

## **The Rhetoric of Moral Justice and Political Expedient: William Ewart Gladstone in His Early Years of Training and Performances of Speech-Making**

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### **0. Introduction**

March 2019 marks the end of my full professorship at Nagoya University of Foreign Studies (NUFS), but luckily, I was allowed to teach two subjects for another year from April 2019 to January 2020: Graduation Project; Politics and Economy in English-speaking Countries. And in the second subject, my students and I read an English article on Hong Kong from *The Economist* dated June 15, 2019. It was about the biggest pro-democracy rally since Hong Kong was handed back to China in 1997.

According to *Wikipedia*, Hong Kong became a colony of the British Empire after the Qing Empire ceded Hong Kong Island at the end of the First Opium War in 1842. The colony expanded to the Kowloon Peninsula in 1860 after the Second Opium War, and was further extended when Britain obtained a 99-year lease of the New Territories in 1898. I remember learning about the Opium War in a World History class, but wondered if there was any opposition in the British House of Commons to the decision to start the First Opium War.

There was much opposition indeed, especially among Tory and liberal politicians. William Ewart Gladstone was one of those politicians who headed

the anti-war faction. In his book titled *Igirisushi Jyukko* (2013, p.211, ll.8–12), Kazuhiko Kondo cited part of Gladstone’s long speech made on April 8, 1840:

“...although the Chinese were undoubtedly guilty of much absurd phraseology, of no little ostentatious pride, and of some excess, justice, in my opinion, is with them, and, that whilst they, the Pagans, and semi-civilized barbarians, have it, we, the enlightened and civilized Christians, are pursuing objects at variance both with justice, and with religion...”

*(Hansard’s British Parliamentary Debates)*

After three days of debates, the vote was taken on Sir James Graham’s motion on 9 April 1840, which was defeated by a majority of only 9 votes (262 votes for vs 271 votes against). Gladstone could not persuade a majority of politicians so that Britain would deter the government from proceeding with the war and stop the British warships already on their way to China, but the fact that, at such a critical time, he made an anti-war speech in his early 30s, did inspire me to study him and his speeches, including this anti-war speech.

Back in 1974, after I quit the job of a sales promoter for a company of electric works and was about to reenter a university, my alma mater<sup>1</sup>, I was baptized, becoming a Christian. The first thing I began to do on a regular basis was to read the Bible and such a devotional book as *Streams in the desert*. Whenever I found something important, I underlined a verse or verses including that part. One such part in the Bible was Lamentations 3:25, 26, which go as follows:

The Lord is good unto them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeketh Him.  
It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the  
salvation of the Lord (King James).

In *Streams in the desert Vol. II* for January 27, Mrs. Charles E. Cowman

referred to William Gladstone like this: It was the hours Gladstone spent alone with God in prayer that made him the wise and safe leader of England. Honestly speaking, I was happy about Mrs. Cowman's comment on Gladstone as a fellow Christian, but what does "the wise and safe leader of England" mean? I would like to know more about his Christian mission in British politics.

Before reentering my alma mater, I studied business administration, but after reentrance, I majored in speech communication, especially rhetorical criticism. One day, when I talked with my supervisor, I noticed there were many "great speakers" in the United States of America that scholars of this field had chosen for their academic studies, but there were few in Britain. Now that William Gladstone is found one of the greatest statesmen in Britain, I have decided to choose him for my own subject in rhetorical criticism, but this paper will focus on his early years of training and performances in speech-making because he made too many speeches in his long political career: he entered Parliament at age 23, first held a cabinet post at 34, delivered his last speech as a member of Parliament when he was 84 and served as Prime Minister four times.

## **1. Hong Kong in 1982 and 2019**

### **1.1 A Personal Experience in Hong Kong**

In the summer of 1982, when I was returning to Japan from a 1-year study at Manchester University in England<sup>2</sup>, my wife and I stayed for a short period of time in Hong Kong, where I met a classmate of Manchester University. One day, when we ate dinner together at a restaurant, I told my classmate and her husband about Hong Kong which I thought was an ideal place for the learning of English, for young people in Hong Kong could learn everything in English—from literature to mathematics and to sciences. The friend's husband, however, looked puzzled at my opinion. To him, Chinese is his mother tongue, and he said he could not be happy as long as he had to express himself in English, not Chinese but the language of the conqueror. How disgusting it is not to learn anything

in one's mother tongue! Never had I thought of the distress of being deprived of one's rights to the use of one's own mother tongue. All I could think of as a teacher of English as a foreign language at that time was to provide my students with ample opportunities to use English. This personal experience changed my idea of language teaching totally, and I began to think of Hong Kong as part of China.

## **1.2 Hong Kong in “One Country, Two Systems”**

According to the June 15th article of *The Economist*, however, “Hundreds of thousands took to the streets in what may have been the biggest demonstration since Hong Kong was handed back to China in 1997. Most of them were young—too young to be nostalgic about British rule.” Probably the fathers and mothers of those young demonstrators must have wanted their territory to be returned to their homeland—China, but now, with that homeland's control tighter, more Hong Kongers are beginning to express their unhappiness at Beijing's heavy hand.

Given my personal experience and what is happening in Hong Kong, I cannot help asking myself if that 99-year British rule was really bad to Chinese people. Under the current law, a Hong Kong resident, even if he murdered his girlfriend in Taiwan, could not be sent back there for trial. Hong Kong's government proposed to allow the extradition of suspects to Taiwan—and to any country with which there is no extradition agreement, including the Chinese mainland.

The colonial-era drafters of Hong Kong's current law excluded the mainland from extradition because its courts could not be trusted to deliver impartial justice. With the threat of extradition, anyone in Hong Kong becomes subject to the vagaries of the Chinese legal system, in which the rule of law ranks below the rule of the Communist Party. Dissidents taking on Beijing may be sent to face harsh treatment in the Chinese courts.

Hong Kong people have enjoyed freedom and democracy for a long time

since the Hong Kong Island was ceded by Britain, while the mainland of China has been ruled by the Communist Party and the freedom and democracy of people there have been largely restricted since it defeated the Nationalist Party on October 1, 1949. In what direction will China and Hong Kong go? Will the “one country and two systems” be maintained although the head of the Communist Party pledged to do so on October 1, 2019<sup>3</sup>? In this connection, it must be helpful to consider what idea Gladstone had when he was first in charge of British colonies in 1835.

## 2. Rhetorical Criticism

As was earlier mentioned, I began to study rhetorical criticism after I came back to my alma mater. Luckily, in collaboration with another scholar of speech communication, my supervisor published a book titled *Speech Criticism* (Kawashima and Okabe, 1978) and in this book, the supervisor pointed out the most important condition for a healthy development of speech communication as follows:

Speech functions only when free speech is possible without any restraints. That is, a society where persuasion aimed at by any rhetorical act can be effective is nothing but one where freedom of speech and thought is guaranteed and constantly upheld under a democratic political system. In a totalitarian society, on the other hand, an absolute policy or course of action (such as one its people are made by its rulers to believe in) is communicated unilaterally from the ruler to those under him. In such a society, therefore, no freedom is given to consider any possible alternative and there is no rationale for any speech whose main purpose is persuasion (*Ibid.*, pp.53, 54, ll.24–6, translated by the author).

According to the June 15th *Economist* article, the freedom of speech and

thought for Hong Kongers seem to be gradually restricted by mainland China, so it may be meaningful to know what idea of colonialism was upheld in Britain behind the colonial-era drafters of Hong Kong's current law.

## **2.1 Speech Criticism with Herbert Wichelns**

In *Speech Criticism*, Okabe divided a study of speech criticism into two: One study was established in 1925 by Herbert Wichelns, professor of Rhetoric at Cornell University, and the other happened after Wichelns. Since Wichelns based his theory of speech criticism on the theory of rhetoric originating in that of ancient Rome and Greece, especially that of Aristotle, Wichelns and his followers are called “neo-Aristotelianists,” and their theory can be summarized as follows:

Speech criticism is an act of a critic to judge whether a speaker can be effective or persuasive in meeting his or her purpose, in an interaction between such extrinsic factors as the speaker himself or herself, his or her audience, an occasion on which he or she makes a speech, and the purpose of that speech and such intrinsic factors as invention, disposition, style, memory and delivery, through an analysis of these two factors (*Ibid.*, p.58, ll. 4–8, translated by the author).

If I were asked to explain in our contemporary society, especially in Japan, what Wichelns is trying to say, I would be ready to mention an English speech contest without any hesitation. As I have participated in many speech contests as a judge, I can compare an act of a critic to the job of a judge in an English speech contest. Before a speech contest, judges are expected to ask themselves in reading each speech manuscript what the purpose of a speech is (invention) and how a speech-maker is trying to meet his or her purpose (disposition). More specifically, what topic does the speaker deal with? Does the title of his or her

speech match what is to be discussed in the speech? (Invention). What arguments does he or she develop in his or her main idea? How does he or she dispose his arguments to make his or her speech as effective as possible? (disposition). What words or phrases does he or she use and where does he or she arrange them to maximize such effectiveness? (Style). And in the speech contest, the judge will listen to each speaker to examine how perfectly the speaker has memorized his or her speech (memory), how eloquently the speaker has delivered his or her speech (delivery).

In many contests of English speeches in Japan, however, it is difficult, or almost impossible to judge how well the speech meets its purpose, how much the speaker persuades his or her audience, or how suitable the speaker and his or her speech is to a particular occasion, for the ultimate goal of each speech contest is to win the contest and a prize. That is all. All the intrinsic factors can be compared to all-out efforts to gain the highest mark in an evaluation sheet. What an unnatural environment a speech contest is! In other words, Wichelns' theory of rhetoric is prescriptive.

## **2.2 Speech Criticism after Wichelns (A.W.)**

Wichelns' influence on speech criticism was so great that such an abbreviation as A.W. was coined. Just as we know in the Christian calendar B.C. is the abbreviation of "Before Christ" and that A.D. is the one of "Anno Domini," so A.W. was used in the field of speech communication as "After Wichelns." His theory of rhetoric is still being adopted by many organizers of speech contests in Japan, but in the United States of America, a great change began to appear in 1965, when Edwin Black published *Rhetorical Criticism: A Study in Method*.

Black said at the end of his book like this:

"Rather than attempt to gauge the effects of the single discourse on its immediate audience, which would be the tendency of the neo-Aristotelian

critic, we have instead sought to discern the effects of the whole process of argument, and we have in consequence seen these effects as sequential: different at different stages of the argumentative process. We have assumed the single discourse to be part of a historic process of argument, one that, in the case of some subjects, has never really ended, but has instead passed into new phases (1965, p.177, ll.7–15).

In short, Black suggests we should make a rhetorical analysis from many different angles. Rhetorical criticism today requires critics to try to make a descriptive comment on each speech as well as an evaluative one they did in the past, for contemporary society is full of diverse racial, cultural and linguistic elements.

Some readers of this paper may have already noticed that this author is talking about a great change in rhetorical criticism in the 20th century, but the main topic of this paper is William Gladstone who lived in England in the 19th century. How anachronistic! It is true Black and Gladstone lived in different centuries, but it must be remembered that what Black was aware of in his time already existed in Britain even in the 19th century.

In his book *Saiko no Gikaijin Gladstone* (Onabe, 2018, pp.49–50), Teruhiko Onabe asked his readers what is common among the three figures of British history: Gladstone, a son of a slave owner, Disraeli, a son of a Jewish and Victoria, a queen, and he pointed out that all of them have one thing in common: They are all non-British! Gladstone is Scottish by birth, although he became a prime minister of Britain. Disraeli, his political rival and a favorite of Queen Victoria, is Jewish, and Queen Victoria is a British queen of German blood. Onabe seems to have been impressed by the very fact that Britain is inclusive and tolerant enough to have developed such “non-British people” into representative British leaders.



### 3. William Gladstone in His Training as a Speaker

In English history, how was William Gladstone treated? Sir George Clark regarded Gladstone as a first-rate politician in his *English history—A Survey—* (Clark, 1971, p.459, ll.26–40) and referred to the years from 1868 to 1880 as a period of time with “a character of their own in the political education of the British peoples,” pointing out that the “most influential medium of expression was speech-making, in parliament or, increasingly, on public platforms, and that this “remained so until the coming of broadcasting and television.” Clark went on to say, “The orator’s power did not depend only on his performance: like a preacher or an entertainer he gained from conforming to the idea of his personality which his hearers brought with them. According to this historian, “Gladstone was an expert in finance and in departmental management” and “Gladstone believed instinctively in religion and in freedom.” William Gladstone is now considered one of the greatest speakers in British politics when the most influential medium of expression was speech-making. How did he become such a great orator?

#### 3.1 “Ladies and Gentlemen” at the Age of Two

According to H.C.G. Matthew (1997, pp.3–9), William Ewart Gladstone was born on 29 December 1809 in Rodney Street, Liverpool, as the fifth child and fourth son of John and Anne Gladstone. His grandfather, Thomas Gladstones, was a corn dealer in Edinburgh and Leith, the family having moved to the capital from the village of Biggar in the Scottish Borders. John Gladstone, his father, was born in Leith in 1764, and soon saw the limitations of east coast trade, and moved west. Ignoring the difficulties of the French and American wars<sup>4</sup>, and turning those difficulties to advantage by surefooted anticipation of shortages, John assembled a huge fortune, travelling widely in North America and the Baltic in pursuit of purchases. John Gladstone was a self-made man. His career epitomized the entrepreneurial drive which made British commerce the dominant

influence in world trade in the first half of the nineteenth century.

John Gladstone attempted to use his money politically, sitting in the Commons from 1818 to 1827. He was one of those representatives of the new commercial class in the north of England who paid their way into the unreformed House of Commons. He was the sort of man who demonstrated that the Constitution needed no reform since it was capable of representing new interests in an old system. His desire for continuing social stability, his distrust of speculative thought, and his respect for established religion, made him a natural supporter of the administration of Lord Liverpool in the 1820s, and especially of the style of modest fiscal and administrative reform pursued by George Canning, Foreign Secretary for Liverpool.

Of Lowland Scottish Presbyterian stock, John Gladstone made his way from Leith to Liverpool, from Whig to Tory, and from the Church of Scotland to the Church of England, dropping the 's' at the end of his name on the way<sup>5</sup>. He also began to translate his money into social prestige through land, buying the Seaforth estate by Sefton then in the countryside outside Liverpool, and, in 1830, when his six children's education was nearing completion, buying the house and estate of Fasque, in the Mearns between Aberdeen and Montrose on the east coast of Scotland.

The atmosphere of the home of the Gladstones was moderately evangelical, with the evangelicals' strong emphasis on the reading of the Bible and on personal duty, family obligation, sin and atonement. William Gladstone was baptized an Anglican. William's mother believed that he had been 'truly converted to God' when he was about ten. Strong paternalism was a characteristic of evangelical families, and in the Gladstones' case this was reinforced by the contrast of the rude vigour of the tall, dark-suited husband with the sickliness of the mother and her elder daughter.

From the start, William Gladstone was familiar with the great, and ready to argue with them. One of his earliest memories was, at the age of two, being taken

into the dining-room of his father's house when George Canning was a guest. Dressed in a red frock, he was set up on one of the chairs, standing, and directed to say to the company: "Ladies and gentlemen". As a boy in Liverpool he was acquainted with the great political figures of the town, especially those in Tory circles, and on several occasions the family spent the parliamentary sessions in London. John Gladstone intended that as many of his sons as possible should consolidate this acquaintance with the political world, and so he sent them to Eton and to Christ Church, Oxford; their education would thus be that of George Canning.

### **3.2 "Is it morally just or politically expedient...?"**

As a biographer of William Gladstone, H.C.G. Matthew gave a detailed description of what happened to young Gladstone at Eton (1997, pp.9–16), but this section focuses on his training process as a public speaker. John Gladstone sent William to Eton as the first step toward his entry into the political world because he respected George Canning so much that he wanted his son to follow suit. William Gladstone went to Eton at the age of eleven and stayed there for six years and three months from September 1821 to December 1827.

Attending Eton was a confirmation of the Gladstones' arrival in the upper echelon of British society and was also the means of penetration to its centre, the House of Commons, and the London professions. The curious structure of Eton, with its College and its Oppidants, its self-employed housemasters, its private tutors and its Dames, was a microcosm of the British ruling elite.

In 1825, William Gladstone was elected to the Eton Society, founded in 1811 by Charles Fox Townshend to give the boys an organization in which intellectual discussion and debate could develop. The success of the society meant that by Gladstone's day membership was one of the chief glittering prizes which the school had to offer. Members read papers for discussion, and debated motions on aesthetic and political topics; 'Our Society men are great politicians in a small

way'. Many of the motions involving Britain were on Reformation or Civil War topics, and the rest was mainly on classical issues. The terms in which these youths learned to discuss politics were those of the Greek-Roman period. The atmosphere within the Society was both friendly and competitive, with a special emphasis on prowess of presentation of argument.

Gladstone read widely at school, ranging far outside the required texts. He began his life-long practice of noting all his reading (except newspapers) in his daily journal entry. He read much modern British history—Clarendon, Burnet, Coxe's *Walpole*, Tomline's *Pitt*—he read most of the plays of Shakespeare, and he read Scott. Gladstone can hardly have been unaffected by the central theme of Scott's Scottish novels, how society progresses in an irreversible direction and how those individuals who fail to progress with it, while particularly attractive and fascinating, are ultimately quaint. Important parts of Gladstone's schoolboy were prompted by the topics chosen for debates in the Eton Society (also known as 'Pop'). Debating preparation launched him on Milton, Clarendon, and Hume. In each case he continued his reading after the context of the debate and its subsequent discussions had passed.

Privately in the manner of his family, Gladstone read the Bible daily and extensively on Sundays, sometimes in Greek; in his last year he read through the Gospels using the High-Church commentary by D'Oyly and Mant. He was also an avid sermon-reader. Some of his choices—the sermons of the moderate Evangelical J.B. Sumner and the sermons and discourses of Thomas Chalmers, Scottish Evangelical and a family friend—were predictable. But he also made a prolonged study of the sermons of the moderate Presbyterian Hugh Blair, a prominent figure of the Scottish Enlightenment and a friend of Adam Smith and David Hume.

Gladstone and his cleverest contemporaries at Eton were ardent politicians, studying parliamentary debates, writing about them to each other in the holidays, and even keeping such division lists as they could get hold of. Gladstone began

early to use his tongue. He spoke frequently in ‘Pop,’ the school debating society, where current politics were forbidden, although historical subjects and abstract questions afforded ample scope for eloquence.

Gladstone’s first speech was delivered on October 29, 1825, when he supported the modest proposition that education was ‘on the whole’ good for the poor:

Is it morally just or politically expedient to keep down the industry and genius of the artisan, to blast his rising hopes, to quell his spirit, a thirst for knowledge has arisen in the midst of the poor, let them satisfy it with wholesome nutrient and beware lest driven to despair?

(Patridge 2003, p.23, ll.3–6)

Nobuhiko Kamikawa, a Japanese scholar of political history, regarded these two ideas as the key to a full understanding of the whole political life of William Ewart Gladstone: “morally just” and “politically expedient” (1967, p.46, ll.16–17).

### **3.3 Becoming a Clergyman or Public Life**

In a book on Gladstone (*Ibid.*, pp.16–28), H.G.C. Matthew went on to say John Gladstone next sent his son to Christ Church, the dominant college, politically, intellectually, and socially, of the University of Oxford. Cyril Jackson deliberately and successfully made Christ Church a forerunner of a college intimately linked with politics and administration, with the explicit purpose of creating a governing elite of the highest quality.

The education provided in Christ Church was not different from that of Eton, but it was better done. For most of his time at Christ Church, Gladstone worked hard, but not very hard: he did not have to, until a spurt in his last year. Then he worked very hard indeed. The set books a student reads, if taught properly

as texts and not via commentaries, stay with him or her throughout life: they have a peculiar grounding quality which is unequalled by later reading. This was certainly the case with Gladstone's undergraduate studies. The set books at Oxford were prescribed under the general rubric of 'a sufficient acquaintance with the Greek and Latin language and ancient history... and Moral and Political Science, as derived from the ancient Greek and Roman authors, and illustrated, if need be, from modern authors.' They introduced him, among others, to Homer, Plato's *Phaedo*, Aristotle's *Ethics* and *Rhetoric*, Joseph Butler's *Analogy* and Thucydides' *History* (partly studied via Thomas Hobbes's Summary).

Gladstone's method of learning was, as at Eton, the detailed Epitome, and the way he made these Epitomes shows that he learned his set books while making a direct relationship between them and his own times. For example, his Epitome of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* is written on the right-hand side of the page; on the left are given examples from contemporary Parliamentary speeches by such as Canning, Peel, and Palmerston to illustrate the Aristotelian categories.

Gladstone's formal education at Oxford was much more rewarding than that of Eton, but a good deal of the value of his time there sprang from what were really extensions of the Eton Society: the university Debating Society (which soon became the Oxford Union) and the Essay Club which he and others founded in Christ Church in October 1829. The intention of the founders of the Essay Club was to provide an Oxford equivalent of the Cambridge Apostles, of which Arthur Henry Hallam, Gladstone's close friend, was a member, and which gave Gladstone the idea of the Club. The Club became known by Gladstone's initials, the WEG. The Oxford Union differed from the Eton Society in being generally open to membership and in being able to debate contemporary politics.

Gladstone felt he ought to be a clergyman—it was his duty to God to offer himself—but he had had no clear call. 'O that, whithersoever he calls, I may follow!'... But God did not call. If Gladstone had had a clearer call,...God's authority would have trumped his father's. There was relief rather than disap-

pointment when John Gladstone's temperate reply urged public life as a broader profession, and counselled delay in making a decision. If Gladstone had not had a call, so also had he not experienced a conversion in the strict Evangelical sense, and this separated him from the Calvinist predestinarianism which he found in the Oxford Evangelicals.

#### **4. William Gladstone in His Performances as a Parliamentary Debater**

William Gladstone decided not to become a clergyman, but to live a public life as a politician. Then how did he become a member of Parliament in the House of Commons?

In 1832, after the fashion of the day, William proceeded from College to make a grand tour, spending six months in Italy and acquiring a familiarity with the Italian language which he never lost. Then the summons came from the Duke of Newcastle. William Gladstone was recommended to run for Newark as one of the members of the first reformed parliament. Newark was a nomination borough which the Reform Act had spared, and the patron was the Duke of Newcastle, father of Gladstone's friend, Lord Lincoln. Gladstone was elected at the head of the poll, and the Whig candidate was defeated.

Why was Gladstone recommended to run for Newark then? Still as a student of Oxford, he chaired a debating on whether the House of Commons should be reformed or not. As was earlier mentioned, William was in agreement with his father John, "one of those representatives of the new commercial class in the north of England who paid their way into the unreformed House of Commons. He was the sort of man who demonstrated that the Constitution needed no reform since it was capable of representing new interests in an old system. His desire for continuing social stability, his distrust of speculative thought, and his respect for established religion..." so William Gladstone delivered a 45-minute anti-reformism speech, after which all of his friends said, "An epoch-making incident happened in our life!" and one of those friends, Lord Lincoln, was so

much inspired that he wrote a letter to his father, the Duke of Newcastle, urging him to recommend William to run for his borough (Nobuhiko Kamikawa, p.56, ll.16–17.) Thus William Gladstone became an MP in the House of Commons at the age of 23.

#### **4.1 Gladstone’s Speech as an Under-Secretary for the Colonies**

After becoming an MP in the House of Commons, what kind of speech did William Gladstone make? According to Kamikawa (*Ibid.*, pp.73–74), William was going to make his maiden speech on the abolition of slavery, which had much to do with his whole family and must have been studied enough by William.

As was often the case with MPs, Gladstone could not deliver his speech soon after one of the MPs criticized his father John. Of course, he raised his hand to catch the attention of the Speaker right after he heard such criticism on May 29, but he was ignored. On May 30, the same effort was made, but he was ignored once again. A few more days later, however, on June 3, he managed to get the floor.

My efforts to get this maiden speech failed, so here in this part of the paper, let me present some information retrieved from *Wikisource*, the free online library, on April 10, 2020, which goes as follows: “It was a defense of his father, who had a plantation in Demerara, where...there was undue mortality among the slaves. This Gladstone strenuously denied, declaring that his father’s slaves were happy, healthy, and contented. He favoured ‘gradual’ emancipation, with full compensation to the owners.”

Although Gladstone’s maiden speech was not obtained, a speech on the same subject (May 17), which was erroneously attributed to Gladstone [sic], was made by his brother Thomas, then member for Portarlington. Thomas is William’s eldest brother. In this speech, “the late Under-Secretary for the Colonies,” meaning a former under-secretary for the colonies, was referred to and it seems useful to see what was talked about in that speech. William’s first tenure of the under-



secretaryship was cut short by the resignation of Peel's government on April 8.

#### **4.1.1 Abolition of Slavery (1,108 words, May 17, 1833) by Thomas**

In this speech, William Gladstone, the Under-Secretary for the Colonies under the government of Robert Peel, was referred to as the "noble Lord", and "his nearest relative" was his father John. According to Lord Howick (afterwards third earl Grey), there was undue mortality among the slaves. That is why some explanation was given in an answer to the enquiry as follows:

"...the real cause of this decrease, in the very large proportion of Africans upon the estate (in Demerara). When it came into the possession of his father, it was so weak, owing to the great number of Africans upon it, that he was obliged to add 200 people to the gang. It was notorious, that Africans were imported into Demerara and Trinidad up to a later period than into any other colony; and he should, when the proper time arrived, be able to prove, that the decrease on Vreeden Hoop was among the old Africans, and that there was an increase going on in the Creole population,..."

This speech first tried to answer the question, then went on to provide the present state of affairs and commented on the situation like this:

"Within a short period, the cultivation of cotton in Demerara had been abandoned, and that of coffee very much diminished, and the people employed in these sources of production had been transferred to the cultivation of sugar. Demerara, too, was peculiarly circumstanced; for, owing to the nature of the soil, sugar was made all the year round; and, consequently, the labour of the same number of negroes distributed over the year, would, in that colony, produce a given quantity of sugar with less injury to the people, than a similar number in other colonies working only at the stated periods of crop."

The severe situation of the sugar cultivation was recognized, but a change of managers in the estate brought about an improvement of the situation: "... there was not an individual in the colony more proverbial for humanity, and the kind treatment of his slaves, than Mr. Maclean. " And this gentleman reported the condition of his slaves as "their state of happiness, content, and healthiness; their good conduct, and the infrequency of severe punishment; and recommended certain additional comforts, which he said the slaves well deserved." Before Mr. Maclean began to manage, Mr. John Gladstone's estate was "a source of loss, rather than of profit, owing to the idle habits of the people." Earlier, what was concerned with William Ewart Gladstone's maiden speech was "This Gladstone strenuously denied, declaring that his father's slaves were happy, healthy, and contented." "This" refers to a question raised by Lord Howick and to deny this, Gladstone talked about what actually happened in Demerara and was happy to declare the state of his father's slaves: happiness, content, and healthiness.

The last part (531 words) of the speech was used to "correct some of the misstatements contained in the speech of the right hon. Secretary for the colonies" when Mr. Marryat spoke on behalf of the colony of Grenada. William Gladstone was the Under-Secretary for the Colonies, while Lord Aberdeen was the Secretary for the Colonies.

The "right honorable" is put before a person's title, such as "the right hon. Secretary for the colonies," and these words can be used as a complimentary term on an ordinary occasion. Hoping he will be a promising member of parliament, William Ewart Gladstone scribbled these words on part of the school wall of Eton College before he was graduating from that public school: THE RIGHT HONOURABLE W.E. GLADSTONE, M.P. (Onabe, p.20, ll.8-9).

As far as Gladstone's speeches are concerned, however, the term does not literally mean so. In fact, as Henry William Lucy suggests in a sketch of William Gladstone's life for *Speeches of the Rt. Hon. W.E. Gladstone, M.P.*, "Taking the brass-bound box upon the table as representing 'the right hon. Gentleman' or

‘the noble lord’ opposite, he will beat it violently with his right hand, creating a resounding noise that sometimes makes it difficult to catch the words he desires to emphasise” (1885, p.xii).

Sure enough, the “right hon.” for the Secretary for the colonies is used in a negative manner: “The right hon. Secretary truly stated, that almost insurmountable difficulties met him on every side, in the adjustment of this important question.” And the Secretary for the Colonies seems to have been threatened by the fact that,

“in rejecting the measures proposed by the Government, these Legislatures had acted, not in a spirit of ‘scorn and mockery,’ but he believed, upon a conscientious conviction, that while a system of slavery existed, the power of the master must be absolute; and in this they had been fully borne out by the testimony of the noble Lord, the late Under-Secretary for the Colonies, who stated, that they had done wisely in rejecting the Orders in Council attempted to be imposed upon them,...”

“That speech was a complete answer to the charges of the right hon. Secretary against the Colonial Legislatures” said the Under-Secretary for the colonies as a conclusion, for

“...the measure of the right hon. Secretary,...was neither safe nor satisfactory...admitting the time was now arrived, when a definite period must be fixed for the extinction of slavery,...He would remind the House, that by the Acts of the Grenada Legislature, slave evidence was admitted on all trials in civil and criminal cases, in the same manner in every respect as the testimony of free persons was received; that slaves were allowed property almost without restriction; that punishments were recorded; that the use of the whip was abolished in the field since 1825 and that manumissions, encouragement

to marriage, prevention of separation of families, and religious instruction, had been provided for.”

“The extinction of slavery” and “manumissions” are in the same category of meaning, and Gladstone admits “the time was now arrived, when a definite period must be fixed for the extinction of slavery”, but does not exactly say when. He seems to have “favoured ‘gradual’ emancipation, with full compensation to the owners.” What does “gradual emancipation” mean? According to Kamikawa (1967, p.74, ll.11–13), “how destructive it would be to the colonies, the nation, and the slaves themselves to emancipate the slaves before they become mature enough to make a good use of freedom!”

To sum up, this speech began with a problem raised by an MP (undue mortality in an estate in Demerara), followed by an explanation to clarify its cause (undue mortality among the old Africans). Then a new situation—the increased production of sugar—made the slaves’ working condition worse, but a change of managers improved the situation. As a result, William Gladstone’s father John was happy to know that his slaves were happy, healthy and contented (morally just). As an Under-Secretary for the colonies, however, William Gladstone was not only happy about his father’s estate but required to reconsider the whole situation of the colonies. Admitting a definite period must be fixed for the extinction of slavery, Gladstone would remind the House of Commons that by the Acts of Grenada, Legislature, all slaves are now entitled to the same human rights as free persons (politically expedient).

#### **4.1.2 Education in the Colonies (443words, February 27, 1835)**

Mr. Fowell Buxton asked two questions, and two speeches were actually made in answering those two questions. The first question was: what steps had been taken or what steps were likely to be taken for providing for the education of the negroes in the Colonies.

After telling Mr. Buxton how difficult it was to answer his question in a few words, Mr. William Gladstone said the subject in question had been drawing the attention of the noble Lord (Lord Aberdeen) since the present Government (Robert Peel's) was launched, and that circular letters had been sent to all the West-India Colonies about the extent of means existing. When all the replies had been received from the colonies, a certain decision was supposed to be made by the Secretary for the Colonies. Mr. Gladstone went on to refer to the expenses for the education in the colonies: A large portion would be supplied from private sources and religious bodies, but the remainder would be covered by Parliament, which pledged to assist in the religious education of the West India apprentices, as suggested below:

“With regard to the expenses, he trusted a large portion of the deficiency would be supplied from private sources, and by the exertions of religious bodies. For the remainder, they must apply to Parliament, if necessary; believing that the pledge Parliament had given to assist in the religious education of the West India apprentices was just as distinct and binding, even though it was not as determined, as their pledge to pay twenty millions of money.”

Mr. Buxton asked another question about what magistrates should be appointed: “whether the persons who had been appointed in Jamaica, were individuals of this description, or whether, in fact, any of the ordinary Magistrates of the Colony had been appointed.” Mr. William Gladstone could not answer this question directly, but gave a clear picture of what magistrate should be appointed in any case by saying this:

“...the Governor of the Colony retained, under the Act, the power of doing anything which was necessary, in his judgment, for the preservation of its

peace and tranquillity...the Governor of Jamaica had refused his assent to an Act making the appointment of these Magistrates absolutely necessary and a matter of course, and that his conduct met with the fullest approbation of the Government and of the Colony. Nothing was further from the wish of the English Government—nothing was further from the wish of the Colonial Government—nothing could be more improper than that that appointment should be deemed a matter of necessity in every case.”

Generally speaking, magistrates appointed by the British government should follow a basic policy for the colonies adopted by the government, but William Gladstone does insist any magistrate should do a matter of necessity in every case, even if it can lead to the rejection of the government’s basic policy. This claim made by Gladstone seems to have been derived from his own view on colonies:

“...Gladstone rejected the idea that the London government should seek to administer directly the affairs of the settler communities. The capacity for democratic self-government was a defining feature of the British genius, and any attempt to override it through diktats from London was sure to generate not loyalty but animosity, tending towards rebellion. Thus, colonies such as Australia and New Zealand should run their own affairs through democratic self-government and, as far as possible, pay for their own policies through taxation. If, for example, they wanted to wage war on the local native population that was their business and they ought to pay for it. This principle of free self-government was the true means by which the links between the Colonies and the mother country would be strengthened—not through force and coercion, as the experience in North America so painfully showed” (*Gladstone and the Logic of Victorian Politics*, 2010, p. 39, ll.23–34).

Ten years later, after working as the Under-Secretary for the Colonies, Gladstone became Secretary for the Colonies for the Robert Peel's short-lived ministry in 1845–6, and remained afterwards the Peelites' informal spokesman on colonial issues. It is easy to imagine, therefore, that the principle of free self-government has been practiced in the management of such a newly-colonized territory as Hong Kong. Now that Hong Kong has been returned to its "mother country," which political system do Hong Kongers want to follow, communism or democracy?

#### **4.2 Gladstone's Speech as an Opposition member**

##### **(The War with China, 8,432 words, April 8, 1840)**

When a war with China seemed likely to break out, William E. Gladstone was not a member of Britain's ruling party, but a rank-and-file member of an opposition party, but hearing of the possible breakout of that war, he could not help making a speech in the House of Commons. His speech was a long one (8,432 words), which did not stand out, as a little survey of the speeches made on April 8 in the House of Commons shows: Mr. Hawes (2,847 words), Mr. Thesiger (9,605 words), Sir George Staunton (145 words), Mr. Charles Buller (8,332 words), Mr. W.E. Gladstone (8,432 words), Mr. Ward (2,009 words), Mr. Thesiger (19 words), Mr. Ward (2,363 words), and Mr. Palmer (2,704 words).

As far as the content of his speech is concerned, however, it did stand out because its last parts have often been cited as an exemplar phrase in opposition to Foreign Secretary, Lord Palmerston (Henry John Temple). One example was already mentioned at the beginning of this paper through Kondo's *Igirisushi Jukko* (2013), but the other two go as follows:

“...a war more unjust in its origin, a war more calculated in its progress to cover this country with permanent disgrace, I do not know, and I have not read of....The right hon. Gentleman opposite spoke last night in eloquent

terms of the British flag waving in glory at Canton,...but now...that flag is hoisted to protect an infamous contraband traffic, and if it were never to be hoisted except as it is now hoisted on the coast of China, we should recoil from its sight with horror,..” (*Jitsuroku Ahen Senso*, pp.170–171, ll.15–3).

“The right hon. Gentleman opposite [Mr. Macaulay] spoke last night in eloquent terms of the British flag waving in glory at Canton, and of the animating effects produced on the minds of our sailors by the knowledge, that in no country under heaven was it permitted to be insulted.... But how comes it to pass that the sight of that flag always raises the spirit of Englishmen? It is because it has always been associated with the cause of justice, with opposition to oppression, with respect for national rights, with honourable commercial enterprise, but now under the auspices of the noble Lord [Lord Palmerston], that flag is hoisted to protect an infamous contraband traffic, and if it were never to be hoisted except as it is now hoisted on the coast of China, we should recoil from its sight with horror, ... justice, in my opinion, is with them [the Chinese], and, that whilst they, the Pagans, and semi-civilized barbarians, have it, we, the enlightened and civilized Christians, are pursuing objects at variance both with justice, and with religion” (*Gladstone and the Logic of Victorian Politics*, p.40, ll.6–20).

It is obviously clear from these two citations that William Gladstone listened carefully to his opponent in a debate over whether Britain should start war with China, pointed out a problem in his argument (the British flag waving in glory at Canton raised the spirits of Englishmen), and suggested a solution (the British flag does not always raise the spirits of Englishmen, but it does only when it is associated with the cause of justice, with opposition to oppression, with respect for national rights, with honourable commercial enterprise). Now more examples will be sought in the whole speech.



In the first example, Mr. Macaulay [the hon. and learned Gentleman] has declined to support the motion of Sir James Graham [his right hon. Friend, the Member for Pembroke], but this argument has two problems (two points of the most vital importance), for Mr. Macaulay, who did not seem to notice what he said agreed with sentiments which had been expressed on the Opposition side of the House: Firstly, Captain Elliot ought to have been furnished with larger powers and more specific instructions; and secondly, courts ought to have been established in China by her Majesty's Government having authority over the conduct of British subjects in that part of the world.

As for the first problem, we were reminded of the fact that,

“In late 1834, the British sent Lord William John Napier to Macau along with John Francis Davis and Sir George Best Robinson, 2nd Baronet as British superintendents of trade in China. Napier was instructed to obey Chinese regulations, communicate directly with Chinese authorities, superintend trade pertaining to the contraband trade of opium, and to survey China's coastline. Upon his arrival in China, Napier tried to circumvent the restrictive system that forbade direct contact with Chinese officials by sending a letter directly to the Viceroy of Canton. The Viceroy refused to accept it, and on 2 September of that year an edict was issued that temporarily closed British trade. In response, Napier ordered two Royal Navy vessels to bombard Chinese forts on the Pearl River in a show of force. This command was followed through, but war was avoided due to Napier falling ill with typhus and ordering a retreat....Lord Napier was forced to return to Macau, where he died of typhus a few days Later. After Lord Napier's death, Captain Charles Elliot received the King's Commission as Superintendent of Trade in 1836 to continue Napier's work of conciliating the Chinese.” (From “Napier Affair” in *First Opium War* retrieved from Wikipedia on September 9, 2020)

Through this information, we can learn how Captain Charles Elliot was sent to China. In December 1833, upon the ending of British East India Company's monopoly on trade in the Far East, Lord Napier was appointed by Foreign Secretary, Lord Palmerston, a family friend of Napier, as the first Chief Superintendent of Trade at Canton and did well in almost every instruction, but failed to "communicate directly with Chinese authorities." His successors, John Francis Davis, Sir George Best Robinson, 2nd Baronet, and Charles Elliot, were also unsuccessful.

In China, any foreign country was required to establish formal relations through the Chinese tributary system. In this system, China did not need, or try to have any economic relations with any other country unless it was asked to do so. China was rich enough to have everything it needed. Also, if any foreign merchant was to do its business in China, the merchant had to contact the Cohong families of Canton and could not do any substantial amount of business without any negotiation with them. These facts seem to have alluded in the speech to "the jealousy which the Chinese had of strangers."

Foreign Secretary, Lord Palmerston, sent Lord Napier to China to negotiate for a better economic relationship with China, but lacking the necessary diplomatic and commercial experience, he was not successful in achieving the objective, nor were two of his successors. So Charles Elliot was sent to China for a better negotiation, even with the use of force. Sensing such an aim in the words of Lord Palmerston (the noble Lord, the Secretary for Foreign Affairs), Gladstone referred to "the despatch of the Duke of Wellington to Lord Napier," in which the noble Duke said, 'It is not by force and violence that his Majesty intends to establish a commercial intercourse between his subjects and China; but by the other conciliatory measures'." When he made this speech, Gladstone was still in his early 30s, so he may have thought it more effective to make an ethical appeal by referring to the words of a person (1st Duke of Wellington) believed to be superior to Lord Palmerston.

The second problem was not given enough attention by Lord Palmerston, either, although it is of great importance if Britain is to start any free trade with China. That is why Mr. Charles Buller, while referring to what Sir James Graham suggested, made a proposal on the courts to be established in China: “the court...invested not only with criminal and admiralty jurisdiction, but also with civil jurisdiction.” This proposal is a “right and necessary and essential” for the Britain-China trade, but probably because he had something else in mind, Lord Palmerston did not provide the House of Commons with any information “as to the actual state of affairs in China...no information as to the state of opium trade or as to the determination of the Chinese Government to put it down.” “The noble Lord (Lord Palmerston) had all the information to himself, and had refused the House an opportunity of forming a sound decision on the subject.” In short, the noble Lord had committed a sin of omission. Then what kind of course is left for such a person? William Gladstone even suggested that the noble Lord should resign, but the Lord did not listen.

There were other things about which Lord Palmerston had omitted to give ample information to the House of Commons: “there was a broad and marked distinction between that trade as carried on before September, 1836, and as carried on subsequent to that period.”; “Up to that time the Chinese had connived at the trade in opium, but... In September 1836, the Emperor of China issued an edict, commanding that all persons engaging in the purchase or sale of opium should be severely punished.”; and “another edict had subsequently been issued against foreigners engaged in the opium trade, and which commanded them to depart at once from the country.” From these pieces of information, it is clear that the Chinese imperial government was ready to punish anyone, their nationals or foreigners, who were engaged in the purchase or sale of opium, but Lord Palmerston and Captain Elliot representing the British government “remained idle and taken no steps.” Apparently sympathizing with Captain Elliot without enough powers and instructions, Gladstone compared Lord Palmerston

to “an Egyptian task master, commanding his officer ‘to make bricks without straw’ (Exodus 5:7).”

What was worse with the British side, Lord Palmerston and Captain Elliot told their government that Captain Elliot’s “Government had no knowledge of the existence of any but the legal trade, and that over an illegal trade he could exercise no power.” According to page 240 of a dispatch, Captain Elliot said that “his commission extends only to the regular trade with this empire; and further, that the existence of any other than this trade has never yet been submitted to the knowledge of his own gracious sovereign.”

With these pieces of information in mind, who can deny what Lord Palmerston and Captain Elliot have said or object to their claim? Although “it was an indisputable fact that the Chinese government had adopted every means, . . . that both imperial and provincial governments had used every lawful endeavor to stop the opium trade, and resorted to every proper means of making their intentions known to the British Government,” this fact had been treated with contempt and neglect—with the same contempt by Lord Palmerston at home as by the British superintendent at Canton (Captain Elliot). This resulted in a tragedy of a native Chinese who had been engaged in the opium trade: he was actually strangled in the square of factories (offices of foreign merchants) and “this was interpreted as a gross and meditated insult to the flag of those who had been themselves, in effect, the cause of the death of that unhappy man.”

Thomas Macaulay, Secretary of State for War, became indignant at whatever measure the Chinese government took to put a stop to the opium smuggling, and demanded “what proof the Chinese officers had of individuals concerned in the prohibited traffic,” but Gladstone dismissed such a demand and suggested that Her Majesty’s Government should have “manfully encouraged those efforts of the Chinese government” for crushing the opium trade, “instead of systematically and deliberately taking measures to defeat those efforts.” This means that the Chinese government acted in accordance with their fixed determination to put a

stop to the opium smuggling, while the British government was not so sincere about the prohibited traffic as it should be.

Mr. Macaulay was indignant about one more thing: “the Chinese should have indiscriminately confined the innocent with the guilty.” With further and more accurate information obtained, however, he found that the whole British community, almost to a man, had been engaged in the illegal opium trade. Gladstone, therefore, concluded that “the Chinese government was justified in acting against the entire British community,” and hastened to add that “the opium smuggled into China came exclusively from British ports...from Bengal, and through Bombay.”

Captain Elliot was placed in a difficult situation “in which he could not, from want of powers, fulfil the task that was imposed upon him.” Whenever he needed any advice from his boss (Lord Palmerston), “he was regularly discouraged by the noble Lord at the head of the Foreign Department.” When he asked the Lord to give him some advice for the suppression or for the legalization of the trade, “he was met by the noble Lord with a total and contemptuous silence.” As a result, “Captain Elliot had completely identified himself with the contraband traffic in opium.”

Now it is quite obvious that Gladstone made this speech to severely criticize what Lord Palmerston did in the House of Commons and what Captain Elliot did at Canton. He could never accept either of them because the opium war likely to happen due to their sins of omission and failures in negotiating with China was “a war more unjust in its origin, a war more calculated in its progress to cover this country (Britain) with permanent disgrace,” he did not know, and he had not read of. This opinion never wavered even after Thomas Macaulay spoke on April 7, 1840, in “eloquent terms of the British flag waving in glory at Canton,” which goes as follows:

“It was natural that they should look with confidence on the victorious flag

which was hoisted over them, which reminded them that they belonged to a country unaccustomed to defeat, to submission, or to shame—it reminded them that they belonged to a country which had made the farthest ends of the earth ring with the fame of her exploits in redressing the wrongs of her children; that made the Dey of Algiers humble himself to her insulted consul; that revenged the horrors of the black hole on the fields of Plessey; that had not degenerated since her great Protector vowed that he would make the name of Englishman as respected as ever had been the name of Roman citizen. They felt that although far from their native country, and then in danger in a part of the world remote from that to which they must look for protection, yet that they belonged to a state which would not suffer a hair of one of its members to be harmed with impunity.”

Hoping that “her Majesty’s Government will never upon this motion, persuade the House to abet this unjust and iniquitous war,” Gladstone concluded his speech by stating that “although the Chinese were undoubtedly guilty of much absurd phraseology, of no little ostentatious pride, and of some excess, justice... is with them [the Chinese], and, that whilst they, the Pagans, and semicivilized barbarians, have it, we, the enlightened and civilized Christians, are pursuing objects at variance both with justice, and with religion.”

## **5. Conclusion**

Since he made a speech in public at the age of 16, William Ewart Gladstone had made many speeches, and, as Nobuhiko Kamikawa suggested in his book, Gladstone’s speeches were characterized by the two key phrases: “morally (or religiously) just” and “politically expedient.” The first characteristic was shared by many British people, most of whom are Christians, whatever denomination they belong to. In his first speech on the necessity of education for the poor, he said, “a thirst for knowledge has arisen in the midst of the poor, let them satisfy

it with wholesome nutrient and beware lest driven to despair,” which is morally just. In a speech in defense of his father, which was not written by William himself but by his elder brother Thomas, a change of managers made his father’s slaves happy, healthy and contended, which is morally just, and his action of reminding the House of Commons that all slaves are entitled to the same human rights as free persons are is also morally just.

In connection with the issues of the education for the colonies and of what magistrate should be appointed, think about what Gladstone said: “...the Governor of the Colony retained, under the Act, the power of doing anything which was necessary, in his judgment, for the preservation of its peace and tranquillity...”. Is it morally just or politically expedient?

We must be careful enough to understand the meaning of “politically expedient”, for its true meaning depends more often than not on what idea is politically expedient to whom. It is true Gladstone rejected the idea that the London government should seek to administer directly the affairs of the settler communities, for “any attempt to override it through diktats from London was sure to generate not loyalty but animosity, tending towards rebellion,” but we must be also informed of the fact that “Britain’s great work in the colonial sphere was that of laying the foundations, on the basis of British traditions of government and religion, for the development of ‘mighty States in different quarters of the world’. In essence, involved was the creation of ‘so many happy Englands’” (Ian St. John, 2010, p.39, ll.16–19).

As for Gladstone’s speech in opposition to the opium war, the opium trade was strictly banned by China’s imperial government, and Gladstone joined the Chinese government in thinking of this contraband trade as morally not just. He did not regard the opium war as “politically expedient,” either. Lord Palmerston, however, did not think the way Gladstone did. Probably, as Foreign Secretary, he had sought a way of countering a trade imbalance created by the demand for Chinese luxury goods, such as silk, porcelain, and tea as European silver

flowed into China through the Canton System, which confined incoming foreign trade to the southern port city of Canton, and found Britain could reduce their trade deficit with Chinese manufactories by counter-trading in narcotic opium. Which idea was politically more expedient, Gladstone's or Palmerston's, to their contemporary people?

In order to find an answer to this question, I am now ambitious for the reading and understanding of all speeches made on April 7, 8 and 9, 1840 before that vote for Sir James Graham's motion on April 9, 1840, which was defeated by a majority of only 9 votes (262 votes for vs 271 votes against).

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Nanzan University

<sup>2</sup> The author won a scholarship of the British Council in 1981.

<sup>3</sup> NHK's Website news dated October 1, titled "Xi: China to uphold '1 country, 2 systems' in HK." The news says, "Referring to Hong Kong, Xi stressed the need to fully and faithfully implement the "one country, two systems" policy, while ensuring a high degree of autonomy in the territory.

<sup>4</sup> They suggest the Napoleonic Wars (1796–1815) and the American War of Independence (1775–1783), also known as the American Revolutionary War.

<sup>5</sup> William Gladstone's grandfather was Thomas Gladstones, but his father was John Gladstone.

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