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Review article:* Full circle: the Manning–Gladstone correspondence

In his famous portrayal of the eminent Victorian Henry Manning, Lytton Strachey commented thus: 'It was as if the Fates had laid a wager that they would daunt him; and in the end they lost their bet.'[1] As one of the high-profile British converts to Roman Catholicism (1851), archbishop of Westminster (1865), cardinal (1875) and candidate for the papacy (1878), Manning was one of the most formidable and influential churchmen of his day. Throughout his adult life, he shared an intellectual, respectful and fractious friendship with William Gladstone who, as Liberal party leader and four-time British prime minister (1868–74, 1880–5, 1886, 1892–4), was the most successful and prolific politician of his generation. The relationship between Manning and Gladstone is significant because in his political career the latter paid great attention to the former. Throughout, Gladstone was fascinated by religious polemics,[2] while his views on constitutional government were shaped very much by his own religious convictions.[3]

The content of the Manning–Gladstone correspondence spans almost sixty years and is divided into three main phases. It provides insight into the opinions of two of the most prominent public figures of the Victorian era regarding such contentious issues as the relationship between church and state in Great Britain, Ireland, and Italy, religious doctrine in the Anglican and Catholic churches, the bearing of religious devotion on civil allegiance, and the functions of faith and reason within nineteenth-century society. As their friendship was carried out mostly through written letters, it has left a rich and voluminous legacy. Peter Erb has done an excellent job of editing this correspondence into this attractive, if very traditionally presented, four-volume compilation. Erb has also included a very detailed survey of the two men's relationship by way of introduction. Manning and Gladstone met at Oxford University during the early 1830s, where both considered pursuing careers in religion and politics before each settling

*The correspondence of Henry Edward Manning and William Ewart Gladstone: the complete correspondence, 1833–1891. Edited by Peter C. Erb. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2013. Vol. I, 1833–1844, cxx, 485 pp. Vol. II, 1844–1853, xii, 557 pp. Vol. III, 1861–1875, xii, 442 pp. Vol. IV, 1882–1891, xii, 550 pp. £320, four vols.

[1] Lytton Strachey, *Cornerstone: portraits of four eminent Victorians* (Tucson, AZ, 2009 [original version 1918]), p. 2.

[2] See Agatha Ramm, 'Gladstone's religion', in *Historical Journal*, xxviii, no. 2 (June, 1985), pp 327–40.

[3] John-Paul McCarthy, 'The religious dimension in Gladstone's Home Rule analysis' in Mary E. Daly and K. Theodore Hoppen (eds), *Gladstone: Ireland and beyond*, (Dublin, 2011), pp 157–68.

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respectively upon divergent paths. Their earlier correspondence (vols i and ii) reveals the profound admiration and respect they felt for one another, their mutual fascination with theology, and their common sympathy with the Oxford Movement's view of the Church of England as a religious institution happily untainted by Roman 'corruption' but unfortunately enslaved by the secular power of the state (pp xvii–xxix). However, there is also evidence of the different opinions which would subsequently lead to their very public disputes of 1851 and 1875, mainly in the form of disagreement over the merits of the established position of the Anglican church within the British state. As early as 1835 Manning came out in favour of disestablishment of the Church of England, arguing that it would resolve their 'contrariety of interests', while Gladstone defended the historic tie as a cornerstone of the British state (p. xxxi). Nonetheless, their sharing of literature and ideas continued harmoniously enough until Manning offended Gladstone's staunchly Protestant sensibilities by gravitating towards the initially 'liberal' papacy of Pope Pius IX in 1846. His eventual reception into the Roman Catholic Church in 1851 came in protest at the Gorham judgment's threat to subordinate the functions of the Church of England to the secular power of the state, and precipitated the first break in their friendship (p. lxxi). Manning's conversion occurred as Gladstone was moving swiftly in the opposite direction. After his famous visit to Naples in 1850, Gladstone took the leading role in promoting sympathy for the Italian question in Britain by publicly condemning the reactionary Bourbon government in southern Italy as 'the negation of God erected into a system of government'.[4] The unification of Italy, supported enthusiastically by British governments in which Gladstone served, would ultimately destroy the temporal power of the pope. Indeed, British policy regarding the unification of Italy has been seen as motivated by anti-Catholicism,[5] and the Anglo–Italian Commercial Treaty of 1863 as an attempt to promote Protestantism as well as free trade.[6] It is hardly surprising that Manning and Gladstone had nothing to do with each other for ten years, but it is perhaps odd that the severance was made by Gladstone rather than Manning.

There were, of course, many significant parallels between the courses of Irish and Italian nationalism,[7] and the British government found itself caught in an awkward position between resisting one while encouraging the other. For historians of Ireland, and of Italy, and of the links between the two, the most compelling section of this collection is surely that covering the renewed acquaintance of Manning and Gladstone between their reunion in 1861 and their second split in 1875 (vol. iii). This volume covers the period in which the two men scaled the heights of their respective careers. Manning's consecration as archbishop of Westminster in 1865 made his the leading voice of Roman Catholicism in the British Isles, and caused disquiet between the prime

[4] William Ewart Gladstone, *Two letters to the earl of Aberdeen on the state prosecutions of the Neapolitan government* (London 1851).

[5] C. T. McIntire, *England against the papacy 1858–1861: Tories, Liberals, and the overthrow of papal temporal power during the Italian Risorgimento* (Cambridge, 1983).

[6] Danilo Raponi, 'An ''Anti-Catholicism of free trade?'' Religion and the Anglo–Italian negotiations of 1863' in *European History Quarterly*, xxxix, no. 4 (Oct. 2009), pp 633–52.

[7] Colin Barr, Michelle Finelli and Anne O'Connor, *Nation/Nazione: Irish nationalism and the Italian Risorgimento* (Dublin, 2014).

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minister, Viscount Palmerston, and his foreign secretary, Earl Russell.[8] Gladstone's own promotion to prime minister in 1868 marked the beginning of his long and futile campaign to resolve the Irish question, in which capacity he could scarcely afford to ignore Catholic opinion. Relations between Catholics and Protestants in Britain had become increasingly fractious, as the need to escape the Famine of the 1840s combined with economic opportunities to precipitate an influx of Irish migrants to British cities. Many unsympathetic Protestants felt inclined to apply common stereotypes to both the Irish and the Italians. Both races were seen by Britain, which reached the zenith of its global power during the 1860s, as inferior, backward, indolent, superstitious, inclined towards drunkenness, violence and criminality, and resistant to political, technological and economic progress. The common denominator between them was their devotion to the Roman Catholic Church.[9] The wave of Irish immigration combined with Pope Pius IX's re-establishment of the Catholic episcopal hierarchy in England in 1850 to make Protestantism feel threatened,[10] while the potential for Italian affairs to increase tensions between Catholicism and Protestantism in Britain was nowhere more obvious than in London's Hyde Park in 1862, when English supporters of Garibaldi clashed with Irish supporters of the pope.[11] Consequently Manning and Gladstone found themselves existing as two friends who leant in completely opposite directions within the eye of this storm.

Ironically, however, it was the very subject of the unification of Italy and its implications for the temporal power of the papacy which brought about the reconciliation of 1861. Manning maintained that the temporal power was 'the moral and actual cohesive of Europe', 'the basis for the Christian order of the world', and 'the only essential preserve of order against revolution', and regarded the Italian crisis as a critical moment for the future of Christianity (iii, 6). Gladstone, by contrast, enthusiastically supported Italian unification and fervently advocated the destruction of the temporal power, even if he did admit that the pope needed somehow to retain his spiritual and civil independence. As prime minister at the time of the Italian occupation of Rome in 1870, Gladstone had to walk a tightrope between what Manning condemned as 'a high crime against the whole of Christendom' and 'a rejection of God'[12] and his own government's priority of seeking to secure the peaceful completion and consolidation of Italian unification in the face of opposition from Catholic opinion in Britain, Ireland and much of the rest of Europe.[13]

[8] Russell to Palmerston, 15 May 1865 (University of Southampton, Broadlands papers, PP/GC/RU/886-911).

[9] R. Romani, 'British Views on Irish national character, 1800–1846: an intellectual history'in *History of European Ideas*, xxiii (1997), pp 193–219.

[10] E. J. Evans, *The forging of the modern state: early industrial Britain 1783–1870* (London & New York, 1983), pp 300–7.

[11] Sheridan Gilley, 'The Garibaldi riots of 1862'in *Historical Journal*, xvi, no. 4 (Dec., 1973), pp 697–732.

[12] E. R. Norman, 'Cardinal Manning and the temporal power' in Derek Beales and Geoffrey Best (eds), *History, society and the churches: essays in honour of Owen Chadwick* (Cambridge, 1985), p. 255.

[13] Owain Wright, 'British foreign policy and the Italian occupation of Rome, 1870' in *International History Review*, xxxiv, no. 1 (Mar., 2012), pp 161–76.

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It is remarkable, and a testimony to the intellectual bond and mutual respect between them that Manning and Gladstone could re-establish their friendship while holding such fervent differences. Whereas Italy complicated their relationship, Ireland seems to have made it easier, for it was in the field of the Irish question that they found much common ground. Gladstone's belief that Ireland reminded Britain 'that she was answerable to a higher power for her misdeeds'[14] led Gladstone to dedicate his political ascendency towards her pacification. He found support from Manning for his government's disestablishment of the Protestant Church of Ireland in 1869, and they maintained a lively correspondence over his subsequent land and university reforms. However, Gladstone's removal from office in 1874 and their disagreement over the Disraeli government's public worship bill precipitated a second faltering of their friendship, culminating in their very public dispute, carried on mostly in the press during 1875, on the Vatican decrees and their implications regarding the civil allegiance of Roman Catholics.[15] Again, the severance was made by Gladstone rather than Manning.

There followed another ten-year hiatus in the Manning–Gladstone relationship before the two men were ultimately reconciled into a third and final phase (vol. iv), which commenced with Gladstone's determination to advocate the granting of Home Rule to Ireland in 1885 and his futile attempt to implement it in 1886. Gladstone might have regarded granting the Irish responsibility for their own affairs as a means of undermining the influence of Catholic priests just as much as nationalists and terrorists,[16] but his Irish policy nonetheless won renewed support from Manning. Indeed, the cardinal penned an appropriate epitaph to their relationship in 1887, when he observed that they had begun their careers 'of one mind' regarding the defence of the interests of the Anglican Church and now finished it by being 'again of one mind and one purpose' regarding Home Rule (iv, 43). In a sense, then, the complex and profound friendship of these two eminent Victorians had turned full circle.

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[14] D. George Boyce, 'Gladstone and Ireland', in Peter J. Jagger (ed.) *Gladstone*, (London, 1998), pp 105–22 at pp 106–7.

[15] See V. A. McClelland, 'Gladstone and Manning: a question of authority' in Peter J. Jagger, (ed.) *Gladstone, politics and religion*, (London, 1985), pp 148–70.

[16] Jonathan Parry, *The rise and fall of liberal government in Victorian Britain* (New Haven & London, 1993), pp 295–6.

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