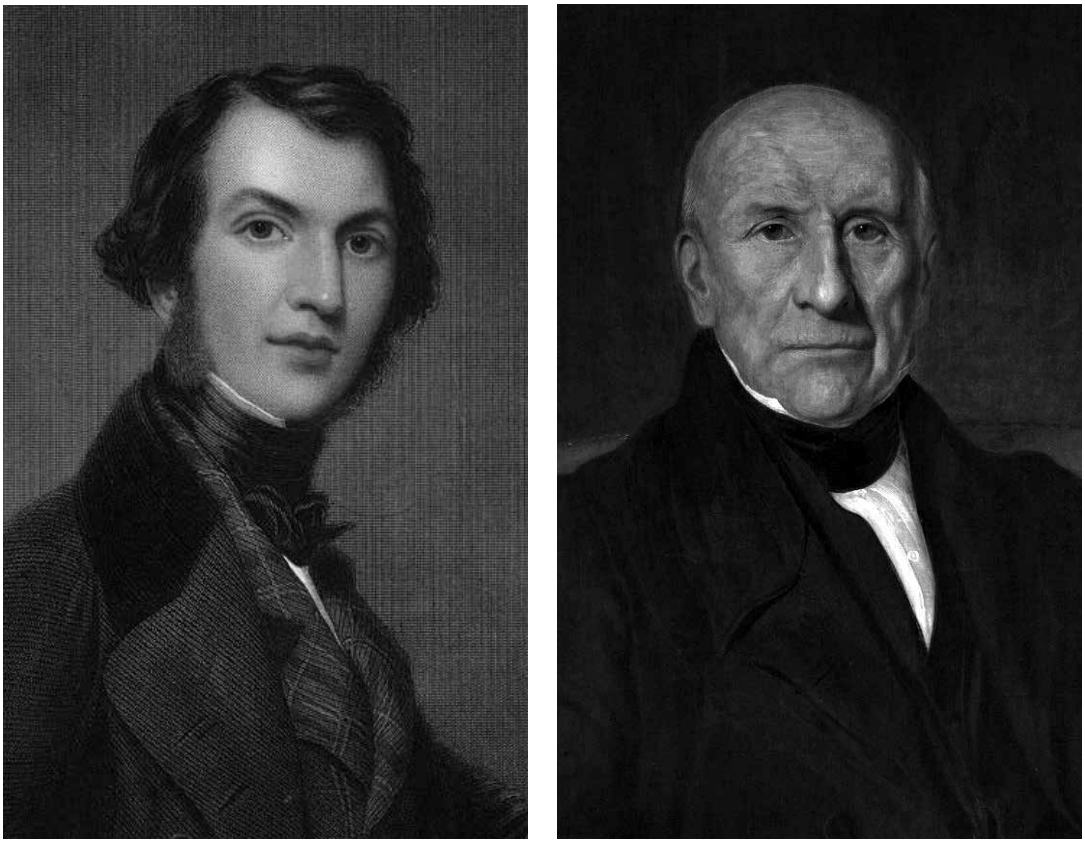
Gladstone

John Powell analyses W. E. Gladstone's views on slavery during his early years in politics, as a Tory parliamentary candidate and MP.

William Gladstone and the Question of Slavery, 1832–33

As history and activism have converged in recent years, the subject of slavery has become the touchstone for testing political morality in Britain, past and present. John Gladstone (1764–1851) was a wealthy merchant who, after the birth of his youngest son William in 1809, acquired slave-holding plantations in Guyana and Jamaica, and was eventually awarded £105,781 in compensation when slavery was abolished in the British Empire in 1833. William Gladstone never held slaves or owned plantations, but it was only a matter of time before his links to slavery would 'require' further examination.[1] In response to the Black Lives Matter movement, in the wake of George Floyd's murder in the United States in 2020, pressure mounted from activist groups to remove statues of the four-time Prime Minister in the United Kingdom, and to rechristen buildings, parks and streets that had been named in his honour throughout the old British Empire. Scholars and public figures increasingly embraced a new historical model – reparative or reparatory history – in which the past is interrogated for the purpose of decentring whiteness and any trait, value or characteristic associated with white power.[2] The historical effects of this activist impulse were brought into sharp relief in August 2023 when Charles Gladstone, great-great grandson of William Gladstone, travelled to Guyana with members of his family to apologise for his father John Gladstone's involvement in slavery. They wished to apologise personally, and to donate £100,000 to support the University of Guyana's International Centre for the Study of Migration and Diaspora, in keeping with the ideals of reparatory justice. Four related articles in *The Observer* of 19 August 2023 preceded the Gladstone family trip, and these were soon followed by dozens of press notices and television reports from around the world. Almost invariably, Charles's relation to William was highlighted, along with large illustrations of the venerable old Prime Minister, now implicated in the family apology.[3]

The apology was not well received. On 25 August, Charles Gladstone addressed an assembly at the University of Guyana, acknowledging 'with deep shame and regret' his 'ancestor's involvement in this crime' and apologising 'with heartfelt sincerity' to the 'descendants of the enslaved in Guyana'.[4] The university's vice-chancellor was gracious, but many were not satisfied. Yells of, 'it is not accepted' and 'murderers', were heard from the back of the crowd, as protesters waved placards reading,



William Gladstone, 1830s, and Sir John Gladstone, ca. 1830 (© National Portrait Gallery, London)

'Your guilt is real Charlie. Move quickly to reparations now.' The apology and gift were denounced as 'perfunctory', one commentator characterising it as performance, merely 'spit shining their halos'.[5] Others complained that the money should have been given to community organisers or reparations groups. The President of Guyana, Dr Irfaan Ali, did not attend the ceremony, but he publicly declared that the descendants of John Gladstone '*must now* also outline their plan of action in line with' the 15-member Caribbean community (CARICOM) '10-point plan for reparatory justice', and he urged that those involved in the slave trade should be 'posthumously' charged for 'crimes against humanity'.[6]

Patrick Robinson, Jamaica Member of the International Court of Justice, was sceptical of the apology. He observed that the United Kingdom could no longer ignore calls for slavery reparations, and urged the British government to move toward payment of more than £18 trillion in reparations to 14 countries.[7] The government stood by its position, publicly expressed during Prime Minister's Questions in April in the wake of a similar apology by Laura Trevelyan. When Rishi Sunak was then asked whether he would 'offer a full and meaningful apology' for Britain's 'role in slavery and colonialism and commit to reparatory justice', he declined, observing that the country should be 'inclusive and tolerant of people from all backgrounds', but that 'trying to unpick our history' was not 'the right way forward'.

All the modern actors in this drama have plausible arguments to make. It seems laudable for Gladstone and his family to personally apologise to the people of Guyana, and to make some attempt at repairing the effects

of John Gladstone's slaveholding. It is understandable that the descendants of men and women once enslaved on John Gladstone's plantations would be sceptical of apologies, and would demand reparations. It is equally clear that a significant number of Britons raised on the virtues of individualism and personal responsibility would reject the proposition that they are responsible for the slave trade or the 'colonial mess' in Caribbean countries, as Ali called it. I am not advocating any of these positions. But if one cares at all about understanding Britain and the British people in the 1830s, it is necessary to move beyond the requirements of a particular activist agenda that are far from self-evident, and to pay some attention to what men like William Gladstone actually thought and said about slavery, to examine his reasoning, and on that basis to determine the degree to which he should or should not now be implicated in his father's slaveholding.

Prologue

Gladstone's opinions about slavery changed over time, as did the circumstances in which he lived. In a retrospect of 1894, he reflected on the real 'illiberalism' of his early Tory views on slavery, but noted what was widely understood in the 1830s, that they 'were not illiberal as compared with the ideas of the time'.[8] Thomas Fowell Buxton, leader of Britain's abolitionist movement, believed that Gladstone was 'guided by principle', and genuinely seeking to improve the condition of those enslaved and hasten their emancipation. This was broadly Gladstone's reputation among both abolitionists and plantation owners, a position that enabled him to appeal to a wide spectrum of the electorate, from ultra-Tories to devout Wesleyans.[9] The same could not be said of his father. To recognise such differences, however, is not to suggest that Gladstone's attitudes were wholly acceptable to all abolitionists, or that he never supported his father in the public forum. The debate over slavery was far more complicated than most activists today will allow, and any understanding of the moment will necessarily reflect nuances that have largely been lost to us nearly 200 years later. It is a greater misreading of Gladstone's position to call him an 'apologist' for slavery than to argue that he was an emancipationist, though neither of these terms quite captures the fullness of his views.[10] Just as there is a growing recognition that the slaveholding 'interest' was diverse, the anti-slavery movement also was 'a heterogenous collection of anti-slaveries, with a variety of emphases'.[11] The considerable diversity on both sides of the slavery question, rooted in personality and method as much as in principle, helps to account for the favourable views of Wilberforce, Buxton and others closely associated with the abolitionist movement, and for the considerable differences on the issue of slavery between Gladstone and his father.

Gladstone was first elected to parliament in 1832, when Britain was a distant and different realm. He was slow to accept the absolute value of individual rights, but instinctively embraced the contours of mainstream political culture, focusing on practical rather than speculative activity, hence his distaste for abstract notions of freedom. His arguments on slavery reflected the logical extension of a principled conservatism rooted in Christian purpose, social hierarchy and a respect for tradition. In this world where Burke trumped Paine, inequality was an inescapable fact. Progress and emancipation were nevertheless both possible and desirable, and it is in this context that Gladstone first developed his attitudes toward slavery and his plans for emancipation.[12]

This is the cultural context, but the key to 'seeing' his position is more personal. Whereas John Gladstone and most others in the West India interest professed Christianity, very few of them applied Christian scripture in the way young Gladstone did, as a true and specific map to the ideal confessional state, where subordination was the fundamental principle of the greater good, and Godly transformation the highest goal. Sorting out belief from self-deception, and high principles from implicit,

and even explicit, racism, is difficult. But in beginning to make the argument that Gladstone's support for amelioration and emancipation was genuine and carefully weighed, with God as his witness, one need only read his *The State in its Relation to the Church* (1838) and observe the responses of friends and foes. In his understanding of the balance of moral goods, the Church was central to the maintenance of social order and justice, and salvation its chief purpose. Many disagreed with his assessment of the times, but no one doubted his sincerity. In later years, Gladstone himself repented of his *naïveté* in believing that the real union of Church and State might be restored, and he repented of his illiberal views toward slavery, which in 1832–33 he could only see as benevolent and spiritually motivated.

This article will examine Gladstone's position during his most illiberal period, just as he was entering public life as a Tory in 1832–33, and will explore how a misreading by scholars of the complicated relationship between John Gladstone and his youngest son contributed to a misleading conflation of their views on slavery.

This article will examine Gladstone's position during his most illiberal period, just as he was entering public life as a Tory in 1832–33, and will explore how a misreading by scholars of the complicated relationship between John Gladstone and his youngest son contributed to a misleading conflation of their views on slavery. It will then seek to explain the reasoning behind Gladstone's support for gradual emancipation and the Abolition of Slavery Bill. While he considered the use of the term 'emancipation' disingenuous, he was committed to a practical plan for bringing it about in the near future. Effective and supervised state-sponsored Christian education would in time lead to what he considered to be the most morally consistent plan for abolishing slavery, and would accomplish four related goals: redressing the failures of the British government, preparing enslaved workers for civic life, vindicating the centrality of the Church of England, and freeing the slaves.

Two historiographical trends have impeded a meaningful understanding of Gladstone's early attitudes toward slavery. The first involves the increased attention paid during the past two decades to patterns and practices of slaveholding in the British Empire, and especially to the financial benefits accrued by the descendants of slaveholders from the time of emancipation in 1834. The 'vast possibilities' of compensation records were noted by Eric Williams in his pioneering work *Capitalism and Slavery* in 1944, but it was not until Nicholas Draper's *The Price of Emancipation: Slave-Ownership, Compensation and British Society at the end of Slavery* in 2010 that any attempt was made systematically to demonstrate the breadth and particularity of the financial legacy of slavery.[13] Draper's detailed examination of compensation records formed the foundation of several related projects which aimed to 'put slavery back into British history'.[14] He was co-founder of the initial project, 'The Legacies of British Slave-ownership' (2009–12), and co-director of its successor, the 'Structure and Significance of British Caribbean Slave-ownership' (2013–15). These projects led to an important book, *Legacies of British Slave-Ownership: Colonial Slavery and the Formation of Victorian Britain,* and the creation of a searchable database maintained by the Centre for the Study of the Legacies of British Slave-ownership (LBS) at the University of London, providing detailed information on enslavers, estates, related maps, and commercial, cultural, historical, imperial, physical and political legacies of slave ownership, which in turn have spawned or enhanced dozens of more narrowly focused works.[15]

Chronologically, these historiographical developments coincided with the Black Lives

Matter movement, formed in the United States in 2013 but widely internationalised following George Floyd's murder in 2020. Traditional history and activism combined to produce an atmosphere particularly receptive to interpretations of British history that emphasised the destructive roles of racism and capitalism, even within the anti-slavery movement. In 2012, Richard Huzzey could still argue that there was 'no vindication for colonialism or racism in the truth that Victorian politics and culture were not fundamentally mercenary, conspiratorial, or amoral'.[16] By 2020, however, even British hostility toward slavery had been routinely racialised and the lines between historical scholarship and activism further blurred. Abolition in 1834 was, in Padraic Scanlan's *Slave Empire,* simply 'the first breath of a new British world where white supremacy, framed as a benign, raceless ideal of human flourishing, justified new kinds of conquest and domination'.[17] Similarly, in an outstanding study of the anti-abolitionist interest in Britain during the 1820s and 1830s, Michael Taylor argues in the adjunctive preface and epilogue that those who were not active abolitionists were necessarily 'pro-slavery', implicating Gladstone as one of 'those people' – 'their money, their ideas, and their politics', which 'bequeathed the true and terrible legacies of British slavery'.[18]

The work of the Centre for the Study of the Legacies of British Slavery and recent studies such as those by Taylor and Scanlan illustrate the current historical challenge in examining the issue of slavery in nineteenth-century Britain. It is just possible to tell a story repugnant to contemporary morality, but difficult to do it without apology and at least nominal identification with an activist agenda that has little regard for the past per se.[19] And while the early works of Draper, Hall and others are essential in better understanding why a generally progressive society was politically divided over the issue of slavery, their historical work has increasingly been used as so many tools for promoting contemporary social goals.[20] Today the Centre is committed to 'reparative history', distancing themselves from the concept of 'a disinterested examination of the past'.[21] This approach to history has in recent years served as a template for the public discourse on race, slavery and reparations. It has been embraced by much of the academic community, and its theoretical assertions have become required signalling for anyone seeking reconciliation, and foundational tenets of organisations calling out the descendants of British slaveholders. The CARICOM Reparations Commission (CRC), for instance, developed a '10-point Reparations Plan' in 2013. By the time Charles Gladstone apologised in Guyana ten years later, this had become the '10-point Plan for Reparatory Justice', with new language calling for a 'reparatory justice approach to truth', to which Charles Gladstone assented even as his efforts were being publicly rebuked.

The goals of acknowledging injustices and setting them right are admirable, but not exactly coterminous with the kind of professional history which seeks to understand the past on its own terms, and to make judgments about the past without primary reference to a future that could not have been known or comprehended. By the time Professor Matthew J. Smith assumed the Centre's directorship in June 2020, this particular 'approach to truth' had widened its remit to include medical inequality during the Covid-19 pandemic and 'the recent horrific murders of unarmed Black US citizens' as part of the struggle to deal with 'with the legacies of forced labour and abuses of Africans and their descendants'.[22] The Centre's increasingly close association with activist rhetoric and goals has fostered an academic atmosphere in which the morality of the past is inherently suspect, and in which William Gladstone can be implicated, without serious inquiry, in 'crimes against humanity'.[23] To the activist, and increasingly to a growing number of students and scholars, it is enough merely to assert 'the fact' that 'we are all implicated in the legacy of slavery', with no distinction between circumstantial association and moral responsibility.[24]

The second historiographical issue affecting the current understanding of the young Gladstone and slavery is mainly biographical, related to the natural tendency to focus on his later, more prominent years. Given that the issue of slavery and the attending period of apprenticeship was settled by 1838, before Gladstone became a Liberal or had risen to the front rank in politics, scholars have paid relatively little attention to his views on the issue, and especially little to his rationale. Two important treatments written near the time of his death are Alfred F. Robbins, *The Early Public Life of William Ewart Gladstone* (1894) and two chapters by F. W. Hirst in Wemyss Reid, *The Life of William Ewart Gladstone* (1899). Both are still useful in addressing Gladstone's early parliamentary career and drawing attention to contemporary sources, but they suffer from the authors' lack of access to private materials now widely available. Chapters Two and Five of David Bebbington's *The Mind of Gladstone* (2004) are essential in understanding the principles informing Gladstone's early thought and the gradual widening of his liberal sympathies, but it deals surprisingly little with the issue of slavery itself. Also useful is Peter J. Jagger's *Gladstone: The Making of a Christian Politician* (1991), which is light on analysis but thorough in its use of early documents.

Only two works have dealt with Gladstone and slavery in any depth. Sidney Checkland's *The Gladstones: A Family Biography* provides significant but partial and divided information on Gladstone's role in his father's financial dealings in the West Indies. Roland Quinault's 'Gladstone and Slavery' was the first work to gather a wide range of underused documentary evidence. The power of the article is in demonstrating the subtle similarities of Gladstone's sensibilities toward the institution of slavery across a lifetime, even as he adopted more liberal positions, but this necessarily limits a more thorough examination of his position at the time of the abolition debates. Quinault's fundamental scepticism of Gladstone's motives, however, undermines any attempt to explain the logic of his position.[25]

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None of Gladstone's earlier biographers could have imagined how central the disposition of the slave question would become to his reputation, considering that the issue seemingly had been settled sixty years before his death. But any person worthy of their society's gratitude must periodically be measured against the evolving society they helped to create. Such reassessment is a form of social criticism, and thus within the purview of the non-professional historian, but it is also a form of biographical representation, and can only be successful to the extent that it cares for both. Students speaking out against 'black oppression' in 2020 were clearly wrong in claiming that Gladstone in his maiden speech argued against the abolition of slavery, and it is not credible to suggest that he was pro-slavery.[26] But at the same time the historian does no good in minimising Gladstone's opposition to immediate emancipation on grounds of moral fitness, which he unambiguously stated on many occasions, both before and after his maiden speech in 1833. Because no biographer has yet fashioned a convincing portrait of the young Gladstone, taking into account complex personal and cultural imperatives rooted in classical social models, Burke's principles, Canning's example and divine providentialism, his strong and consistent support for gradual emancipation has continued to be tied to the more extreme, 'pro-slavery' model so often identified with his father.[27]

The Gladstones and the legacy of slavery

William Gladstone's connections to slavery are less unknown than misread. He never enslaved anyone, owned plantations, or held workers under apprenticeship (the seven-year transitional system of bound labour prescribed by the Slavery Abolition Bill). He supported the abolition bill, which immediately freed enslaved children under the age of six, provided meaningful amelioration of conditions for enslaved workers and ended in full emancipation for slaves held in the West Indies. Even the abolitionist leader Buxton encouraged abolitionists to support the bill for 'the good of the Negroes'.[28]

When Gladstone was born in 1809, his father was already a wealthy merchant, engaged in trade, shipping and marine insurance. Earlier that year John Gladstone had become chairman of the Liverpool West India Association, and three years later acquired a joint share in his first plantation, Success (in Demerara), but his interests in the West Indies remained mainly commercial until the 1820s.[29] His part in the promotion of British slavery has been extensively studied, first because of the 1823 slave uprising in Demerara that began on the Success Plantation and ended with the death of a missionary accused of preaching sedition.[30] The political and public inquiry into the uprising, as well as his widely published newspaper exchange with the Quaker abolitionist James Cropper, revealed to the larger British public, and to later historians, much that had previously been unknown about the dynamics of absentee slave ownership in the British West Indies.

The second reason that the Gladstone connection to slavery has been so carefully examined is that John Gladstone received one of the largest compensation payments from the government when slavery was abolished in 1833. In anticipation of the government's plan to compensate plantation owners, he frequently used his sons Tom and William, both MPs in the 1830s, as liaisons in his lobbying efforts, though their roles were limited.[31] All of the Gladstone children benefitted financially – William having been gifted £15,000 by 1843 – but these legacies were beyond his control, and in any case were not necessary to his good education, privileged lifestyle or political preferment.[32] His great opportunity in Newark in 1832 had everything to do with his energy and brilliance in denouncing Reform in Oxford during the previous year. There was much confusion in the press about which 'Gladstone', son or father, was the subject of any particular story, which further emphasised the patronym alone. Parliamentary reporters sometimes confused Tom (b. 1804) and William, reverting to the indiscriminate 'Mr Gladstone' when they could not be sure who was speaking.[33] In relation to slavery, as late as June 1838, the *Jamaica Royal Gazette* erroneously reported that the Holland estate was 'the property of Mr. W. E. Gladstone, member for Newark'.[34] Had this been true, he would have been the owner of a plantation worked by apprentices, which would account for some of the more extreme political accusations sometimes levelled against him. But it was not true. John Gladstone had privately informed his sons in May 1838 of the future settlement of his estate, but made it clear that the transfers would not be effected until 1 January 1839, five months after the ending of apprenticeship, and even then, only the profits from their father's many business ventures would be turned over to his children prior to his death.[35]

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As a boy, Gladstone was fascinated by politics.[36] Before the age of twelve, he was already following local and national issues,

and beginning to develop a critical sensibility regarding political language and method. This natural inclination was sharpened by the tumultuous aftermath of the Napoleonic wars, and by his father's complex and often disappointing political career, which included political friendships with George Canning and William Huskisson, who served as MPs for Liverpool between 1812 and 1830. It also reflected a more personal interest not common to his three older brothers, Thomas (b. 1804), Robertson (b. 1806) and John Neilson (b. 1807). He was aware of the controversial nature of his father's slaveholding, at least from the age of thirteen, and probably much earlier, and was conditioned at an early age to accept explanations both accounting for the institution of slavery and supporting its moral validity. In writing to his mother in 1823 about his father's exchange of letters in the Liverpool press with Cropper, Gladstone eagerly attacked Cropper's hypocrisy in condemning West Indian slavery while profiting from the sugar trade in the East Indies. Cropper's method was 'confused', he argued in the most stentorian schoolboy manner, withholding 'mitigating evidence', instead of appealing to 'cool and open argument'.[37] At the same time, he knew that his mother and saintly sister Anne were averse to the acquisition of slave-holding estates.[38] As the years passed, in the family home in Liverpool, and at Eton and Oxford, he was often reminded of the conflicting moral and commercial interests at stake as the debate over slavery and the fate of the colonial empire escalated.[39] But until 1832, this issue was only one of many for Gladstone, and subsumed under the larger rubric of politics.

Developing a response to slavery

Too much has been made of both Gladstone's active interest in slavery as a political question and the degree to which his views were shaped in deference to his father.[40] Quinault rightly points to half a dozen cases in which Gladstone read about or discussed the issue.[41] One could add a dozen more. But these cover a decade of time, and one will search in vain for any sense of cause on Gladstone's part involving the issue of slavery before 1832. He showed far more interest in Canning's legacy, Catholic emancipation, Liverpool politics, Church reform, the Eton and Oxford debating societies and, finally, by 1831 the great matter of Reform, which threatened, in his mind, the very foundations of society. It was only during his first campaign for Newark in the autumn of 1832, and in the debate surrounding the Slavery Abolition Bill in his first parliamentary session, that he began to study the question with any rigour, reading and taking careful notes about the actual conditions of slaveholding.[42] Still, any interest in slavery and the West Indies paled in comparison to his reading on Church reform, the tithe, English history or poetry. Until the debate over the Slavery Abolition Bill and the attending questions of compensation, Gladstone was as likely to read the *Foreign Quarterly,* or Hallam's *Translation of Milton* or a draft of the Irish Church Bill, as anything related to the West Indies.

While it is true that John Gladstone was a formidable father and William a dutiful son, there was a kind of theatre at work in their relationship, particularly as young Gladstone moved into public life. His father was at once financially brilliant, permanently energetic, personally demanding and totally unselfconscious.[43] William genuinely admired his father, for his financial acumen, his daring entrepreneurship, his philanthropy and his Christian faith. It was no small source of pride for Gladstone to see these qualities combined in the building of churches and colleges, and it was edifying for the two of them to work hand in hand in raising beautiful and permanent edifices to the glory of God, as some fathers and sons might go for an afternoon shoot.[44] But John Gladstone's religion was mainly practical, and William was stubborn. He recognised his father's flaws and justified them – while simultaneously exaggerating his own hypocrisy and sinfulness. If his father's 'intellect was a little

intemperate', Gladstone admired his character and his deeply affectionate nature, and young Gladstone sometimes took advantage of this.[45] Of course William genuinely believed that it was his Christian obligation to be obedient – what more natural channel for the will of God than 'the wishes of a parent?' – but he never understood this quite literally to mean that he was never to conceal anything from his father or to always trust in his judgment, as his father had demanded of Tom.[46] William disagreed with his father on many specific and often major issues.[47] And though he often expressed his differences in terms of self-recrimination, or remained silent when necessary, his mind was seldom changed, particularly on matters of principle.

Knowing that Gladstone deeply admired his father, had been raised to accept slavery as an element of historical reality in a fallen world, and believed unquestioningly in Aristotelian principles of hierarchy, is it fair to say that his 'stance on slavery was essentially the same as his father's'?[48] Given their difference in age and employment, one might imagine this to be true. In 1830, John Gladstone was 65 years old, and had made himself wealthy by skilfully navigating a global market in the most uncertain times of revolution and war, while William, at 20, was not yet quite a serious scholar.[49] But it is not clear at that time how closely he identified with his father's views, or how carefully he had considered them. Between 1830 and 1832, William's university concerns were tempered by a rising seriousness of purpose, and it is at this point that one can begin to discern the contours of his personal perspective on slavery and those held in bondage by the system. He was still in many ways naïve, but also intelligent, good-hearted and quick to learn, qualities that served him well during his first experience of practical politics in Newark during the autumn of 1832. By the time the debate over the Slavery Abolition Bill rose to prominence in Britain, both father and son had publicly stated their views on slavery in considerable detail, affording a good opportunity for examining their relative positions on the issue.

In the autumn of 1830, as reports of cruelty and abuse from the West Indies led to a rising call for immediate emancipation, John Gladstone published the pamphlet *A Statement of Facts connected to the Present State of Slavery*, which pushed back against abolitionists who were 'unacquainted with the negro character' and colonial society. His argument was thorough, and included many elements of the common case for slaveholding. Historically, slavery had existed 'since the origin and formation' of this world. Economically, slavery was necessary, for the negroes would not voluntarily work, given the 'relaxing influence of the climate' which led to 'a love of ease and relaxation'. Legally, slavery was sanctioned by 'acts of the British legislature' by which planters had acquired their 'right of property'. Politically, the 'reckless impatience' of the abolitionists was 'misplaced', for they had no 'property stake' and such a course would lead to the 'abandonment' of the sugar colonies by the white inhabitants. Gladstone acknowledged some occasional abuses, but reminded readers that there was 'brutality, murder, plunder and cruelty' even in England. He invited readers to compare the condition of slaves, whose 'comforts and wants' were generally provided, to the condition of workers in England's industrial cities and in Ireland. 'I may be told', he wrote, 'that "the slave in our colonies works from compulsion, the labourer here from choice"'. He granted this, but asked what the choice amounted to. 'Is it not either to submit to labour, which exhausts his strength and health for a bare subsistence, or to leave it and starve?' John Gladstone's recommendations were clear: support for Canning's 1823 resolutions to 'ameliorate the state of slavery, to improve the condition and raise the character of the people', but do not name the time or circumstances for some distant emancipation. 'It is not for me', he wrote, 'to attempt to say when a system should terminate which

Almighty God in the Divine wisdom of his overruling providence has seen fit to permit'.[50]

William, then at university at Oxford, read his father's pamphlet in December 1830, but was completely preoccupied thereafter with the activities of the Essay Club and Debating Society. The subject of the moment was the Duke of Wellington, whose administration came under debate on 11 November. Gladstone caused a row by reporting the debate to the editor of the *Evening Standard* and declaring that 'the rising generation' had just pronounced the administration 'undeserving of the confidence of the country'.[51] There was more than a little vanity and love of battle here displayed, as Gladstone had opened and closed the debate, and taken up a third of its time. On 17 May occurred the epochal speech in which Gladstone excoriated the reformers and marked himself in the university as foremost among the young debaters. This too he followed up with a letter to the *Evening Standard*, in which he sketched for the public the place that the rising generation would soon be taking in public affairs. Two weeks after his anti-reform speech, Gladstone first spoke publicly on the issue of slavery, in his last speech at the Oxford Union on 2 June 1831. There was nothing of the enthusiasm, the 'outgrowth of passion', that had made the anti-reform speech so memorable, and as a result he was not at his best.[52] But he was prepared to address the proposal, 'That while all due precaution consistent with such a measure should be taken, the negroes in the West Indies should be emancipated without delay'. Gladstone countered with a carefully prepared amendment that fairly encapsulated the views on the subject he would take with him to parliament in 1833:

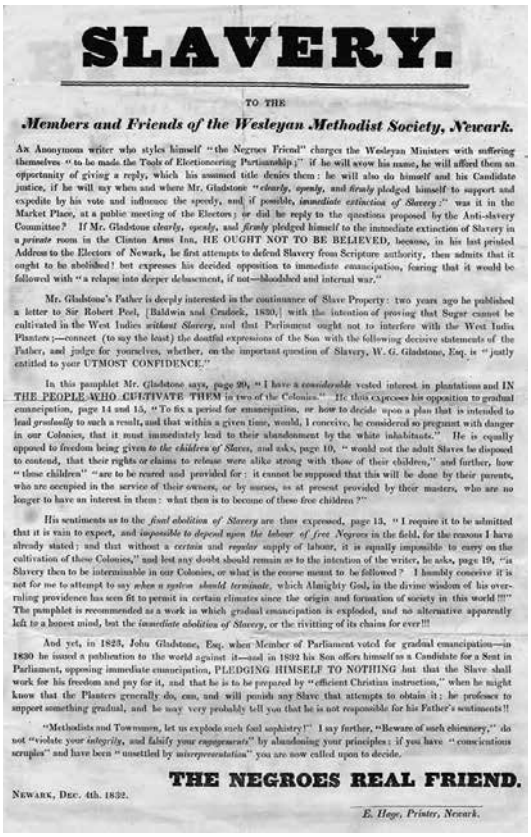
> That legislative enactments ought to be made, and, if it be necessary, enforced – (1) For better guarding the personal and civil rights of the negroes in our West India Colonies. (2) For the establishing of compulsory manumission. (3) For securing universally the receiving a Christian education, under the clergy and teachers, independent of the planters; a measure of which total but gradual emancipation will be the natural consequence, as it was of a similar procedure in the first ages of Christianity.[53]

His approval of amelioration was generally consistent with his father's views, but already William was going much farther, calling for 'compulsory manumission' and for Christian education 'independent of the planters'.

Young Gladstone was knowledgeable about the West Indies, but he was far more interested in the question of reform and its implications for the state of the Church of England in British society. No one paid much attention to the speech and it was not, for a change, reported to the *Evening Standard*.[54] At that point he plunged into a project for gathering signatures from resident bachelors and undergraduates for a petition opposing the Reform Bill, skipping chapel three times in the process, and attending parliamentary debates between 3 and 8 October. It was, in Richard Shannon's words, 'a week of intoxication and enchantment' that could not last, for final honours schools were to commence on 9 November (Literae Humaniores) and 9 December (Mathematics).[55] Having earned double firsts, he immediately packed to leave for home, and on 1 February 1832 departed for his Grand Tour of Europe in the company of his brother, John Neilson. For the next six months, Gladstone was so full of the historical glories of the Continent that there was no room for mundane matters. These cultural treasures were some consolation for the enactment of the dreaded Reform Bill, which became law on 7 June 1832.

The Newark campaign, 1832

On 6 July, Gladstone returned to his hotel in Milan to find a letter from his friend Lord Lincoln, offering on behalf of his father, the fourth Duke of Newcastle, his support in the upcoming general election in the contest for



SLAVERY.

TO THE

Members and Friends of the Wesleyan Methodist Society, Newark.

AN Anonymous writer who styles himself "the Negroes Friend" charges the Wesleyan Ministers with suffering themselves "to be made the Tools of Electioneering Partizanship;" if he will avow his name, he will afford them an opportunity of giving a reply, which his assumed title denies them: he will also do himself and his Candidate justice, if he will say when and where Mr. Gladstone *"clearly, openly, and firmly* pledged himself to support and expedite by his vote and influence the speedy, and if possible, *immediate extinction of Slavery*:" was it in the Market Place, at a public meeting of the Electors; or did he reply to the questions proposed by the Anti-slavery Committee? If Mr. Gladstone *clearly, openly,* and *firmly* pledged himself to the immediate extinction of Slavery in a *private* room in the Clinton Arms Inn, HE OUGHT NOT TO BE BELIEVED, because, in his last printed Address to the Electors of Newark, he first attempts to defend Slavery from Scripture authority, then admits that it ought to be abolished! but expresses his decided opposition to immediate emancipation, fearing that it would be followed with "a relapse into deeper debasement, if not—bloodshed and internal war."

Mr. Gladstone's Father is deeply interested in the continuance of Slave Property: two years ago he published a letter to Sir Robert Peel, [Baldwin and Cradock, 1830,] with the intention of proving that Sugar cannot be cultivated in the West Indies *without Slavery*, and that Parliament ought not to interfere with the West India Planters;—connect (to say the least) the doubtful expressions of the Son with the following decisive statements of the Father, and judge for yourselves, whether, on the important question of Slavery, W. G. Gladstone, Esq. is "justly entitled to your UTMOST CONFIDENCE."

In this pamphlet Mr. Gladstone says, page 20, "I have a *considerable* vested interest in plantations and IN THE PEOPLE WHO CULTIVATE THEM in two of the Colonies." He thus expresses his opposition to gradual emancipation, page 14 and 15, "To fix a period for emancipation, or how to decide upon a plan that is intended to lead *gradually* to such a result, and that within a given time, would, I conceive, be considered so pregnant with danger in our Colonies, that it must immediately lead to their abandonment by the white inhabitants." He is equally opposed to freedom being given *to the children of Slaves*, and asks, page 10, "would not the adult Slaves be disposed to contend, that their rights or claims to release were alike strong with those of their children," and further, how "these children" "are to be reared and provided for: it cannot be supposed that this will be done by their parents, who are occupied in the service of their owners, or by nurses, as at present provided by their masters, who are no longer to have an interest in them: what then is to become of these free children?"

His sentiments as to the *final abolition of Slavery* are thus expressed, page 13. "I require it to be admitted that it is vain to expect, and *impossible to depend upon the labour of free Negroes* in the field, for the reasons I have already stated: and that without a *certain* and *regular* supply of labour, it is equally impossible to carry on the cultivation of these Colonies," and lest any doubt should remain as to the intention of the writer, he asks, page 19, "is Slavery then to be interminable in our Colonies, or what is the course meant to be followed? I humbly conceive it is not for me to attempt to say *when a system should terminate*, which Almighty God, in the divine wisdom of his overruling providence has seen fit to permit in certain climates since the origin and formation of society in this world!!" The pamphlet is recommended as a work in which gradual emancipation is exploded, and no alternative apparently left to a honest mind, but the *immediate abolition of Slavery*, or the rivitting of its chains for ever!!!

And yet, in 1823, John Gladstone, Esq. when Member of Parliament voted for gradual emancipation—in 1830 he issued a publication to the world against it—and in 1832 his Son offers himself as a Candidate for a Seat in Parliament, opposing immediate emancipation, PLEDGING HIMSELF TO NOTHING but that the Slave shall work for his freedom and pay for it, and that he is to be prepared by "efficient Christian instruction," when he might know that the Planters generally do, can, and will punish any Slave that attempts to obtain it: he professes to support something gradual, and he may very probably tell you that he is not responsible for his Father's sentiments!!

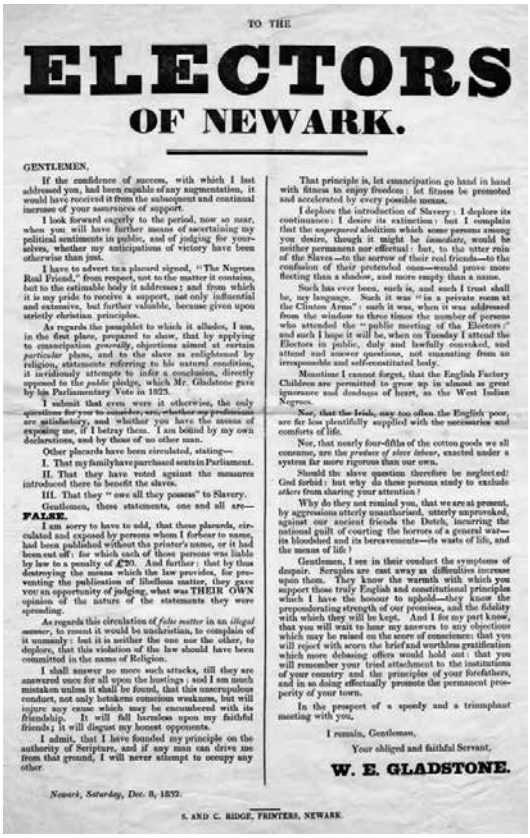
"Methodists and Townsmen, let us explode such foul sophistry!" I say further, "Beware of such chicanery," do not "violate your *integrity*, and falsify your *engagements*" by abandoning your principles: if you have "conscientious scruples" and have been "unsettled by *misrepresentation*" you are now called upon to decide.

THE NEGROES REAL FRIEND.

NEWARK, Dec. 4th. 1832.

E. Hage, Printer, Newark.

Election handbill from Newark, 1832, attacking Gladstone on the basis of his father's views on slavery.



TO THE

ELECTORS OF NEWARK.

GENTLEMEN,

If the confidence of success, with which I last addressed you, had been capable of any augmentation, it would have received it from the subsequent and continual increase of your assurances of support.

I look forward eagerly to the period, now so near, when you will have further means of ascertaining my political sentiments in public, and of judging for yourselves, whether my anticipations of victory have been otherwise than just.

I have to advert to a placard signed, "The Negroes Real Friend," from respect, not to the matter it contains, but to the estimable body it addresses; and from which it is my pride to receive a support, not only influential and extensive, but further valuable, because given upon strictly christian principles.

As regards the pamphlet to which it alludes, I am, in the first place, prepared to show, that by applying to emancipation *generally*, objections aimed at certain *particular* plans, and to the slave as enlightened by religion, statements referring to his natural condition, it invidiously attempts to infer a conclusion, directly opposed to the *public* pledges, which Mr. Gladstone gave by his Parliamentary Vote in 1823.

I submit that even were it otherwise, the only questions for you to consider are, whether my professions are satisfactory, and whether you have the means of exposing me, if I betray them. I am bound by my own declarations, and by those of no other man.

Other placards have been circulated, stating—

I. That my family have purchased seats in Parliament.

II. That they have voted against the measures introduced there to benefit the slaves.

III. That they "owe all they possess" to Slavery.

Gentlemen, these statements, one and all are—

FALSE.

I am sorry to have to add, that these placards, circulated and exposed by persons whom I forbear to name, had been published without the printer's name, or it had been cut off: for which each of those persons was liable by law to a penalty of £20. And further: that by thus destroying the means which the law provides, for preventing the publication of libellous matter, they gave you an opportunity of judging, what was THEIR OWN opinion of the nature of the statements they were spreading.

As regards this circulation of *false matter* in an *illegal manner*, to resent it would be unchristian, to complain of it unmanly: but it is neither the one nor the other, to deplore, that this violation of the law should have been committed in the name of Religion.

I shall answer no more such attacks, till they are answered once for all upon the hustings: and I am much mistaken unless it shall be found, that this unscrupulous conduct, not only betokens conscious weakness, but will injure any cause which may be encumbered with its friendship. It will fall harmless upon my faithful friends; it will disgust my honest opponents.

I admit, that I have founded my principle on the authority of Scripture, and if any man can drive me from that ground, I will never attempt to occupy any other.

That principle is, let emancipation go hand in hand with fitness to enjoy freedom: let fitness be promoted and accelerated by every possible means.

I deplore the introduction of Slavery: I deplore its continuance: I desire its extinction: but I complain that the *unprepared* abolition which some persons among you desire, though it might be *immediate*, would be neither permanent nor effectual: but, to the utter ruin of the Slaves—to the sorrow of their real friends—to the confusion of their pretended ones—would prove more fleeting than a shadow, and more empty than a name.

Such has ever been, such is, and such I trust shall be, my language. Such it was "in a private room at the Clinton Arms": such it was, when it was addressed from the window to three thousand of the most respectable who attended the "public meeting of the Electors:" and such I hope it will be, when on Tuesday I attend the Electors in public, duly and lawfully convoked, and attend and answer questions, not emanating from an irresponsible and self-constituted body.

Meantime I cannot forget, that the English Factory Children are permitted to grow up in almost as great ignorance and dondage of heart, as the West Indian Negroes.

Nor, that the Irish, may too often the English poor, are far less plentifully supplied with the necessaries and comforts of life.

Nor, that nearly four-fifths of the cotton goods we all consume, are the *produce of slave labour*, exacted under a system far more rigorous than our own.

Should the slave question therefore be neglected! God forbid: but why do these persons study to exclude *others* from sharing your attention?

Why do they not remind you, that we are at present, by aggressions utterly unauthorised, utterly unprovoked, against our ancient friends the Dutch, incurring the national guilt of courting the horrors of a general war—its bloodshed and its bereavements—its waste of life, and the means of life?

Gentlemen, I see in their conduct the symptoms of despair. Scruples are cast away as difficulties increase upon them. They know the warmth with which you support those truly English and constitutional principles which I have the honour to uphold—they know the preponderating strength of our premises, and the fidelity with which they will be kept. And I for my part know, that you will wait to hear my answers to any objections which may be raised on the score of conscience: that you will reject with scorn the brief and worthless gratification which more debasing offers would hold out: that you will remember your tried attachment to the institutions of your country and the principles of your forefathers, and in so doing effectually promote the permanent prosperity of your town.

In the prospect of a speedy and a triumphant meeting with you,

I remain, Gentlemen,

Your obliged and faithful Servant,

W. E. GLADSTONE.

Newark, Saturday, Dec. 8, 1832.

S. AND C. RIDGE, PRINTERS, NEWARK.

Gladstone's response, arguing that slaves should be educated to be able to prove their fitness to use freedom responsibly.

the borough of Newark-upon-Trent. Gladstone was at once stunned and thrilled, having imagined that he must first spend several years in private study of history, theology, politics and a host of other subjects that would be required for the ripening of a public man. He quickly returned to England, landing on 29 July, and spent the next two weeks in what he termed an 'amphibious state' between candidate and private person.[56] On 4 August Gladstone received a letter from the Duke and an enclosed request from Edward Smith Godfrey, President of the Red Club and chairman of Gladstone's election committee, for an address to the borough constituents. He immediately sat down to prepare one, which was printed on Monday 6 August, and finally published in the *Nottingham Journal* on 11 August.

As a young man just out of university, unknown to the electorate and running against a strong slate of candidates, he was unsure what to say to his prospective constituents. First, he reminded them of 'a warm and conscientious attachment to our Government as a limited Monarchy, and to the Union of our Church and State' – clearly throughout the 1830s, this high ideal was the *sine qua non* of Gladstone's politics and, in his mind, the source of 'numberless blessings' to the nation. Also consistent with his general approach was an appeal to 'facts', with 'abstract principles' only useful in 'subservience' to them. His only mention of slavery was in a general listing of positions: the 'alleviation' of public burdens, the defence of Irish establishments, a 'dignified and impartial' foreign policy, the

'amelioration' of conditions of the labouring classes, and 'the adjustment of our Colonial Interests', providing for 'moral advancement and further legal protection of our fellow-subjects in slavery'.[57] All the elements of this personal declaration were platitudinous enough, lightly expressed and the small portion on slavery was consistent with his final Oxford Union address of 1831. In Gladstone's mind, however, the primary issue was Reform, and how this might affect the Church of England.

Gladstone was surprised, then, when on 14 August the Agency Anti-Slavery Committee published an advertisement that included his name in Schedule A – as a candidate for Parliament, whose 'past conduct, or present professions, or admitted personal interest in the question' had convinced the committee that the candidate would not support immediate abolition.[58] This was true enough, and consistent with Gladstone's Oxford Union speech, but only implied in his declaration of 4 August. The advertisement further confused the issue by indicating that Schedule A 'contains, as a matter of course, all who are known to be slave proprietors'. The Whig incumbent, Serjeant Wilde, was listed with those who were recommended 'with perfect confidence' for those desiring 'immediate abolition'.[59] The listing of Gladstone in Schedule A left room for some confusion regarding the reasons for his inclusion. None of the Newark constituents were likely to know anything of his obscure Oxford speech, with all its careful distinctions and clear call for 'compulsory manumission', but many would have read – long before he first arrived in Newark at the end of September – that he was 'a Liverpool merchant' and a Tory with 'considerable commercial experience', neither of which was true, but which suggested a West Indian connection.[60] 'All I can say', he recorded in his diary, 'is, God help the poor slaves, whose interests I fear will be torn in pieces between the contending parties'.[61]

Even before the Agency Anti-Slavery Committee's advertisement appeared, some constituents were confused about Gladstone's opinions regarding slavery. In a letter to Godfrey forwarded to Gladstone, Francis Eggleston identified the political ambiguity of the candidate's statement – 'the adjustment of our Colonial interests, with measures for the moral advancement and further legal protection of our fellow subjects in slavery'. 'Could I be informed by you', Eggleston wrote, 'whether Mr.Gladstone intends their *continuance in slavery*? Or will he not only advance their morals, protect their rights, but vote for (upon proper restrictions) *their emancipation from slavery*?'[62] … That was the question.

Gladstone had included some account of his views on emancipation in an earlier draft, but had deleted them. He sat down immediately to pen a more thorough record of his opinions on the slavery question and what should be done about it. In this first, careful exposition of his views on slavery, two fundamental characteristics mark a middle ground not quite acceptable to the immediate abolitionist or the West Indian planter.[63] Gladstone believed that in dealing with an issue so beset with 'prejudice and misapprehension', which mingled conflicting goods in Christian truth, historical precedent, legal obligation and human rights, that an open and unbiased search for the truth was the necessary foundation for successfully resolving the difficulty. 'In my soul and conscience', he had written a few days earlier, 'as I shall answer at the day of judgment, I do not feel that I have any bias on the question. … I think I could account for it intelligibly enough to any moderate person'.[64] When Gladstone perceived abolitionists treating the matter with 'levity', or as merely a matter of politics, he was disgusted.[65] If, on the other hand, they approached the issue as a solemn duty and with some recognition of conflicting claims, he was inclined to listen and even cooperate. This explains in part why he so valued the work of William Wilberforce and Buxton, and, in this case, why he was ready to so openly and fully answer Eggleston – whose premise assumed that Gladstone might vote for emancipation – '*upon proper restrictions*'. This was the essence of

Gladstone's position. It was not the goal of the abolitionists he disliked, but rather the simplistic moral terms in which they often cast the debate.

The second essential characteristic for Gladstone in approaching the slavery issue was the 'law of humanity', rooted in the writers of antiquity and confirmed by Scripture. Thus, after attempting to remove any bias, he makes 'the first question to be answered' – 'Is the holding an individual in slavery in itself a sin?' To determine the answer, he argued, 'we must of course repair to Scripture'. If scripture condemns slavery as a sin, there is no option but to 'emancipate immediately and universally'. In Gladstone's judgment, slavery was not necessarily a sin, and thus the issue of slavery could not be resolved by the simple solution of immediate abolition.[66] In the absence of scriptural condemnation, he argued that Britain's policy should be guided by 'the interests of the parties concerned', temporal, yes, but mainly 'those higher interests, which they possess in common with ourselves, as our brethren in all the features of our conditions'. Remarkably, Gladstone considered the interest of 'the people themselves, and of their owners, to be identical', in that their ultimate goal should be spiritual health and restoration. As improbable as this may now sound, the combination of his classical education and literal reading of scripture led him to conclude, in the happy phrase of David Bebbington, that 'Aristotle and the Bible spoke with one voice'.[67] Inequality was both natural and good. In a private note of 1830, Gladstone concluded that 'the natural law of humanity' was that some 'are to rule, others to obey, the wellbeing of the whole meanwhile remains the end in order to whose attainment the parts are thus disposed'.[68] To his mind, it was 'pretty clear that the abstract form of freedom' was not 'absolutely a legitimate object of desire or pursuit'. The 'object to be desired' was not 'universal freedom of action, which obviously would do him harm if his will be depraved and generally inclined to what is wrong'.[69]

The greater evil, 'which no emancipation of itself can remove, and which immediate emancipation' would 'inevitably perpetuate', was the low moral condition of the slave, which was the reason he did not favour immediate emancipation.

Gladstone admitted that there was 'unquestionably' a 'great and alarming evil in the condition of the West Indian slaves', but believed it was mainly a moral evil. In addressing the physical condition of the enslaved – and trusting too much on the testimony of eyewitnesses – he argued that 'in point of food, clothing, means of acquiring property, care in sickness, and general treatment', the condition of West Indian slaves was '*very decidedly* superior to that of the labouring classes' of England. Gladstone made it clear that he was not 'imputing any extraordinary benevolence to the owners', merely observing the actual physical result of the economic interest of the planters. Gladstone readily admitted that enslaved men and women had been mistreated, and that 'gross maltreatment' would almost certainly happen in the future. The only way to solve that problem was through 'emancipation', with further 'legal protections' in the meantime.

Gladstone's entire conception of politics, which included the issue of slavery, was founded on the exclusive nature of Christian truth, for he did not think it likely that 'the difficulties of political relations' could ever be 'surmounted except by practical Christianity'.[70] The greater evil, 'which no emancipation of itself can remove, and which immediate emancipation' would 'inevitably perpetuate', was the low moral condition of the slave, which was the reason he did not favour immediate emancipation. Gladstone lauded both 'private benevolence' and 'legislative enactment' for efforts at 'religious instruction', but

he believed that the government – and hence, the country – were to blame. The country had been 'wicked' in 'proposing Christianity as a nation' and 'having embodied it in both the legislature and laws', while continuing 'to bring these poor people into bondage and hold them in it', while withholding from them 'that transcendent blessing which it was in our power to have communicated'. It was the 'wicked example' of Britons that kept the slaves in a 'state of animal existence'. Until 'that slumber is dispelled', Gladstone wrote, 'I do not think it possible that he can be made sensible of the high capabilities and destinies of his being' that would lead to 'purely voluntary industry and good conduct'. Until a Christian principle of action was provided, he believed that 'emancipation would be the sorest evil which could be inflicted on the slave'. His view of slavery as expressed for the electors of Newark was consistent with his general appreciation of the 'natural law' of politics, confirmed in scripture, that 'the right to govern' could only lie 'where the capacity to govern' was also found.[71]

This was not merely a self-serving explanation of the situation that existed, though clearly he was speaking from a position of privilege as one who had inherited that providential 'right it govern'. More importantly, for Gladstone, unlike his father, it was a starting point for a solution that was in reach. Both sides in the debate reflected good and evil principles – the West Indian interest mixing selfishness with 'lawful caution'; the abolitionists combining 'fervid benevolence' with imperial 'recklessness and indifference to the rights of property'. Gladstone believed that, if both sides worked 'in good earnest', there were still 'remarkable facilities for raising the Negroes to the condition of an enlightened and Christian population'. He was optimistic that 'a comprehensive scheme of education' was still practicable. Sceptics might consider this cant or self-delusion, but it was more than that. Gladstone knew the Christian faith and character of his father, and of the planter class more generally, and believed that this 'body of Christian men' would respond favourably to a 'practical scheme for genuine religious education' that might eventually result in emancipation. He also could see on the horizon an opportunity for himself and others to actually develop such a plan.[72]

Gladstone believed that justice demanded compensation for the planters, and his father expected him and Tom to serve as his factotums in London, reporting on developments among the various committees and groups representing the West India interest, and determining the temperature of the political debate. This could have created a moral dilemma, but the main work of the committees was to determine whether or not to support the Abolition of Slavery Bill, with its £20 million in compensation, and, if so, how to apportion it among the planters. On these matters Gladstone agreed with his father. The slave trade originated before any West Indian colonisation, it was sanctioned by British law and pressed upon the government 'by the manufacturing and trading classes' of the country. Had not Colonial Secretary Lord Dartmouth in 1775 required the trade in slaves, refusing to 'allow the colonies to check or discourage in any degree a traffic so beneficial to the nation'?[73] But Gladstone was clear about the primary reason he supported the bill. Even a just compensation to the planters would not atone for an emancipation that was 'ruinous to the Negroes'. The 'true object' was to emancipate them neither sooner nor later than the moment at which emancipation would be 'beneficial' to both the slave and the planter. Because slavery developed from an 'unfortunate combination of circumstances', and was, like war, 'evil in its origin', it was impossible to be 'at once got rid of'.[74] It nevertheless provided 'remarkable advantages for ensuring' the 'blessings of systematic and universal instruction'. The abolitionists, Gladstone argued, 'wish to change the name, I the nature' of that state of society. 'I want effectual emancipation'.[75]

The first session of the new House of Commons following the Great Reform Act, 5 February 1833 (painted by Sir George Hayter, © National Portrait Gallery, London)

Gladstone's position, then, in 1832–33, was to support emancipation with a period of apprenticeship, with 'the opportunity of manumission' granted to those who showed 'industry and good conduct', then to wait for a 'general diffusion of knowledge' that would 'put the Negroes in the condition as to religion of the people of this country. In his optimistic view, this was 'no difficult nor distant object'. If slavery then did not 'die a natural death, let it die a forced one by direct interposition of the Legislature'. He had called for 'compulsory manumission' in his speech to the Oxford Union in 1831, and it was still his position during the debates of 1833.

Godfrey, who knew that the issue of slavery would be foremost with many, especially among the Wesleyans, was right to press Gladstone for clarification. From that point forward, Gladstone's tact, openness and goodwill carried the day. He began his canvass on 25 September 1832. A handful of women were angry about his position on slavery, and many Wesleyans were hesitant to offer support. But that evening Gladstone met privately with thirty or forty of them. Their manner he found 'really gratifying', because they 'behaved as voters ought, as men who had a duty to perform, and commands of conscience to follow'. He was surprised that they had not heard the accounts of the Anti-Slavery Society. 'They were candid and fair beyond anything', he wrote to his father, 'and not one of them left the room without leaving us his promise'.[76]

Gladstone's Whig opponent Wilde, who had made slavery *the* issue of the campaign, made frequent use of John Gladstone's pamphlet in the process.[77] In his address at the Clinton Arms of 9 October 1832, Gladstone devoted half of his message to the issue, yet without directly responding to his father's own particular views. He repeated his appeal to the 'paramount authority of scripture', gently reminded voters that 'fitness' should be 'the condition of emancipation' and touted a 'universal and efficient system of Christian instruction' for West Indian slaves, as a preparation for emancipation. Knowing that some were for immediate emancipation, he emphasised his common ground with them: 'We are agreed, that both the physical and the moral bondage

of the slave are to be abolished. The question is as to the order and the order only: now Scripture attacks the moral evil before the temporal one, and the temporal through the moral one, and I am content with the order Scripture has established.'[78] Wilde continued to attack Gladstone with *A Statement of Facts*, and the abolitionists continued to appeal to the Wesleyan community for 'the immediate extinction of Colonial Slavery'.[79] One man opposed him because he did 'not go far enough about slavery', another because, as he wrote to his father, of '*the situation in which I stood*! We can do without them'.[80] And Gladstone was right. At the declaration on 14 December, he topped the poll: Gladstone 887, fellow Tory Handley 798, and the Whig Wilde 726. What was perceived as wise moderation, even among Wesleyans and others who favoured emancipation, won the day at Newark.

Gladstone's maiden speech, 3 June 1833

Gladstone's maiden speech in Parliament on 3 June 1833 was not a major policy statement, but it was notable for two reasons. It was foremost a spirited defence of his father, who on 14 May had been publicly named by Colonial Secretary Lord Howick as the proprietor of the Vreed-en-Hoop estate in Demerara, where, it was alleged, slaves had been worked to death in proportion to increases in sugar production. Gladstone argued that Howick had erred in both honour and in fact. He should not have made a statement impugning John Gladstone's 'moral character' without notice, particularly as two members of his family sat in the House. Notice would have given Gladstone the opportunity of marshalling his facts, for he believed that the best information was derived from the reports emanating directly from the plantations themselves, along with reports from various travellers who had witnessed management of the estates first-hand. 'What man's character would not be affected if he should see, from the reports from his estate, that while the sugar cultivation was increasing his slaves were dying off in equal proportion, and if, under such circumstances, he should continue the same system of management?' In terms of defending his father's honour, Gladstone received a sympathetic hearing from both friends and opponents, who considered family loyalty as being, in Richard Shannon's phrase, 'on the level of a cardinal virtue'.[81]

The speech also served as an announcement to the House, and to a lesser extent to the public at large, that a formidable young Tory was among them, full of facts, and fire and an uncommon grasp of detail.[82] Not only was Howick's assertion wrong, that the mortality rate on Vreed-en-Hoop was 14 per cent – it was about 2 per cent. Even then, the figures there were not representative. On Mon Repos, in 1825, the estate produced 1,200 pounds of sugar per enslaved worker, which according to Howick's 'own admission' was the 'lowest average for any estate', but in fact when his father had acquired the property in 1828, '250 were immediately added to the gang', which materially altered the calculations. As to punishments on Vreed-en-Hoop, Gladstone had a trump card in his pocket, a letter from the estate, dated 20 April 1833, which indicated that there had been exactly one punishment during the current year. This all demonstrated that 'honourable and respectable branches of his family' which owned West Indian property 'were not inattentive to the wants, the wishes, the feelings, and the interests, of the negro population'.

When the leading Irish MP Daniel O'Connell spoke of 'the blood of the negro' crying 'to God from the ground', Gladstone admitted that if there were genuine 'recklessness of human life' among the planters, this would 'deprive them of the right to appeal to justice'. When Buxton argued that the number of males and females in Demerara was equal, Gladstone had the figures ready to disprove it, and when Buxton boldly challenged the planters – 'Give me the quantity of sugar, and I will give you the decrease of life', Gladstone was happy to apply his 'theorem'. In 'St Vincent

there was an increase of 122 persons in twelve years: in Santa Lucia there was a decrease of 1,962. In Santa Lucia, the produce of sugar had been 6 cwt. per man, so how much ought that in St Vincent's to be? He had not worked out the problem, but the answer' would be 'very different indeed from the fact, which gave no less than 10 cwt. per man'. Gladstone had an answer for every criticism, speaking to specific cases in Demerara, St Vincent, Santa Lucia, Trinidad, Jamaica, and Barbados, each disproving careless allegations against the 'West-Indian interest'.

Even for the historian attempting to understand the nature of a remote line of reasoning, there is something faintly ludicrous in responding to the question of freedom or continued slavery for 800,000 men, women and children with updated information just arrived from one estate and illuminating statistics regarding the number of hogsheads of sugar produced in particular colonies according to mathematical 'theorems'. But if one is unwilling to recognise that all matters in Britain in that period, from slavery to trade to labour, were debated in the context of the concrete and with a deep suspicion of the abstract, it is virtually impossible to understand the terms of the debate, or the views of the abolitionists themselves, making it difficult to fully appreciate the magnitude of their achievement in shepherding the bill through the legislature. Why were so many of them, including Buxton, willing to support gradual emancipation; why were so many of the petitioners willing to qualify their abolitionist appeal; and why were they willing to support compensation for the planters? O'Connell himself appealed to the million and a half signatures that had been gathered on petitions against slavery, and argued that Howick and others had 'proved indubitably' the case of the anti-slavery advocates. The 'way' in which he came at the evidence was the testimony before the committee regarding the condition of the slaves and the testimony of those who wished to disprove it. And in refuting planter claims regarding excessive loss of life among the slaves, O'Connell 'would only state the fact' for every 1,720 persons in the West Indies, there were 65 deaths, while in England the number was only 31 – 'those were the facts which no man would deny'.[83] Howick and O'Connell and Buxton might vigorously disagree with Gladstone about the validity of compensation, but they did not dispute that it was a proper point of discussion which required supporting facts. Appeals to 'liberty as a natural right' were secondary, even among most radicals. For Gladstone, the weighty issue of slavery was only one aspect of the condition of the world, good in God's conception, marred by the sinfulness of humanity but redeemable through Christ.[84]

Conclusion

The question of abolishing slavery in 1833 was not framed to suit the twenty-first century. Even staunch abolitionists could then speak in terms of emancipation in the sugar and coffee colonies 'so as not to destroy them'. Both abolitionists and slaveholders professed religious motives and generally cooperated in philanthropy. Nor were West India merchants 'systematically contested in any moral or social reaction against their involvement in slavery'.[85] Most observers weighed the complexity of the sugar issue, in which commercial, imperial, philanthropic, and religious considerations mingled, 'confounding and crossing each other and confusing legislature and nation lost in a maze of conflicting interests and contending emotions'.[86] Even in considering the possibility of freeing enslaved children, John Gladstone could not imagine continuing sugar cultivation in such circumstances, for there would be too much insecurity of labour at harvest time, and the demand at home would be too great. The *Star*, like young Gladstone, however, believed that education might work. If the children were properly trained, they would 'make free labourers, just like the natives of all countries, if duly recompensed'.[87] Even Buxton

and 'many senior abolitionists' were hostile to 'wild and enthusiastic immediatism'.[88] So there was room for disagreement in British society in 1833, just as in British families, regarding the best way for dealing with the issue of slavery.

John and William Gladstone agreed on many things about slavery. They believed that it was sanctioned by history and justified by the exclusive truth of the Christian gospel. Neither understood slavery to be necessarily sinful, but recognised that it had been supported by legal statute and encouraged by the government, and thus in justice required compensation with the abolition of slavery. Both supported amelioration of the condition of the slaves, consistent with Canning's resolutions of 1823, which included what Taylor calls 'impossibly restrictive caveats': the 'safety of the colonies' and the 'interests of private property'.[89] They both recognised the enervating nature of sugar production, but considered it less brutal than many forms of factory work in England or Ireland, and more conducive to a generally happy life. They admitted that violence against slaves did occur – but saw this as consistent with the 'brutality, murder, plunder and cruelty' present in all societies, including England'.[90] They also believed that those instances were greatly exaggerated, particularly following the Orders in Council of 1831, which had made any slave owner who ill-treated his slaves liable to prosecution.

The question of abolishing slavery in 1833 was not framed to suit the twenty-first century. Even staunch abolitionists could then speak in terms of emancipation in the sugar and coffee colonies 'so as not to destroy them'.

William Gladstone's views were, however, distinctive in a number of respects. First, he was troubled by the dehumanisation of the slave system, rooted in the 'original sin' of the slave trade, and believed it to be a fair claim to emancipation. The planters make them 'slaves of our lust … incompetent to enjoyment they still retain the capacity of suffering', and all for the sake of torrents of wealth flooding into England.[91] He was also committed to an unbiased investigation of emancipation (however contested the possibility of this may now appear), and to a respectful hearing for those of similar mind. When some Demeraran deputies wished Gladstone to hold back petitions for gradual emancipation, he demurred, feeling that it would be 'disrespectful to the petitioners'.[92] Too, he supported compulsory manumission. Whereas his father would not 'attempt to say when a system should terminate which Almighty God in the Divine wisdom of his overruling providence has seen fit to permit', William had a clear idea as to when and how it should be done.[93] Those enslaved should be freed when their moral condition had been raised through Christian education outside the control of the planters. If this proved unsuccessful, he then believed that slavery should be abolished through legislation. John Gladstone vaguely spoke of a distant possibility of emancipation, though he had no idea how it might be brought about. During the Newark campaign, William disagreed with his father regarding 'the difficulties of emancipation' and was already thinking about effective means of preparing for it.[94]

Shortly after his maiden speech and deep into his lobbying work on behalf of the planters of six colonies, Gladstone met William Wilberforce, the leader of the campaign against the slave trade in the 1790s and 1800s, for the first time, introduced by his son. In arranging the meeting, Henry Wilberforce reported that his father wished him to tell Gladstone he knew 'of a very kind proposal wh. he made about me and am particularly obliged to him'.[95] This was a poignant moment, for the great abolitionist had once been friendly with John and Anne Gladstone until their falling out over the Demerara Revolt of 1823 and the founding of the Anti-Slavery Society.[96] Nevertheless,

during their meeting, Wilberforce asked after his father, and 'how is your sweet Mother?' Gladstone listened to the exalted abolitionist pray with his family, and must have reflected on the troubling religious divisions within his own family, particularly over the issue of slavery. It was a touching scene, with the gentle, generous old hero showing undue kindness to an earnest young man just entering public life. Wilberforce was in many respects the kind of public man Gladstone wanted to be – rigorous in self-examination (and a fervent keeper of a diary), serious, generous in spirit and in philanthropy, and optimistic about the future. Four days later, Wilberforce was dead. After attending his funeral on 3 August, Gladstone's thoughts turned 'solemn, particularly about the slaves'.[97] He deeply admired Wilberforce – for his stand against slavery, for his reflective life, for his evangelical Churchmanship – '*almost* purely an individual case' among Tories, he thought.[98] And the sincerity of his feelings for Wilberforce were clearly understood by the family, who consulted him on West Indian questions while preparing the testamentary biography of their father. Upon receiving a copy of *The Life of William Wilberforce* from his sons, Gladstone acknowledged what an example he was for a man in public life, and observed that on the issue of slavery, he had never regarded Wilberforce's conduct with 'any feeling but admiration'.[99] The irony is inescapable. In his mercantile roots and family loyalty, Gladstone was his father's son, but with respect to religious sensibility, personal habit and method, he had far more in common with Wilberforce.

So where did Gladstone stand in 1833? Was he an apologist for slavery, or an abolitionist? He was a first-time member of parliament with little influence, who rarely spoke. He finally rose to prominence in the early 1840s and continued to shape the contours of British politics for more than half a century. It is unnecessary to recount the long list of his achievements, but generally they were on the side of the oppressed, including British workers and prostitutes, Africans trafficked into slavery, the Irish generally and religious minorities in Bulgaria and Armenia. As he gained more practical experience of the world, more and more of his efforts were designed to promote greater freedoms and less violence globally. Henry Manning, who had been both his intimate friend and religious antagonist, reflected on Gladstone's 'boyish … admiration of Canning' during that first Newark election. But thereafter he reckoned that his 'whole career' had been 'for the people, always widening out'.[100]

When Gladstone re-read his speech on the Slavery Abolition Bill 'at some later period', he regretted his early illiberal opinion and was thankful for the 'enormous and blessed change of opinion' on 'the subject of negro slavery'.[101] And by 1878, fully understanding his own complicity in resisting immediate abolition, he named 'the Abolition of Slavery' as the first great historical example where 'popular judgment' was 'more just than that of the higher orders'.[102] What Gladstone had not learned at Oxford, he later observed, was to properly value 'the imperishable and inestimable principles of human liberty'.[103] He regretted his youthful Tory views, and subsequently changed both his opinions and his policies.

While some today hold him morally responsible for slavery, others are wondering why a speech from 1833 is being wielded against him. When Brent Council in 2020 raised the possibility of renaming Gladstone Park due to the family links to slavery, the Bulgarian Ambassador to the United Kingdom reminded the mayors of London and Brent that Gladstone was still a hero in Bulgaria for supporting their 1876 uprising against the 'Ottoman system of slavery'.[104] Gladstone's maiden speech was naïve in some respects, and some of his views unpalatable 200 years on, but his humanity was even then beginning to widen out.

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1 'The Slave Trade and the British Empire: An Audit of Commemoration in Wales', Task and Finish Group Report and Audit, 26 November 2020, pp. 8-9.

2 Thus, when Gladstone's name was removed from a block of student housing at the University of Liverpool in 2022, it was re-named for Dorothy Kuya, a Black, racial activist and long-time member of the Communist Party of Britain. Leading the small resistance was Dr. David Jeffery, senior lecturer in British politics at the University of Liverpool. 'Gladstone should be celebrated, not cancelled' CapX, 11 June 2022, https://capx.co/gladstone-should-be-celebrated-not-cancelled/.

3 Among all these early articles, only one was explicitly devoted to William Gladstone's position. But the title promises rather more than the article delivers, as it caricatures a single speech and misleadingly asserting that he was 'entangled' in his father's plantation enslavement. Jonathan Smith and Paul Lashmar, 'How William Gladstone defended his father's role in slavery', The *Observer*, 19 August 2023, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/aug/19/how-william-gladstone-defended-his-fathers-role-in-slavery#:~:text=In%20later%20life%20Gladstone%20appeared,dying%20off%20in%20large%20numbers'.

4 All references, unless otherwise noted, are from the widely disseminated Associated Press article by Bert Wilkinson, 'Descendants of a British owner of slaves in Guyana apologize as Caribbean nation seeks reparations', ABC News, 25 August 2023, https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/descendants-british-owner-slaves-guyana-apologize-caribbean-seeks-102569708.

5 On 'spit shining their halos', see Esther Krakue on Talk TV, 22 August 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jIrFHoNJ92g&t=254s.

6 "Family of former British PM apologises for links to slavery', *Al Jazeera*, 27 August 2023, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/8/27/family-of-former-british-pm-apologises-for-links-to-slavery

7 'Jamaicans call for Gladstone slavery reparations', BBC News, 26 August 2023, https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/world/2023-08-26-jamaicans-call-for-gladstone-slavery-reparations/.

8 22 June 1894, in John Brooke and Mary Sorensen (eds.), *The Prime Minister's Papers: W.E. Gladstone*, 4 vols. (Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1971–81), 1:39 [hereafter, PMP]. Biographers writing near the time of Gladstone's death recognised how difficult it was 'for those who have been born into the freer air of later years to realise how men of tender conscience and scrupulous honour could ever have defended its policy or apologised for' slavery. . . . 'while everyone can see the evil which is condemned by all, it is but few who perceive it as long as it receives he common sanction'. Alfred F. Robbins, *The Early Public Life of W. E. Gladstone*, (Methuen, 1894), pp. 182–83.

9 William Gladstone to John Gladstone, 5 Aug. 1836, Gladstone's Library, Glynne-Gladstone Papers [hereafter GG] MS 224/174, f. 359; Thomas Fowell Buxton to William Gladstone, 16 September 1837, British Library, Gladstone Papers [hereafter GP] Add. MS 44355, f. 252; Samuel Wilberforce to William Gladstone, 20 April 1838, in A. R. Ashwell, *Life of Samuel Wilberforce*, 2nd ed., 3 vols. (John Murray, 1883), 1:133-35.

10 Michael Taylor, *The Interest: How the British Establishment Resisted the abolition of Slavery* (Vintage, 2020), pp. 89, 248-9.

11 Richard Huzzey, 'Free Trade, Free Labour, and Slave Sugar in Victorian Britain', *Historical Journal* 53 (June 2010), p. 366.

12 Angus Hawkins, *Victorian Political Culture: 'Habits of Heart and Mind'* (Oxford 2015), pp. 39-40.

13 Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* [1944] (London: Penguin Modern Classics, 2022), p. 263.

14 Nicholas Draper, 'The Fall of Slavery: statues, symbols and social contention', *History and Policy*, 10 June 2020, (https://www.historyandpolicy.org/opinion-articles/rss).

15 Rachel Lang, Katie Donington, Keith McClelland, Nicholas Draper, and Catherine Hall, *Legacies of British Slave-Ownership: Colonial Slavery and the Formation of Victorian Britain* (Cambridge University Press, 2014). Draper served as Director of the Centre for the Study of the Legacies of British Slavery (2016-19), with Catherine Hall as

lead investigator. Centre for the Study of the Legacies of British Slavery [hereafter LBS], https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/

16 Richard Huzzey, *Freedom Burning: Anti-Slavery and Empire in Victorian Britain* (Cornell University Press, 2012), p. 212.

17 Padraic X. Scanlan, *Slave Empire: How Slavery Built Modern Britain* (Robinson, 2020), p. 330.

18 Michael Taylor, *The Interest: How the British Establishment Resisted the Abolition of Slavery* (Vintage, 2020), p. 311. See pp. 248-9 for a more direct condemnation of Gladstone.

19 'At the end of the day', writes Jessica Marie Johnson, 'history is actually about social justice. . . . The battle is . . . about how we relate to each other, and it's also about how we are laying the foundation for a new generation of activists'. Julie Scharper, 'Black Beyond Data', Johns Hopkins University HUB, 2 June 2022, https://hub.jhu.edu/2022/06/02/black-beyond-data-jessica-marie-johnson/.

20 Ryan Smith, 'Why Black Twitter is 'On Fire' after Queen Elizabeth II's Death', *Newsweek*, 10 September 2022, https://www.newsweek.com/why-black-twitter-fire-after-queen-elizabeth-second-death-1741410; Call for submissions – Women in Power: Female Agency in the Nineteenth Century, The Victorianist: British Association for Victorian Studies Postgraduates, 26 January 2021, https://royalhistsoc.org/?s=-women+in+power; Trushula Patel, 'Two Separate Societies Divided by Color: Race Colonialism and *Bridgerton*', *Perspectives on History*, 9 August 2022, https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/september-2022/two-separate-societies-divided-by-color-race-colonialism-and-embridgerton/em.

21 'LBS, past and present', 12 June 2020, LBS, https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/project/lbspp1/. On reparative history, see Catherine Hall, 'Doing Reparatory History: Bringing 'race' and slavery home', *Race and Class* 60/1 (2018): 3-21.

22 Matthew Smith, 'Looking Forward', LBS, 12 June 2020, https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/project/lbspp2.

23 See 'Change proposed for Vancouver school named after U. K. Prime Minister with Links to Slavery', 11 June 2020, CBC, https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/change-proposed-for-vancouver-school-named-after-u-k-prime-minister-with-links-to-slavery-1.5608483#:~:-text=The%20Vancouver%20School%20Board%20told,the%20community%20and%20the%20school.%22.

24 Trevor Burnard, 'We must face up to the fact that we're all implicated in the legacy of slavery', *Yorkshire Post*, 12 April 2023, https://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/opinion/columnists/we-must-face-up-to-the-fact-that-were-all-implicated-in-the-legacy-of-slavery-trevor-burnard-4099759.

25 My differences with Quinault in this study relate mainly to interpretation. Among numerous examples, for instance, he reads Gladstone's confession—that his 'leading desire was to benefit the cause of those who are now so sorely beset'—as a reference to the planters, which it certainly could be. I read the antecedent to be those who were enslaved, and I think the evidence points in this direction. But it can work both ways. Quinault, 'Gladstone and Slavery', *The Historical Journal* 52/2 (2009), p. 368.

26 'William Gladstone: University of Liverpool to rename building over slavery links', BBC News, 10 June 2020, https//:www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-merseyside-52990464.

27 Purba Hossain, 'A Matter of Doubt and Uncertainty: John Gladstone and the Post-Slavery Framework of Labour in the British Empire', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 50:1, p. 67.

28 Taylor, *The Interest*, p. 268.

29 The LBS database indicates that Gladstone 'purchased' the Belmont Estate (Demerara) in 1803, but it is not clear that his £1,500 interest was anything more than a financial investment—at 6 per cent. S. G. Checkland, *The Gladstones: A Family Biography* (Cambridge University Press, 1971), pp. 44–45.

30 Hossain, 'A Matter of Doubt and Uncertainty', pp. 52-82; Richard B. Sheridan, 'The Condition of the Slaves on the Sugar Plantations of Sir John Gladstone in the Colony of Demerara, 1812–49', *New West Indian Guide*

76 (2002), no.: ¾, Leiden, pp. 243–69; Trevor Burnard and Kit Candlin, 'Sir John Gladstone and the Debate over the Amelioration of Slavery in the British West Indies in the 1820s', *Journal of British Studies* (October 2018): 760-782; Burnard and John Coffey are currently preparing a study on 'John Gladstone, Demerara and 1823'.

31 In the world of reparatory history, actor and activist Femi Nylander is free to imagine and say on national television that William 'used his political power just before he became Prime Minister to basically assure that his father would get a payment of about 20 million'. William Gladstone had no such power in 1833, and would not become prime minister until 1868. 'Gladstone Family Apologises'. GBNews.com [August 2023]. Available online: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VPSCTaGa7nw&t=44s.

32 On the complicated details of John Gladstone's legacy, see Checkland, *The Gladstones*, pp. 375–6, 414-16.

33 Robbins, *Early Public Life of Gladstone*, pp. 155-56.

34 Reprinted in *Champion*, 2 September 1838, p. 8.

35 John Gladstone to William Gladstone, 4 May 1838, GG MS 638, [nf]. On 30 August 1839, John Gladstone informed his son that he meant to actually 'transfer to us his Demerara properties', but later evidence suggests that this might not have been done before the estates were sold the following year. 30 August 1839, M. R. D. Foote and H . C. G Matthew (eds.), *The Gladstone Diaries and Prime Ministerial Correspondence*, 14 vols. (1968-1994), [hereafter *GD*], 2:623; William Gladstone to his John Gladstone, 31 Dec. 1839, GG 225/126, f. 250

36 29 December 1830, *GD*, 1:336.

37 Gladstone to Anne M. Gladstone, 5 December 1823, GG MS 394, f. 43.

38 Peter J. Jagger, *Gladstone: The Making of a Christian Politician* (Pickwick, 1991), pp. 75-76.

39 See, for instance, his reading of 'Mr. Wilberforce's admirable speech and several more on the Slave Trade in 1791', 15 Oct. 1826, *GD*, 1:79; and his 'long conversation on W. Indies' with his sister Anne, 11 July 1828, *GD*, 1:189.

40 Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, p. 88; E. J. Feuchtwanger, *Gladstone* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975), p. 13; Checkland, *The Gladstones,* p. 262; Eugenio Biagini, *Gladstone* (Macmillan Press, 2000), pp.20-21; Quinault, 'Gladstone and Slavery', *p. 365*.

41 Quinault, 'Gladstone and Slavery', pp. 365-6.

42 Especially Basil Hall, *Travels in North America,* British Library, Gladstone Papers [hereafter GP], Add. MS 44722, f. 149; Alexander Barclay, *A Practical View of the present state of slavery in the West Indies*, GP Add. MS 44793, ff. 30-31; and Frances Trollope, *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, GP Add. MS 44815, f. 35.

43 When friends attempted to tactfully alert the elder Gladstone to his unpopularity in Liverpool following Huskisson's death, he was puzzled: 'I am ignorant of any rational reasonable cause why it should be so'. Checkland, *The Gladstones*, p. 233; 'Beginnings or Incunabula', 8 July 1892, in PMP 1:20.

44 'I remember cherishing a hope', Gladstone wrote late in life, that he would 'bequeath' the church he had built at Seaforth in 1815, and 'that I might live in it'. PMP I:19.

45 8 July 1892, PMP 1:18. 'So wretched a creature am I that now I have gained my wish I dare not act upon it!', Gladstone wrote when his father conceded to allow him to give up Mathematics. 9 November 1830, *GD*, 1:329.

46 William Gladstone to John Neilson Gladstone, 30 December 1830, in D.C. Lathbury, ed. *Correspondence on Church and Religion of William Ewart Gladstone*, 2 vols. (Macmillan, 1910), 2: 226. Tom Gladstone's 'experiment' in independence was crushed by this literal understanding of filial obligation. See Checkland, *The Gladstones*, p. 167.

47 The most notable of these differences involved John Gladstone's support 'for popular representation' in 1831, while William was making his name at Oxford in frenzied opposition, drafting placards, hawking petitions and delivering the Oxford Union speech of 17 May 1831 that made him famous in Oxford and brought him under the notice of the Duke of Newcastle. W. E. Gladstone to Robertson Gladstone, 26 March 1831, GG MS

568. Later that year, John Gladstone opposed 'sweeping measures', but argued that 'certain changes' in the system of representation were desirable. 'The Liverpool Reformers', *London Courier and Evening Gazette*, 24 November 1831, p. 3.

48 Quinault, 'Gladstone and Slavery', pp. 365-6; Burnard and Candlin, 'Sir John Gladstone and the Debate over the Amelioration of Slavery in the British West Indies in the 1820s', p. 782.

49 29 December 1830, 5-8 January 1831, *GD*, 1:336-37.

50 John Gladstone, *A Statement of Facts connected with the Present State of Slavery in the British Sugar and Coffee colonies, and in the United States of America, together with a view of the present situation of the lower classes of the United Kingdom, contained in a letter addressed to the Rt. Hon. Sir Robert Peel, Bart.* (London: Baldwin and Craddock, 1830).

51 One of the Majority [William Gladstone], 18 November 1830, *Evening Standard*, p. 1.

52 F. H. Doyle, *Reminiscences and Opinions*, 5th ed. (Longmans Green, 1886), p. 114.

53 For his notes on the speech, see Add. MS 44649, ff. 29-31.

54 Robert Lowe, listening to Gladstone for the first time in this speech, was nevertheless struck by his mastery of the material and 'carefully prepared scheme' for gradual emancipation. A. Patchett Martin, *Life and Letters of Robert Lowe, Viscount Sherbrooke*, 2 vols. (Longmans, Green, 1893), pp. 16-17.

55 Richard Shannon, *Gladstone I: 1809–1865* (London, 1982), p. 32.

56 Gladstone's account of this period is in *GD*, 1:564-67.

57 Robbins, *Early Public Life*, p. 118-19.

58 This is not unlike the modern, simplifying social critique that places Gladstone in a category 'requiring examination having been highlighted by campaigners', along with Churchill, Columbus, Peel and the fictional 'Jim Crow'. Ironically, the brief assessment of Gladstone's relation to slavery is fair and balanced. 'The Slave Trade and the British Empire: An Audit of Commemoration in Wales', Task and Finish Group Report and Audit, 26 November 2020, pp. 8-9, 25.

59 Robbins, *Early Public Life*, pp. 120-21.

60 Robbins, *Early Public Life*, p. 120.

61 14 August 1832, GD, 1:565.

62 Francis Eggleston to Godfrey, 18 August 1832, (copy), GP Add. MS 44352, f. 257.

63 All references in the following five paragraphs, unless otherwise cited, are from William Gladstone to Godfrey, 23 August 1832, GP Add. MS 44352, ff. 256-57.

64 14 August 1832, *GD,* 1:565.

65 13 February 1833, *GD*, 2:10.

66 Gladstone expands on the scriptural test in a more fiery, anonymous polemic in the *Liverpool Standard*, in which he directly points to Ephesians vi.9 and Colossians iv.1, emphasising that 'no consideration' could 'justify the continuance in known sin for one moment'. [William Gladstone], 'West India Slavery', *Liverpool Standard,* 5 February 1833, p. 176.

67 Bebbington, *Mind of Gladstone*, p. 42.

68 'On the Principle of Government', 31 May–6 June 1830, Add. MS 44721, f. 4.

69 'On the Principle of Government', Add. MS 44721, f. 7

70 'On the Principle of Government', Add. MS 44721, f. 9. This was most likely a nod to William Wilberforce, who had made 'practical Christianity' a household phrase among evangelical churchmen with the popularity of his *A Practical View of Real Christianity* [1797], which Gladstone read in a new edition when it was published in 1829.

71 'On the Principle of Government', GP Add. MS 44721, f. 13.

72 When Peel appointed him colonial under-secretary in late January 1835, Gladstone was viewed as an ideal candidate, one who 'would give confidence to the West Indian body', and comfort to those concerned with the 'religious and moral condition of the black population'. Quinault interprets this as evidence of Gladstone's identification with his father's views. Yet, within a few days of his appointment, in the midst of the transition and all the business on hand, Gladstone began to develop the West Indian education plan that he had once imagined might do so much good, and which little interested his father. 'West Indian Education', 7 April 1835, GP Add. MS 44724, ff. 4-37; see, too, PMP 2:49-50. In general, Quinault is skeptical of sympathetic interpretations of Gladstone's motives. 'Gladstone and Slavery', pp. 368, 369, 381.

73 'Chronology of the Slave Trade, 1585-1775', [ca. 1832–33.], GP Add. MS 44793, f. 140; [Notes for speech of 3 June 1833], GP Add. MS 44649, f. 44. This was in keeping with his broader economic theory that the 'richest and most advanced' nation should have colonies, otherwise 'profits being low at home from the great abundance of capital and consequent competition, speculators will transfer their commercial operations to foreign countries where money is more scarce'. [Aug.] 21 [1832], GP Add. MS 44815e, f. 2.

74 [W. E. Gladstone], 'West India Slavery'. *Liverpool Standard*, 5 February 1833, p. 176. In his maiden speech, he argued that the slave trade 'unquestionably began in crime, in atrocious crime, and in grievous sin'. 3 June 1833, *Mirror of Parliament*, cited in Robbins, *Early Public Life,* p. 176.

75 [untitled mem.] GP Add. MS 44815, f. 67.

76 William Gladstone to John Gladstone, 27 September 1832, GG MS 223/12, ff. 29-30.

77 On the electoral challenges of the family name, see Douglas Kanter, 'Was All Irish Politics Local? The Portarlington Election of 1832 and the Structure of Politics in 19th-Century Ireland, *Parliamentary History* 33/3 (2014), pp. 448-9.

78 'To the Worthy and Independent Electors of the Borough of Newark', 9 October 1832, GP Add. MS 44722, ff. 59-64

79 Leonard Posnett, Joseph T. Milner, 'Slavery', 24 November 1832, GP Add. MS 44523.

80 William Gladstone to John Gladstone, 8 October 1832, GG MS 223/14, f. 35.

81 Shannon, *Gladstone I: 1809-1865*, pp. 45–46. On reception of Gladstone's speech, see, too, Robbins, *Early Public Life*, pp. 177–80. The distinction between Gladstone's loyalty toward his father, and the readiness of Charles Gladstone to dismiss him out of hand as 'vile. . . greedy and domineering', are striking and reflective of the reparatory turn in examining the past. Jonathan Smith and Paul Lashmar, "William Gladstone: family of former British PM to apologise for links to slavery', The *Observer*, 19 August 2023, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/aug/19/william-gladstone-family-of-former-british-pm-to-apologise-for-links-to-slavery.

82 3 June 1833, Hansard, *Parl. Debs* (series 3) vol. 18, cc. 330–37.

83 3 June 1833, Hansard, *Parl. Debs* (series 3) vol. 18, cc. 308–17.

84 Because this orthodox Christian view is unpalatable to many scholars, they fail to countenance its sense of reality or motive power among Christians in the early nineteenth century. This applied across the spectrum of men and women involved in the debate over abolition.

85 Draper, *Price of Emancipation,* pp. 254, 268; Taylor, *The Interest*, p. 86.

86 Benjamin Disraeli, *Lord George Bentinck: A Political Biography*, 4th ed., rev. (Colburn and Co, 1852), p. 530.

87 [Anonymous rev. of John Gladstone, *A Statement of Facts, connected with the Present State of Slavery in the British Sugar and Coffee Colonies*], 16 February 1831, *The Star* [np].

88 Taylor, *The Interest*, p. 189.

89 Taylor, *The Interest*, pp. 63-4.

90 Upon reading Alexander Barclay's admission that it could not be denied that 'concubinage was customary in the West Indies', William added prostitution to the common toll of sin – the pollution of London has no parallel in the West Indies!' Barclay, *A Practical View of the present state of slavery in the West Indies*, GP Add. MS 44793, ff. 30-31.

91 [untitled memorandum], GP Add. MS 44821.d., f. 4. On 'original sin', William Gladstone to J.N. Gladstone, 10 November 1834, Huntington Library, Gladstone Papers, GLA 323.

92 William Gladstone to John Gladstone, 29 April 1833, GG 223/43, f. 82.

93 John Gladstone, *A Statement of Facts connected with the Present State of Slavery in the British Sugar and Coffee Colonies, and in the United States of America, together with a view of the present situation of the lower classes of the United Kingdom, contained in a letter addressed to the Rt. Hon. Sir Robert Peel, Bart.* (London: Baldwin and Craddock, 1830).

94 William Gladstone to Helen Gladstone, 18 September 1832, cited in Checkland, *The Gladstones*, p. 259.

95 H. W. Wilberforce to Gladstone, 22 July 1833, GP Add. MS 44353, f. 200.

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William Gladstone and the Question of Slavery, 1832–33
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96 John Gladstone publicly labelled Wilberforce a 'well-meaning but mistaken man', while Wilberforce privately complained of opposition from the 'Liverpool Gladstone Connection'. John Gladstone, Letter to the *Liverpool Courier*, 5 November 1823, in *Correspondence between John Gladstone and James Cropper on the Present State of Slavery in the British West Indies and in the United States of America* (West India Association, 1824), p. 17; [9 October 1827], Wilberforce Diary, Wilberforce Diaries Project, https://wilberforcediariesproject.com/. My thanks to Professor John Coffey for this reference.

97 3 July 1833, *GD,* 2:52.

98 William Gladstone to Andrew Fairbairn, 15 October 1893, in Lathbury, ed. *Correspondence on Church and Religion*, 2:333.

99 William Gladstone to Samuel Wilberforce, 25 April 1838, Bodleian Library, MSS Wilberforce d. 35, ff. 7b-8b.

100 Henry Manning, 13 December 1882, in Peter C. Erb, *The Correspondence of Henry Edward Manning and William Ewart Gladstone*, 4 vols. (Oxford University Press, 2013), 4:4.

101 William Gladstone, '1833–4 in the Old House of Commons', 3 June 1897, in PMP, 1:54–55. Gladstone never imagined that he was 'opposing' emancipation. See PMP, 1:41.

102 William Gladstone, 'Last Words on the County Franchise' [1878], reprinted in *Gleanings of Past Years*, 7 vols. (John Murray, 1879), 1:178.

103 Cited in Bebbington, *Mind of Gladstone,* p. 259.

104 Polya Stancheva and Diana Dukovska, 'Bulgarian Ambassador Asks London Mayor to Rethink Renaming of Gladstone Park', 21 April 2022, Bulgarian News Agency, https://www.bta.bg/en/news/bulgaria/255087-bulgarian-ambassador-in-london-asks-london-mayor-to-rethink-renaming-of-gladston