fraught with the greatest danger to the peace of Europe (motion: H. A. Bright)	
1852 March	That the Novelists of the present generation are superior to those of the preceding generation (motion: F. J. A. Hort)	
1852 April	That the Conservative is the only true and safe policy for Englishmen; and that the theories of Reformers—whether called Radicals, Chartists, or Christian-Socialists—are fraught with the greatest danger to the welfare and dignity of the country (motion: C. T. Swanston) (Character, Principle and Expediency)	
1852 May	That the hesitation of the present Ministers to declare their opinion on free trade, and on other questions of the greatest importance, is particularly unworthy of those men who so violently attacked Sir Robert Peel on his repeal of the Corn Laws (motion: A. Cohen)	
1852 May	That the line of policy pursued by Mr Cobden and the leaders of the independent party in the House of Commons, is upright, consistent, and commendable (motion: James Payn) (Character and Principle)	
1852 November		That Shelley is the greatest poet that has appeared since the accession of George III (motion: Byrth)

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1853 February	That the late Whig Government has claims to our respect and esteem; on account of their able administration of public affairs, and the measures of high public usefulness which they brought forward and carried (motion: V. Lushington)	That Mr Gladstone's political conduct since the General Election has been dignified, consistent, and patriotic (motion: Wetherell)
1853 April	That the late Sir Robert Peel was one of England's most enlightened statesmen, and most conscientious patriots (motion: C. S. Grubbe)	
1853 October		That in this age of Political Inconsistency Mr D'Israeli's conduct is a fair example of statesmen (motion: Stopford)
1853 November		That the aggressive conduct of Russia is dangerous to the peace of Europe and the interests of England, and that the present ministry have not resisted it with sufficient firmness (motion: Montgomerie)
1853 November		That Mr Thackeray is superior to Mr Dickens as a novelist (motion: Hon. F. Lygon)
1853 December	That Tennyson is the Poet of the 19th century (motion: S. E. Bengough)	
1854 January		That John Bright is an enlightened and patriotic statesman (motion: Beesly)
1854 March	That this House considers that the conduct of Ministers in bringing forward the question of Reform, at the present time, is judicious (motion: H. W. Elphinstone)	That the recent strikes may be in a great measure attributed to the mismanagement of the masters (motion: Wilkinson)
1854 March	That since the time of Egbert there has been no royal line ruling in England, so incompetent and contemptible as that of Stuart (motion: C. S. Grubbe)	That our foreign policy during the last 40 years has been one deeply disgraceful to a free people (motion: Harrison)

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1854 May		That the intention of government to re-constitute, reform, and extend the University of Oxford demands our sympathy and support (motion: G. C. Brodrick)
1854 October	That National Character is deteriorated by the influence of the Drama (motion: G. Bulstrode)	
1854 November		That the Political Works of Thomas Carlyle are visionary and unpractical (motion: Dunlop) (Character, Principle and Expediency)
1854 November	That Thackeray is the Novelist of the Age (motion: H. W. Elphinstone)	
1854 December	That Shelley is the greatest poet that has appeared in England since the accession of George III (motion: H. M. Moule)	That the conduct of Lord Aberdeen in retaining office at the present crisis is prejudicial to the country (motion: Montgomerie) (Character and Expediency)
1855 February	That the recent resignation of Lord John Russell, was an act unworthy of a British statesman (motion: J. E. Gorst)	That the position and policy of Mr D'Israeli have been, and continue to be, disgraceful to the Conservative Party (motion: Fowle)
1855 March	That the character of the late Emperor of Russia, judged as a whole, is worthy of respect (motion: H. E. F. Tracey)	That the Whig party has done good service to its country, but is now come to a timely dissolution (motion: Lushington) (Character and Principle)
1855 April	That the party commonly called 'Cobdenite', has done the country good service (motion: W. C. Gully)	That Mr Gladstone's political career has rendered him unfit to represent this University in Parliament (motion: Wilberforce) (Character and Vote of Confidence)
1855 October	That the projected alliance of the Court of England with that of Prussia, would be dishonourable to the Crown (motion: H. E. F. Tracey) (Character and Principle)	
1855 November		That the 'Times' has deserved well of its country (motion: Fowle)

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1855 November	That the conduct of the 'Times' Newspaper since the commencement of the present war, has been most unprincipled and unpatriotic (motion: J. E. Gorst) (Character and Principle)	
1856 March	That Lord John Russell deserves the gratitude of his country (motion: J. W. Mellor)	
1856 April	That the character of Queen Elizabeth ought to stand high in our estimation (motion: R. B. Somerset)	
1856 May	That the Annexation of Oude, was a justifiable and laudable act on the part of the British Administration in India (motion: W. L. Heeley) (Character and Principle)	
1856 May	That the 'Fall of Kars' is not attributable to any fault on the part of Her Majesty's Government (motion: C. Puller)	
1856 May	That France is a declining power (motion: E. Bell)	
1857 February	That the recent conduct of the British Authorities at Canton, is inconsistent with justice (motion: C. Trotter) (Character and Principle)	
1857 March		That Mr Gladstone is a fit and proper person to represent the University of Oxford in the ensuing Parliament (motion: Fogg) (Character and Vote of Confidence)
1857 May		That the Opium Trade carried on with China is a disgrace to the English Nation (motion: Nihill) (Character and Principle)
1857 June		That the Irish branch of the Established Church merits our warmest sympathy under recent attacks (motion: Charley)

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1857 November	That the conduct of the government of India since the beginning of the mutiny has been most injudicious and improper (motion: J. J. Cowell) (Character and Principle)	
1857 December	That Currer Bell [i.e. pseudonym of Charlotte Brontë] is not justly entitled to the great popularity her works enjoy (motion: W. S. Thomason) (Character and Principle)	
1858 February	That the late suppression of public journals by the Emperor of the French, is an impolitic and tyrannical measure (motion: T. J. Clarke) (Character and Principle)	That the Political career of Sir R. Peel has exercised an unfavourable influence on the Statesmanship of the day (motion: King-Smith)
1858 June		That Lord Macaulay, whether viewed as an Essayist or as a Historian, has conferred great benefits on the Country (motion: Tollemache) (Character and Expediency)
1858 November	That this House views with disapprobation and distrust the principles enunciated by Mr Bright (motion: H. C. Raikes) (Character and Principle)	That the political, social, and literary influence of Mr Carlyle has been most important and beneficial (motion: Morley) (Character and Expediency)
1858 November		That the principles of Foreign policy recently enunciated by Mr Bright, demand the support of the nation (motion: Green) (Character and Principle)
1859 February	That the stringent measures adopted by Government with reference to the Seditious Societies lately discovered in Ireland, are deserving of approbation (motion: H. C. Raikes)	
1859 February	That the position taken for England by the present government with reference to the Italian Question, is the only one tenable (motion: E. H. Fisher) (Character and Principle)	

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1859 June		That John Graham of Claverhouse, Viscount Dundee, is worthy of our highest admiration, alike for his inviolable loyalty, his constancy, and consummate excellence as a leader, and that the cruelties laid to his charge were no more than acts which the necessity of the times and his duty to the Crown, fully justified and required of him (motion: Urquhart) (Character and Principle)
1859 November	That this House finds it impossible to justify the conduct of the working classes in the recent strikes (motion: M. C. Buszard) (Character and Principle)	
1859 November	That the conduct of the Emperor Napoleon since the conclusion of the late war is deserving of the severest censure (motion: H. Geary)	
1860 May	That the system of inducing men to take the Temperance Pledge is not consistent with our National Character (motion: W. Bettison)	That Garibaldi's expedition deserves our warmest sympathy and support (motion: Mackay)
1860 May	That the Political Conduct of Mr Gladstone does not entitle him to our confidence (motion: Lawrance) (Character and Vote of Confidence)	
1860 June		That Mr Disraeli has shewn himself unfit to lead the Conservative party (motion: Butler)
1860 November	That the Emperor of the French has entirely forfeited the good opinion of the English people (motion: P. Kent)	That the general policy of England towards China has been unworthy of so great a nation; but that the present war was rendered necessary by the conduct of the Chinese themselves (motion: Bassett—Key) (Character and Expediency)
1860 November		That the Times newspaper exercises a world-wide influence for evil (motion: Robinson)

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1861 January		That Mazzini has been grossly maligned, and deserves our sympathy and respect (motion: Beesly)
1861 February	That this House cannot approve the conduct of Garibaldi during the last year (motion: W. M. Lane)	
1861 April		That the Poles, in the event of their endeavouring to regain their independence, will be entitled to the sympathy of this country, and that the re-establishment of the kingdom of Poland is greatly to be desired (motion: Vidal) (Character and Principle)
1861 May		That the conduct of the Conservative party in Parliament for the last three years has not entitled it to the confidence of the country (motion: Urquhart) (Character and Vote of Confidence)
1861 November		That in their quarrel with the Austrian government the Hungarians have taken up a position which is deserving of our sympathy (motion: Bagwell)
1862 February		That the opposition of Dissenters to the Church of England has been of late years malicious and unreasonable (motion: Moore) (Character and Expediency)
1862 March		That the Saturday Review, though a paper of great ability, in its general tone is not to be commended (motion: Sandford)
1862 May		That this House views the attitude of the Conservative party towards Italy with great dislike (motion: O'Hanlon)
1862 June		That the present high character of the periodical press of England is principally due to the system of anonymous writing (motion: Tancock)

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1862 November	That the manner in which the affairs of the International Exhibition have been conducted by her Majesty's commissioners, has tended to throw discredit upon a great and useful undertaking (motion: H. M. Hyndman)	That the present ministry is a disgrace to the country (motion: Towgood)
1862 November		That Mr Disraeli's political conduct fully deserves the confidence of the country (motion: Dombain) (Character and Vote of Confidence)
1863 February	That the recent Foreign policy of our government is open to grave censure (motion: S. B. Phillpotts)	That the moral support accorded by England to the Southern Confederacy is a disgrace to the Country (motion: Berkeley)
1863 February	That the Polish Insurrection is ill-advised and undeserving the sympathy of the English nation (motion: J. B. Payne)	
1863 February	That the conduct of the Federal Government towards General McClellan has been characterised throughout by gross injustice (motion: P. V. Smith)	
1863 March	That the character of Henry VIII, as presented by Mr Froude in his 'History of England', is more just than that which previously obtained (motion: N. Goodman)	That the Daily News and the 'Advanced School' which it represents deserve the highest reprobation (motion: Jeune)
1863 June		That the foreign policy of the present government in Europe has not deserved the approval of the Country (motion: Webster)
1863 November	That the seizure of the steam rams 'El Tousin' and 'El Monnassir' by the government is an act to be deprecated (motion: A. G. Shieff)	
1864 February	That the efforts of the members of the French Opposition, in the cause of liberty, are deserving of our warmest sympathy (motion: H. M. Hyndman) (Character and Principle)	

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1864 March	That the conduct of the present administration towards France, has been unworthy of the country (motion: L. Sergeant)	
1864 April		That the conduct and moral opinions of M. Mazzini and his party are deserving of the reprobation of Europe (motion: Phillimore)
1864 May	That the honours recently shown in England to General Garibaldi, were calculated to excite reasonable alarm and distrust of this country (motion: J. B. Payne)	That it would be unworthy of the dignity of the Legislature to defer a fair consideration of the question of Parliamentary reform (motion: Duggan)
1864 November	That in the opinion of this House the character of Oliver Cromwell ought to meet with the disapproval of every true Englishman (motion: R. A. Palmer)	
1865 February		That this House entirely disapproves of the Political career of the Right Hon. B. Disraeli (motion: Duggan)
1865 May		That in the choice of a University Representative regard should be paid rather to character and attainments than to adhesion to a party creed (motion: Geldart) (Character and Principle)
1865 October	That while this House condemns the recent Fenian Conspiracy, it nevertheless considers that the disaffection in Ireland has been produced by English mis-government (motion: H. L. Anderton) (Character and Principle)	
1865 November	That this House views with satisfaction the present course of affairs in America; and the Re-construction Policy of President Johnson (motion: S. Colvin) (Character and Principle)	

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1865 November	That this House views with satisfaction the recent rejection of Mr Gladstone as Member for the University of Oxford (motion: W. A. Lindsay) (Character and Principle)	
1866 February	That the conduct of Governor Eyre in suppressing the late insurrection in Jamaica, deserves the approval of this House, and the thanks of the country (motion: H. L. Anderton)	
1866 May	That the government, by remaining in office, have shewn a most disinterested and praiseworthy desire to settle the Reform Question (motion: R. Collier)	
1866 November		That in the opinion of this House Mr Bright is a reproach to the country that gave him birth (motion: Geldart)
1867 February		That George Eliot is the greatest English novelist of the present century (motion: W. B. Duggan)
1867 March	That in the opinion of this House the present Irish Rebellion, though ill considered, is by no means dishonourable to the Irish people (motion: N. Moore)	
1867 March	That in the opinion of this House the Hebdomadal Council at Oxford have neglected an opportunity of adding fresh lustre to their University by the refusal of an honorary degree of Mr R. Browning; and that this House would view with marked approbation the conferring that honour on so distinguished a poet by our own University (motion: G. W. Forrest) (Character and Principle)	

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1867 May	That Wordsworth is the great regenerator of modern English poetry (motion: F. G. Luke)	That its timeserving policy and falsification of facts makes the Times quite unworthy of its position as the leading British newspaper (motion: Russell)
1867 May		That the mass of Fenians even though misguided, are patriotic men; and that the disgrace of the late rebellion lies with England not with Ireland (motion: Fyffe)
1867 June		That in the opinion of this House, Tennyson is with the exception of Shakespeare the greatest poet England ever produced (motion: Richards)
1867 October	That this House desires to record its satisfaction at the Reform Bill lately introduced by the Conservative Government, and its admiration at the brilliant leadership of Mr Disraeli, in the House of Commons (motion: E. A. Owen) (Character and Principle)	That the passing of the Reform Bill by Mr Disraeli has ruined the character of the Conservative Party for consistency and principle (motion: Cotton) (Character and Principle)
1867 November		That Wordsworth is the greatest poet of the country (motion: Hollings)
1867 November		That it is the opinion of this House that horse racing, as at present carried on, is unworthy the support of Englishmen (motion: Brooke) (Character and Principle)
1867 December	That this House considers that the Middle Classes of our Country are, in the main, responsible for the great existing national evils (motion: R. T. Wright) (Character and Principle)	
1868 February	That this House approves of the conduct of the Government in allowing the late Fenian Executions in Manchester to take place (motion: J. F. Popham)	

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1868 March	That this House considers the existence of any Political Constituency from which Dissenters are excluded, to be discreditable to the country (motion: W. Wiles) (Character and Principle)	That this House regrets that it should have been necessary to entrust the Post of Prime Minister to so dishonest a politician as Mr Disraeli (motion: Doyle)
1868 March	That, in the opinion of this House, the recent appointment of Mr Disraeli is a sign of decay in the political life of this Country (motion: N. Moore)	
1868 April		That this House disapproves of the course taken by the Liberal Party in Parliament in the recent debate and division upon the Irish Church (motion: Dale)
1868 May		That this House desires to see Mr Gladstone speedily invested with the Premiership (motion: A. Bathe)
1868 June		That the recent trial of President Johnson reflects the utmost discredit on the Republican Party in the United States (motion: Jacob)
1868 October		That Sir Roundell Palmer is the fittest and worthiest Representative of this University (motion: Geldart)
1868 November	That, in the opinion of this House, the recent charges of reckless expenditure brought against the present Government, are unjust; and deserving of the strongest censure (motion: J. Adam) (Character and Principle)	That Mr Bright is the greatest statesman of the age (motion: Bernays)
1869 January		That the poetry of George Eliot is not so admirable as that of E. B. Browning (motion: Duggan)
1869 January		That Mr J. S. Null's exclusion from Parliament is a national loss (motion: Bernays)
1869 February	That the <i>Girl of the Period</i> is worthy of our admiration (motion: H. G. Seeley)	That Alfred Tennyson is the greatest English poet of the Century (motion: Hames)

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1869 October		That William Morris is a greater poet than Tennyson (motion: Nicholson)
1869 November		That Gladstone has acted wisely in refusing to liberate the Fenian prisoners (motion: Anstruther)
1869 December	That this Society watches with interest and sympathy the career of the Ladies' College at Hitchin (motion: I. Davis)	
1870 February		That the candidature of Odger for Southwark deserves the approval of this House (motion: Cotton)
1870 May	That this House, while approving of the establishment of a Second Parliamentary Chamber, considers that its character should not be hereditary (motion: D. L. Boyes)	That Comprehensive Internal Reform having been long an imperative necessity in the National Church, the programme of the newly formed Church Reform Association is deserving of the support of this House (motion: Sinclair)
1870 October		That the conduct of the British Cabinet with regard to the Continental war has been satisfactory (motion: A. W. Reith)
1870 November		That the conduct of the Prussian Government during the last seven years deserves the reprobation of Europe (motion: Ashmead Bartlett)

APPENDIX D: UNION PUBLIC DEBATES
CONTAINING THE *TOPOS* OF VOTE
OF CONFIDENCE

<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1830 November	Was the Duke of Wellington's Administration deserving of the support of the Independent Members of Parliament? (motion: Matthew)	That the administration of the Duke of Wellington is undeserving of the confidence of the country (motion: Gladstone)
1831 March	Ought Ministers to receive the confidence and co-operation of the People in bringing forward measures for general Reform? (motion: Gardiner)	
1831 May	Did Mr Grey, in his Bill for reform in 1793, deserve the confidence of the Country? (motion: Law)	That the present Ministry is incompetent to carry on the Government of the country (motion: Knatchbull)
1832 March	Are his Majesty's Ministers deserving of the Confidence of the Country? (motion: Yonge)	
1833 May		That the conduct of the ministry, since the passing of the Reform Bill, has not been such as to deserve confidence of the country (motion: Tickell)
1833 December	Is Lord Grey's Ministry deserving the confidence of a British Parliament? (motion: Fearon)	

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1835 February	Is the present administration worthy of the confidence of the country? (motion: Drake)	
1836 June		That the present ministry are undeserving of the confidence of the country (motion: Fowler)
1838 November		That the present ministry by the Conservative tone of their recent policy at home and in the Colonies have forfeited the confidence of the country (motion: Moncreiff)
1839 February	Is the conduct of the present Government with regard to the British Navy, likely to inspire the nation with confidence, in the event of a war? (motion: Drury)	
1839 May	Does the conduct of the Ministers for the last three years entitle them to the approbation of their country? (motion: Rudd)	
1840 March	Has the conduct and policy of the Melbourne Government since its return to office in 1835, been entitled to the confidence of the country? (motion: Bullock)	
1840 May		That of the various parties which divide the country, the conservative is the least entitled to our respect and confidence (motion: Congreve) (Vote of Confidence and Character)
1840 November	Is the Irish Policy of the Present Government unworthy of our confidence? (motion: Stock)	
1840 December	Has the policy of the Ministry with respect to the Syrian Question been such as to deserve our approbation? (motion: Galton)	
1841 May	Has the Budget produced by the Melbourne Administration (May 1841,) deserved the confidence of the Country? (motion: Bullock)	

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1841 November	Is the Present Administration worthy of the confidence of the country? (motion: Crawshay)	
1843 May		That the present Government deserves the gratitude of the nation (motion: West) (Vote of Confidence and Character)
1843 November	That the proceedings of the present Government towards Ireland, are disgraceful to it as an executive, and absurd in policy (motion: Tooke)	
1845 April		That Sir Robert Peel's government has forfeited the confidence of the country (motion: Giffard)
1846 February	That Her Majesty's Ministers are unworthy of the confidence of the country (motion: Cayley)	
1847 March	That the conduct of Her Majesty's Ministers, in their having rejected Lord George Bentinck's measure for the permanent relief of Ireland, does not meet with the approbation of this House (motion: Prest)	
1847 April		That in the present state of politics in England, the Protectionist party appears to have most claims on our confidence (motion: Bedford)
1847 June		That the three gentlemen nominated as candidates for the representation of this university at the next election, Mr Round, of Balliol, is the only one entitled to our confidence and support (motion: Latham)
1848 March	That the Manchester school of politicians is unworthy the confidence of the Country (motion: Colt)	

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(continued)

<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1848 November		That the present ministry is incompetent to carry on the government of the country, and that it is only from an union of the Conservative party that we can expect an administration which shall possess the confidence of the nation (motion: Knatchbull)
1849 March	That this House approves the foreign policy of the present ministry during the last three years (motion: Louis)	
1851 November	That the Foreign Policy of the present government has been conducive to the honour and dignity of this country; and deserves the approbation of this House (motion: Cust) (Vote of Confidence and Character)	
1852 June		That Mr Gladstone is deserving of the confidence of the Church, the Country, and the University (motion: Oxenham)
1852 November	That this House reposes confidence in the fitness of the present Ministers to govern the country; and in the purity of their motives (motion: Swanston)	
1852 December		That the conduct of Lord Derby's government since their accession to office entitles them fully to the support and confidence of the country (motion: Cazenove)
1853 February	That the present Administration is so constituted as to demand the confidence of the Country (motion: Littlewood)	
1855 April		That Mr Gladstone's political career has rendered him unfit to represent this University in Parliament (motion: Wilberforce) (Vote of Confidence and Character)

(continued)

<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1855 June		That the conduct of Lord Palmerston's government with reference to the present war has not been such as to deserve the confidence of the country (motion: Bayley)
1857 March	That this House would regret a change, at the present time, in Her Majesty's Government (motion: C. A. Jones)	That Mr Gladstone is a fit and proper person to represent the University of Oxford in the ensuing Parliament (motion: Fogg) (Vote of Confidence and Character)
1858 March		That the general policy of Lord Palmerston's government has not deserved the confidence of the country (motion: Austen)
1859 June		That Mr Gladstone deserves the support of this University (motion: Puller)
1860 January		That the present government is unworthy of the confidence of the nation (motion: Robinson)
1860 February	That the Government have been guilty of neglect in not adopting more vigorous measures for the suppression of the Outrages in St George's in the East (motion: F. Ll. Bagshawe) (Vote of Confidence and Principle)	That the Budget of the Chancellor of the Exchequer merits the cordial approbation of the House (motion: Farrell) (Vote of Confidence and Principle)
1860 May	That the Political Conduct of Mr Gladstone does not entitle him to our confidence (motion: Lawrance) (Vote of Confidence and Character)	
1860 October	That the Garibaldi volunteer movement is deserving of confidence (motion: Geary) (Vote of Confidence and Principle)	
1861 February		That the political antecedents of Lord Palmerston justify us in placing the greatest confidence in his administration of public affairs (motion: How)

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<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1861 May		That the conduct of the Conservative party in Parliament for the last three years has not entitled it to the confidence of the country (motion: Urquhart) (Vote of Confidence and Character)
1861 November	That this House views with satisfaction the policy pursued by Lord Palmerston's government (motion: Beard) (Vote of Confidence and Principle)	
1862 November		That Mr Disraeli's political conduct fully deserves the confidence of the country (motion: Dombain) (Vote of Confidence and Character)
1863 May		That Mr Gladstone is unworthy to represent this University in Parliament (motion: Thomas)
1864 February	That this House disapproves of the foreign policy of Lord Palmerston's government (motion: Jones) (Vote of Confidence and Principle)	
1864 March		That this House wishes to express its full confidence in the present ministry (motion: Slipper)
1864 October		That it is expedient that Mr Gladstone should continue to represent this University (motion: Maurice) (Vote of Confidence and Expediency)
1865 May	That this House considers the ministry entitled to the confidence and support of the nation at the ensuing general election (motion: Peto)	
1866 March		That in the opinion of this House the present Government has not as yet proved itself worthy of the confidence of the nation (motion: Campbell MacKinnon)

(continued)

<i>Date</i>	<i>Cambridge Union Society</i>	<i>Oxford Union Society</i>
1867 February	That, in the opinion of this House, Her Majesty's Government has exhibited a patriotic sense of duty, and a sincere desire to settle the Reform Question in the scheme they have laid before Parliament on the subject (motion: Lindsay)	
1867 May		That the government ought to be supported in their endeavours to carry a sound and Constitutional Reform Bill (motion: Smith)
1868 May	That the present Government has justly forfeited the confidence of the country (motion: Wilkins)	
1869 February	That the present Government is deserving of the confidence of the Country (motion: Symes)	
1870 May	That the present Colonial Policy of the Government deserves the condemnation of the Nation, as tending to the ultimate disintegration of the Empire (motion: Rocke) (Vote of Confidence and Principle)	

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