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ABSTRACT OF "THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL THOUGHT OF LORD ACTON"

This dissertation on "The Social and Political Thought of Lord Acton" is written in the form of an intellectual biography since he was above all an historian of ideas. The most important influence on Acton's education was Professor Dollinger of the University of Munich who was a liberal Catholic devoted to the theory of "development" in theology. A secondary influence was the Burkean Whiggery of Acton's family (and English friends) and of the University of Edinburgh. Acton's early career was spent in polemical journalism; he tried to bring liberalism to his fellow Catholics, Catholicism to his fellow liberals and the discoveries and techniques of German historical research to both. He edited several influential liberal Catholic journals in London (The Rambler, The Home and Foreign Review, etc.) and worked on some matters with the future Cardinal Newman. He was drawn into a running controversy over intellectual freedom with the hierarchy culminating in his refusal to accept without some qualification the new dogma of papal infallibility proclaimed at the Vatican Council of 1870.

The dissertation also traces the gradual change in Acton's political thought. From his youth until about 1863 or 1864 he was a conservative, Burkean Whig; from that time on he gradually became more of a purist liberal, especially in theological and other intellectual matters. Unlike most people, he began as a conservative and became more liberal with age.

Acton's philosophy of history is also analyzed. He spurned those historians who attempted to be "objective" or worse yet (in his view) "understanding". He believed historians should be hanging judges, adding the verdict of posterity to the verdict of Heaven. The thesis sifts the reasons advanced by other scholars as to why Acton never completed his History of Liberty (or any other major work) and offers a possible solution to this enigma.

His historical work came to fruition at Cambridge University. The thesis analyses his principal ideas and also the critiques of contemporaries and of living scholars. Throughout this thesis some manuscript sources are employed (mainly from the Cambridge Library) and the latest published scholarship (mainly the works of Damian McElrath and his colleagues) has been used to correct previous misapprehensions. In a revised bibliography of Acton's works, previous errors have been corrected and the works have been divided by subject-matter.

Robert Lindsay Schuettinger

I declare that this thesis has been composed by myself, that the work of which it is a record has been done by me, and that it has not been accepted in any previous application for a higher degree in the University of St. Andrews or elsewhere.

STATEMENT OF RESEARCH

Since 1969 Mr. Schuettinger has pursued research into the Social and Political Thought of Lord Acton under my supervision as a part-time student. He was formally admitted as a research student under Ordinance 12 in December 1974, backdated to February 1969. He was enrolled as a candidate for the degree of B.Phil. in January 1975.

STATEMENT BY SUPERVISOR

I certify that the conditions of the appropriate Resolution and Regulations for the B.Phil. degree have been fulfilled in respect to the present thesis.

N. GASH



21 April 1975

**THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL THOUGHT
OF LORD ACTON**

Robert Lindsay Schuettinger



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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

A life of Lord Acton must inevitably be primarily the biography of a mind since Acton was above all a historian of ideas. It was ideas - both good and bad - which he believed were the moving forces of history. As Lord Keynes was to say in our own time, practical men who may rarely read a book are, if truth were known, the slaves of some long-dead scribbler.

Acton has justly been called the Magistrate of Modern History. It is in that combined role of Teacher-Judge that he offers lessons for us. If he were alive today he would undoubtedly remind us of his most important lesson - always to be wary of that absolute power which corrupts absolutely. Power, like liberty, is in itself neutral - it can serve us or dominate us; in democracies, at least, how it is used is up to us. He would tell us to watch out for the concentration of power, especially the personification of authority in one man or one institution.

"Nothing causes more error and unfairness in men's view of history," he once wrote, "than the interest which is inspired by individual characters. The most absolute devotion to certain ideas and opinions is less dangerous,

for they may be perfectly true, while no character is perfectly good; and the allegiance which is paid to doctrine is less blind and less unreasoning than that in which loyalty or friendship usurp the place of reason and duty....An indiscriminate admiration and jealousy of criticism marks the feelings of a sect and a party towards its leaders." 1

Again and again, he shows us how practical men who hold ideas in contempt and regard principles with amusement serve their masters ill when they act as courtiers rather than as honest advisers. He tells us how one of Napoleon's officers rejoiced that he "had the prudence, on certain occasions, to suppress a just and useful remark." 2 Those in Washington and London and elsewhere, who today pride themselves on their political pragmatism, could do worse than to read even a few pages of Acton before setting off to their busy offices to face the pressures of day-to-day politics.

It is clear, I believe, that Acton does have something to teach us. Hopefully, this study of his social and political thought will be a small step forward in the growing tradition of Acton scholarship. There is, unfortunately, no definite biography of Acton and no complete edition of his works. "Lord Acton: A Study in Conscience and Politics," by the eminent Victorian scholar, Miss Gertrude Himmelfarb, is a work of thorough scholarship and considerable insight. Since it was

published in 1952, however, a substantial amount of new work on Acton and his papers has been done. Perhaps the most important contribution to Acton studies in recent years has been the first complete and accurate edition of his correspondence with his coeditor, Richard Simpson. Fr. Damian McElrath and Josef Altholz have corrected, to the great benefit of modern readers, the incomplete and often misleading edition first compiled by Abbot Francis Gasquet, who attempted (from the best of motives) to obscure Acton's true views of persons and institutions within the Catholic Church. Other scholars, whose work is noted in the bibliography, have carried forward Acton scholarship in our time. In 1942, F.E.Lally published a study of some of Acton's writings, but did not intend a full biography. G.Fasnacht has given us a work on Acton's political philosophy which, while useful, makes little attempt at serious analysis; most recently, Archbishop David Mathew has published "Lord Acton and His Times," which, while interesting, is more concerned with the Victorian world in general than with Acton in particular.

The relevance of Lord Acton to the twentieth century, according to one of his editors, "comes from his prophetic preoccupation with the very questions with which the twentieth century has found itself preoccupied. The great objects of his studies in history were the moral ends of government, the relations of politics to morality, and these are the questions which bitter experience has

forced our age to think about more urgently than the Victorians needed to do." 3

The future Lord Acton was born in Naples on January 10, 1834, and baptized John Emerich Edward Dalberg Acton. His grandfather, Sir John Acton, was both an English baronet and the prime minister of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. He was also, as it was delicately put, the confidant of his Bourbon queen. The prime minister had chosen to transfer his religious and political allegiances simultaneously, forsaking both the Anglican Christianity and the political ties of his fathers for the Romanism of his employers.

Sir John Acton's eldest son, Sir Ferdinand Richard Acton, was to marry Marie Peline de Dalberg, the devoutly Catholic heiress of an ancient and distinguished Bavarian house. This lady's own father, the duc de Dalberg, was also a peer of France and had represented Louis XVIII at the Congress of Vienna in the company, of course, of the bishop of Autun, better known as Talleyrand.

An Italian birthplace, an English father, a French-German-Italian mother, a supranational religion and scores of relatives in high places in Church and State in most of the nations of Europe inevitably stamped the character of John Dalberg Acton for the remainder of his life.

In later years it was perfectly commonplace for him

to sit at dinner with his family in one of his English or Bavarian or French country houses and talk, in German with his wife, in English with his children, in Italian with his mother-in-law, in French with his sister-in-law and perhaps in Spanish or Swedish with a guest.

He wore his cosmopolitanism, however, with an easy grace, just as he did his aristocratic upbringing and his own intellectual powers. His wit and love of good talk as well as his powerful personality made him a welcome companion wherever he went, from New York to Moscow. James Bryce, an ambassador to the United States and himself a notable scholar not unfamiliar with the great men of his time, once recorded a conversation with Acton in terms that would smack of ingenuousness were they to come from any lesser personage. The former cabinet minister and ambassador wrote in his 'Studies in Contemporary Biography: "Twenty years ago, late at night, in his library at Cannes Acton expounded to me his view of how such a history of Liberty might be written, and in what wise it might be made the central thread of all history. He spoke for six or seven minutes only; but he spoke like a man inspired, seeming as if, from some mountain summit high in the air, he saw beneath him the far winding path of human progress from dim Cimmerian shores of prehistoric shadow into the fuller yet broken and fitful light of the modern time. The eloquence was splendid, but greater than the eloquence was the penetrating vision which discerned through all events and in all ages the play of those moral forces,

now creating, now destroying, always transmuting, which had moulded and remoulded institutions, and had given to the human spirit its ceaselessly-changing forms of energy. It was as if the whole landscape of history had been suddenly lit up by a burst of sunlight. I have never heard from any other lips any discourse like this...." 4

His absolute moral standards, however, which recognized no extenuating circumstances and made no allowances for time or place, often made him a difficult companion. It should be said that he did not always hold this view of the world. Until he entered his early thirties, Acton was proud to acknowledge himself a disciple of Burke and scorned ideologues and such single-minded people as the American abolitionists. 5 To the mature Acton, however, a man who condoned a moral lapse in a politician for "reasons of state" was as guilty as the sinner himself.

He once made his views on this subject unmistakably clear in his most famous letter, written to his good friend Mandell Creighton, Anglican bishop of London and himself an eminent historian. "I cannot accept your canon," he wrote, "that we are to judge Pope and King unlike other men, with a favourable presumption that they did no wrong. If there is any presumption, it is the other way against holders of power, increasing as the power increases. Historic responsibility has to make up for want of legal responsibility. Power tends to

corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men, even when they exercise influence and not authority. There is no worse heresy than that the office sanctifies the holder of it. That is the point at which the negation of Catholicism and the negation of Liberalism meet and keep high festival, and the end learns to justify the means." 6

In his inaugural lecture on the study of history, delivered when he accepted the Regius Professorship of Modern History at Cambridge University, he exhorted his students above all "never to debase the moral currency or to lower the standard of rectitude." 7 He often complained, as might be expected, that he was "absolutely alone" in his "essential ethical position." His Catholic friends, he said, did not understand his liberalism and his liberal friends did not appreciate his Catholicism. As he grew older he came to feel more isolated. "I never," he once said, "had any contemporaries." Still, his rather stiff-necked personality did not prevent him from living all his life at the centre of political, ecclesiastical and literary society both in Britain and on the Continent.

His physical appearance must have made almost as permanent an impression on those he met as his prodigious store of knowledge. The American poet, James Russell Lowell, remarked that he was one of the few men he had ever met "the inside of whose head more than keeps the

promise of the out - and in his case that is saying a great deal."

His wide forehead, magnificent black beard (grown at an early age), piercing blue eyes and deep sonorous voice gave him the appearance of one of those ecclesiastical statesmen handed down for us by Titian whose mingled power and subtlety have earned the admiring gaze of four centuries.

Henry Sidgwick, himself a leading light of Victorian scholarship, was far from alone in saying that "however much you knew about anything, Acton was certain to know more." The historian G.P. Gooch, however, who knew Acton when he himself was a young man at the turn of the century, gives us what is doubtless a more detached and realistic view. Acton, he thought, had only an average educated man's knowledge of the natural sciences, cared little for pure literature and the arts and was only an oracle on later medieval and modern history. 8 This estimate of the range of Acton's powers (which are still considerable) is corroborated by the list of one hundred best books which Acton once recommended as reading for the young university graduate. In the list there is only one poet, Dante, and no novelists; almost all of the works are in history, philosophy, theology or politics. If Acton was not a truly universal man, it would still be fair to say that he was an authority on more subjects than almost all of his peers.

His multitude of interests combined with his

preference for research at the expense of writing, and his perfectionism, to prevent him from publishing even one volume in his lifetime. His projected masterwork, "The History of Liberty," came to be known as the greatest book that was never written. He himself would ironically refer to it as "The Madonna of the Future," after the story by Henry James. The notion that he published little, however, is a misconception. In fact a bibliography of his essays, reviews and articles consists of twenty closely printed pages. 9

Throughout his life his two great concerns were freedom and morality. He was absolutely convinced that one could not exist without the other and that both were required for the fulfilment of man's purpose on this earth.

He inherited his religion along with his titles and illustrious names, but he perfected his faith through years of study and a lifetime of searching his conscience. His creed, like his liberalism, was not a matter of tradition or mere habit.

His paternal ancestors, in fact, were neither Catholics nor Whigs. They were High Tory Anglicans and proudly so; as ready to suffer for their beliefs when necessary as they were to benefit from them when possible. The Acton family is recorded as occupying their estate of Aldenham in Shropshire at least as far back as the

beginning of the fourteenth century. During the Civil War they were resolutely Cavalier and High Church. For his pains, a Richard Acton was removed as lord mayor of London by the House of Commons. Charles I was not a man to forget loyalty, however, and the ousted lord mayor became the first of a long line of baronets. The third baronet, Sir Edward Acton, was among those who formally opposed the granting of the crown of England to "the Dutchman William" and his wife Mary.

In the eighteenth century, a younger and somewhat less austere branch of the family migrated to France and then to Italy. The first Lord Acton's grandfather, General (and Admiral) Sir John Acton, entered the service of the Bourbon sovereigns of Naples. The king's faculties, both physical and mental, were unfortunately in less than perfect condition. General Acton gallantly assumed many of the duties of his monarch and quickly rose from minister of war to prime minister, making use of all his talents to do so. He returned the queen's affections by remaining a bachelor until the age of sixty-three when, fortified with a papal dispensation, he married his niece and proceeded to insure the continuance of his recently inherited baronetcy.

In 1801 his first son, who was to succeed him as Sir Ferdinand Richard Edward Acton, was born. His second son, Lord Acton's uncle, was to become in due time a prince of the Church as Charles Edward, Cardinal Acton.

Sir Ferdinand and his brother were both sent to England for their education, first at Westminster and then at Magdalene College, Cambridge. After the birth of Sir Ferdinand's own son, the future Lord Acton, in Naples, he moved his family to Paris, where they took a house in the Faubourg St. Honoré. The Actons got on well in Paris and soon became part of a circle around the ageing Talleyrand, whose caustic wit was still the delight of those bystanders not the subject of it.

However, Sir Ferdinand apparently lacked the political skills of his father. He never achieved more than a minor post about the new king of the Two Sicilies, who did not suffer from the incapacities of his predecessor and was capable of fulfilling his own responsibilities. The young baronet did inherit a taste for sumptuous living and, managing on his own to develop a seemly interest in literature, spent some time in building up a library. Early in 1837, when his only child was but three years old, Sir Ferdinand died unexpectedly of pneumonia at his Paris home. His son succeeded him as Sir John Dalberg-Acton, eighth baronet and master of Aldenham.

Acton's mother, of course, was a Dalberg, member of a family who were the premier dukes of the Holy Roman Empire. Occupying the same position in Germany that the Howards, dukes of Norfolk, held in England, their rank was second only to the imperial family itself. At his

coronation in 1494, the Emperor Maximilian I had granted the Dalbergs the right to be knighted before all others. At every coronation since, the phrase *Ist kein Dalberg da?* was heard; if any Dalberg were present he would receive his knighthood first. There was even a legend, doubtless apocryphal, that the Dalbergs were directly descended from a relation of the Saviour himself who had entered the Roman army and emigrated from Palestine to the Rhine Valley to found the ducal estate of Herrnsheim. It is little wonder that Acton's maternal grandfather was uneasy about his daughter merging her quarterings with those of a mere baronet of scarcely two centuries' standing. The duke even attempted to have his prospective son-in-law created a peer of the United Kingdom, but when this last-ditch effort to keep faith with his ancestors failed, the grand seigneur accepted the inevitable with good grace. Unhappily, as matters turned out, the marriage was to be a short one.

In 1840, three years after the death of Sir Ferdinand, Lady Dalberg-Acton married again. Sir John Acton's stepfather was an old family friend who was presumably more acceptable to the fastidious duke; he was the eldest son of Earl Granville, the British ambassador in Paris. Lord George Leveson (as he then was), later the second Earl Granville, was to supply yet another tradition to Acton's already diverse background.

The Leveson-Gowers, who were related to the dukes of

Devonshire, had long been prominent in the Whig aristocracy of England and therefore in diplomacy and in politics. Lord Leveson was to hold several of the great offices of state and was foreign minister in the governments of Lord John Russell and William Gladstone. The three families, the Actons, the Dalbergs and the Leveson-Gowers, had first met in Paris, where Lord Leveson's father, the first Earl Granville, was in charge of her Majesty's embassy. Educated at Eton and Christ Church, Oxford, Lord Leveson was undersecretary for foreign affairs in the Whig ministry of Lord Melbourne at the time of his engagement to Lady Acton.

At first religious differences led to difficulties. Lord Leveson was a member of the Church of England and Lady Acton a pious Roman Catholic. The engagement, in fact, was once broken because Lady Acton insisted that any children of the marriage be brought up as Catholics. The differences were reconciled, however, and Lord Leveson's sister, Lady Georgiana Fullerton, was so much impressed with Lady Acton's attitude toward religion that she converted to Catholicism herself. Acton's stepfather, however, was himself little troubled by religious scruples and in the end his Anglicanism was to have almost no influence on Acton. The general transcendental attitude of the great Whig families, in fact, was well expressed by their prime minister of the time, Viscount Melbourne, who once nonchalantly said that if he could not be called a pillar of the church, he was at least a buttress of it, since he

strongly supported it from the outside.

Leveson fully shared this Burkean aversion to ideology or abstract principles which so characterized his party. So did John Acton; Burke's speeches, he said at the outset of his journalistic career in 1859, were "the law and the prophets." 10 (Several years later, he was to modify his earlier views as he became convinced that absolute moral values must prevail in politics as in religion.) Although generally on the conservative side of the Whig party, both Leveson and Acton, like their guide, Edmund Burke, believed strongly in religious toleration and in free trade, policies which were held only by a part of the Whig coalition. Although both Leveson and Acton sincerely believed in toleration on grounds of principle, they obviously could not have done otherwise, at least so far as Catholic emancipation was concerned. In the same way it was easier for the Leveson-Gowers group to side with the radical wing, led by Cobden and Bright, on the issue of free trade than it was for most of their party. The Leveson-Gower wealth, as it happened, was derived mainly from manufacturing and mining and not from the land; in this respect, they were a rarity among their own class. Aside from the issues of toleration and free trade, however, both Leveson and Acton had little in common with the radicals. Neither one could ever be accused of having Cobden's "essentially bourgeois way of looking at things," as Acton was later contemptuously to call it. In Acton's

writings, the economic motive was generally ignored; like most men used to spending money without a thought of where it came from, he had little understanding of the attitudes of businessmen and workers.

Although he learned a good deal about the world and politics from his stepfather, Acton was ultimately to develop in his own way in his own time. The young baronet certainly admired the easy Regency manners of his diplomatic guardian and sympathized with his amiable and very human loyalty to his party. Such characteristics, however, were not so prominent in Acton's own serious and already more rigid temperament.

His education must have had much to do with this. Acton's schooling, in four countries (Saint Nicolas in France, Oscott in England, the University of Edinburgh in Scotland and the University of Munich in Bavaria) was fully as cosmopolitan as his family life. Unlike the prevailing atmosphere of the English country houses of the time, however, the dominant values of his teachers were religious and not secular. Following the movements of his parents between their homes in Aldenham, Paris, Naples, Herrnsheim and London, Acton soon learned to speak French fluently and was duly entered in the preparatory seminary of Saint Nicolas du Chardonnet in Paris in the year 1842.

NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE (INTRODUCTION)

1. "The Home and Foreign Review," January, 1863, p.219.
2. "The Chronicle," 20 April, 1867, p.99.
3. Lord Acton, "Essays on Church and State," ed., Douglas Woodruff (London, 1952), p.6.
4. James Bryce, "Studies in Contemporary Biography," (London, 1903), pp. 396-97.
5. See Lord Acton, "Essays on Freedom and Power," ed., Gertrude Himmelfarb (Boston, 1948) p.246. Acton was one of those rare individuals whose views become more idealistic and less moderate as they grow older.
6. "Ibid.," p.364
7. Lord Acton, "Renaissance to Revolution," (New York, 1961) p.26.
8. G.P.Gooch, "History and Historians of the Nineteenth Century," (London, 1913) p.365.
9. See the bibliography (prepared by Bert F.Hoselitz) in "Essays on Freedom and Power," (ed. Gertrude Himmelfarb). Also see the bibliography in the appendix of this thesis.
10. Lord Acton, "Acton-Simpson Correspondence," Cambridge, 1971, Vol.1, p.149.

CHAPTER TWO

THE EDUCATION OF LORD ACTON

Acton's first teacher was Monsignor Felix Dupanloup. Like the other two priests who were to influence his intellectual development, Cardinal Wiseman and Professor Dollinger, Dupanloup was also a prominent theologian, with ideas of his own on how Peter's bark ought to be piloted. As the clerical spokesman for the liberal wing of French Catholicism he was deeply involved in the attempt to reconcile the liberal State with the Catholic Church. At the Vatican Council he was to be part of the minority faction which held the definition of papal infallibility to be inopportune. Although liberal, his place in the Church seemed secure; he had been tutor to the royal princes and had received much acclaim for his part in the deathbed reconciliation of Talleyrand with Rome. (When the wildest of diplomats was about to receive the last rites, he calmly turned his palms downward and said "Remember, I am a bishop.")

In 1849, the liberal monsignor was to be elevated to the see of Orléans. A few years later Bishop Dupanloup was elected to the French Academy; at about the same time he helped to reorganize the liberal Catholic journal "Le Correspondant." He had been a friend and confessor to both the Dalbergs and Actons and had assisted at the death of Sir Ferdinand Acton. His mother's frequent visits

to Paris, Acton later said, were for the dual purpose of visiting her dressmaker and going to confession to Fr. Dupanloup.

When Acton entered the school in 1842, Fr. Dupanloup as the new supervisor had just changed the rules to permit enrolment of boys who did not intend to enter holy orders. Acton remained at St. Nicolas for only nine months, however. Since Acton was expected to matriculate at Cambridge, as his father and uncle had done before him, the family thought it more suitable that his preparatory education should be in England. Accordingly he was sent to St. Mary's, Oscott, an institution which liked to boast that it was now what Eton once was: a school for Catholic gentlemen. Their official announcement, in fact, promised to teach all those branches of learning "becoming either a scholar or a gentleman" (emphasis supplied).

At the time the college was under the presidency of the Right Reverend Nicholas Wiseman, titular bishop of Melipotamus, and destined to wear a cardinal's hat. Dr. Henry Weedall, his predecessor, who was largely responsible for the growth of the college, was now in charge of the preparatory school. Through a series of moves in the ecclesiastical hierarchy, in which Acton's uncle (then Monsignor Acton) was involved, Dr. Weedall found himself, in his last years, in this relatively humble office. He was an elderly Catholic gentleman

who belonged to the old world when Catholics desired nothing more than to be left in peace. He was thought to be too unassuming and lacking in aggressiveness. This was definitely not the mood of the militant Bishop Wiseman, who felt that "We are like the Jews returned to Jerusalem or like the first family after the Flood - we have to reconstruct everything." 1

The future cardinal had arrived at Oscott shortly after the beginning of the Oxford Movement. Wiseman looked upon this intellectual faction within the Church of England as the foothold upon which he and his Church would build in order to gradually reconvert Britain to the orthodox faith. As things turned out, many of the leaders of the Oxford Movement, which had its origins in the publication of the famous "Tracts of the Times" in 1833, remained High Church Anglicans and did not go over to the Roman communion, despite their sympathies with the ancient church. John Keble and Dr. Edward Pusey, for instance, though they did much to widen the Anglican understanding of the Church of Rome did not make the final break. John Henry Newman, of course, did take the Roman sacraments and was received into the Church at Oscott while Acton was still a student there in October of 1845. The most distinguished of English converts took up residence in the old college buildings, renamed Maryvale.

Encouraged by the small but steady trickle of

converts who moved from Oxford to Oscott, Wiseman was convinced that Britain would soon be a Catholic nation once again and that Oscott, strategically placed as it was, was to be the prime mover in this turning point of history. Acton later recalled that Wiseman seemed to take personal satisfaction at each new "conquest" for Rome: "The converts used to appear among us and he seemed to exhibit their scalps," Acton wrote. 2

Some of the less far-sighted of the Catholic parents and neighbouring clergy sometimes thought that the good bishop was not giving enough of his attention to the job he was being paid for, namely the education of his young charges. To these men of little faith, Wiseman haughtily replied: "Among the providential agencies that seemed justly timed, and even necessary for it (the reconversion of England), appeared to me the erection of this noble college, in the very heart of England. Often in my darkest days and hours, feeling as if alone in my hopes, have I walked in front of it, and casting my eyes toward it, exclaimed to myself, 'No, it was not to educate a few boys that this was erected, but to be the rallying point of the yet silent but vast movement towards the Catholic Church, which has commenced and must prosper.' I felt as assured of this as if the word of prophecy had spoken it." 3 Through the outer-directed efforts of its president, Oscott was visited by a continual train of distinguished men - English nobility, French royalty, famous statesmen both sacred and profane,

philosophers and theologians. As Acton later recalled, "We used to see (Wiseman) with Lord Shrewsbury, with O'Connell, with Father Mathew, with a Mesopotamian patriarch, with Newman....and we had a feeling that Oscott, next to Pekin, was a centre of the world." 4

The faculty of Oscott was by no means provincial; it was drawn from a wide variety of sources. There were, of course, many Oxford converts, some earlier Cambridge converts (including the vice president, Henry Logan, a Scotsman by birth), Irish Catholics, local midland clergy and some others whom Wiseman had brought with him from Rome. Acton thought later that Wiseman failed to integrate properly these diverse elements or inspire them in any one direction. "The point is," Acton wrote, "that he was an all-round person, and we did not clearly see his drift." 5 Wiseman himself was an Ultramontane, that is, he belonged to that party in the Church which favoured centralization of power in the papacy (so called from the phrase "beyond the mountains," i.e., Rome). However, he sometimes had visitors to Oscott who would lecture on both points of view within the Church; for instance, he once invited Vincenzo Gioberti, well known for his belief in the separation of Church and State, and on another occasion invited one of Gioberti's principal opponents, Antonio Rosmini.

In later life, Acton was to be rather critical of his old school; he once wrote to his coeditor, Richard

Simpson, that he had recently sent a letter to a friend on the students and divines of Oscott "compared to which X.Y.Z. is a panegyrist, and in February (the friend) told me that things were a good deal worse than I described." 6 While he was there, however, he seems to have been perfectly content and making great progress academically. He once sent the following letter to his mother, written at the age of ten.

"Dearest Mamma, - I received your letter this morning and shall tell you what you told me - nothing but good news....I am happier here than I have ever been. I am very much liked by the boys, and excell in two principal things: I am the best chess player of all the boys, except four, and I am the best pick-pocket (of pocket handkerchiefs) ever known....I am a perfect linguist, knowing perfectly - that is, so as to be able to speak them - English, French, German, and can almost speak Latin. I can speak a few words of Chinese, Greek, Italian, Spanish and Irish. I also know Chemistry, Astronomy, Mechanics, and many other sciences, but do not know botany. I am very happy here and perfectly reconciled to the thoughts of stopping here seven more years.- I am in a hurry, therefore good-bye,

Caesar Agamemmon John Dalberg Acton" 6

In 1848 at the age of fourteen, Acton left Oscott and spent the next two years at the University of Edinburgh under the tutelage of Henry Logan, former vice president of Oscott. It was the fashion among young English gentlemen of this period, especially those with an interest in scholarship, to spend a year or two at one of the Scottish universities either before or after Oxford or Cambridge. In Acton's case, we may presume that he was taking his Scottish interlude in preparation for his entrance into Cambridge. He applied in 1849 and again in 1850 to Magdalene College, Cambridge, where both his father and uncle had been undergraduates. Magdalene, however, was probably worried about the rash of converts to Catholicism which had been unsettling its common room at the very time Acton applied; accordingly the future Regius Professor of Modern History was refused admission as a student. Two other colleges gave the same answer and, in what for a Cambridge family must have been a last gamble, two Oxford colleges received Acton's application. The answer was everywhere the same. 7 It was hoped that at least he would learn Greek while at Edinburgh, but after two years he left, dissatisfied with his progress and knowing no more than five hundred words of the language. 8 However, the home of the "Edinburgh Review" must have had some effect on his thought; since he later told a friend that he left Scotland stuffed with Macaulay and raw Whiggery, we may assume that the citadel of liberalism had done its work.

Acton's intellectual journey next took him to Munich where in June, 1850, he came to live at the house of Professor Johann Ignaz von Dollinger. Munich was chosen as the place for him to continue his studies for several reasons; not only was it a seat of Catholic learning at the time, but it was also the home of his mother's relatives, the Arco-Valleys. Count Arco-Valley (whose daughter Acton later married) had known Dollinger for years; accordingly arrangements were made for him to stay with the professor in Munich and to visit the Arco-Valley country house at Tergensee on weekends.

Although a priest, Dr. Dollinger was primarily concerned with the life of the mind; he had refused the archbishopric of Salzburg because it would have interfered with his scholarship. Generally considered to be one of the greatest historical scholars in Europe, he was to be more influential than any other single individual on Acton's intellectual development. In the opinion of Miss Gertrude Himmelfarb, "The most decisive fact of Acton's life was his apprenticeship under Dollinger." 9 The priest-scholar was a humble man with the simple tastes and standards of the German bourgeoisie. He was himself the son of a professor of anatomy at the University of Wurzburg. "His personal appearance," Acton wrote to his stepfather, "is certainly not prepossessing. His forehead is not particularly large, and a somewhat malevolent grin seems constantly to reside about his wide, low mouth." 10

Despite the minimum of flattery in Acton's description (which is perhaps the inevitable student-teacher relationship on the first day of class), the young Englishman had great respect for the scholar's enormous capacity for work and his austere manner of life. He seemed to be the personification of the cold, dispassionate scholar, interested in nothing but the plain search for truth for its own sake.

Catholic scholarship throughout most of the world in the nineteenth century was in a lethargic condition. The University of Munich by contrast was in the midst of intellectual ferment. At the beginning of the century Protestant scholarship had taken the lead in the German universities. Men such as Ferdinand Baur and David Strauss broke new ground in Biblical criticism, B.G. Niebuhr and Leopold von Ranke were developing whole new schools of history and Friedrich von Schelling and Friedrich Schleiermacher were attracting international attention for their work in the philosophy of religion. The Catholic scholars of ["]Tübingen and Munich took it upon themselves to explore such problems as the relationship of science and religion or the historical analysis of the Old Testament. Their goal was to make Catholicism intellectually respectable by the standards of the most rigorous secular philosopher or historian. They succeeded so well in this task that for decades Munich was the intellectual cent^{re} of world Catholicism.

Upon Acton's arrival in Munich he threw himself into a course of study as broad and as demanding as the professor's own schedule. During his first few enthusiastic weeks, Acton later recalled, he read the whole of the "Biographie Universelle"- a work of some fifty-five volumes. "My day," he wrote to his stepfather, now Earl Granville, "is portioned out something in this manner - I breakfast at 8 - then two hours of German - an hour of Plutarch and an hour of Tacitus. This proportion was recommended by the professor. We dine a little before 2 - I see him for the first time in the day. At 3 my German master comes. From 4 till 7 I am out - I read modern history for an hour - having had an hour's ancient history just before dinner. I have some tea at 8 and study English literature and composition till 10 - when the curtain falls." 10

A few years later, Acton, as a more mature scholar, explained his personal philosophy of education to Lord Granville. He admitted that his studies at first glance seemed to be useless or unrelated. There was, however, definite unity in his method. He studied English history, the classics, the history of the Middle Ages and of the Church, theology and the history of philosophy in order to prepare himself both for a role in public life and to lay the foundation for an academic career as a serious writer, not as a dilettante. The common theme that united all his studies, he said, was history; his academic goal was to become an original historian and to teach others of

his countrymen to become the same. 11 His political goal was to promote in both Church and State the supremacy of principles over interest, of liberty over despotism (whether from above or below), and of plain truth over evasion and rationalization. "He had no desire," two of his editors note, "to make of intellectual pursuits an end in themselves. His scholarship was to him as practical as his politics, and his politics as ethical as his faith." 12

In the 1850s both Dollinger and his young student grew out of some of their intellectual shells, and both changed their minds on a number of important issues. Almost on his arrival Acton was told to read Burke in order to broaden his mind and as an antidote to Macaulay. Dollinger had an aversion to Macaulay but recommended Bacon, Newman and especially Burke's "Letters on a Regicide Peace," which the professor called "the literary starting point of Legitimism." 13 At the beginning of Acton's stay in Munich, Dollinger, like most of the Munich faculty was an Ultramontane and monarchist who saw little wrong with the status quo. He was comfortable in his life and derived satisfaction from being an industrious scholar, a loyal subject of the king and a devoted servant of the pope.

Dollinger's first serious quarrel with Rome was in 1854 over the proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Mary. Although there was a long tradition

in the Church which maintained that Mary was herself conceived without original sin, Dollinger opposed the intended proclamation on three main grounds. First, he asserted that historically it was not held to be a divinely revealed truth and that many leading Catholic scholars, including St. Thomas Aquinas had demurred to it. Secondly, it was to be decreed by Pope Pius IX on his own authority without the confirmation of a council of the Church. Thirdly, he believed that unnecessary additions to the creed would serve only to make the Catholic Church more isolated and further divide it from the Protestants. After the new dogma was officially proclaimed, however, Dollinger accepted it and consoled himself with the thought that he had fought it as long as possible. Pius IX's early exercise of papal infallibility in this matter foreshadowed the more serious struggle that was to come in 1870 when papal infallibility in faith and morals was itself to be proclaimed by the same pope as binding on all Catholics.

The latter doctrine was to be ratified by a council of the Church, which presumably vitiated at least one of Dollinger's procedural objections. At that time, however, Dollinger was not to submit; he and a small minority left the Roman Catholic communion and, calling themselves Old Catholics, continued to venerate every dogma of the Catholic Church but the last.

The basic transformation in Dollinger's intellectual outlook, which ultimately led to his excommunication, took place in those years when he and Acton lived together in Munich. On Acton's side there is little doubt that he acquired his lifelong distrust of ecclesiastical power largely as a result of his participation in these early battles in the 1850s.

The old Dollinger would have joined, in fact did join, in condemning any Catholic philosopher or theologian who inquired too deeply into matters which earned him the wrath of Rome. In 1835, a leading German theologian, Georg Hermes, was officially condemned by the Church for overemphasizing natural reason and rationalistic religion in the tradition of Kant. At that time Dollinger saw nothing improper in this proceeding. Two decades later, however, a similar controversy erupted over the theological works of Anton von Gunther and Jakob Frohschammer. The first philosopher maintained that science and religion were coequal in the area of scholarship and that science could assert its own truths independent of the teachings of religion. The second writer, Frohschammer, went further than this and claimed that science must take precedence over religion. In this case, Dollinger reversed his earlier position and came to the defence of the alleged heretics. If Rome were to silence every serious thinker who attempted to explore such problems as the relationship of religion and science, he insisted, Catholic scholarship would be reduced to sterile servility. There must be at least a reasonable amount of freedom of thought for

Catholic intellectuals, he said, if the universities were not to become centres of stagnation. Dollinger's efforts met with a cold rebuff, however, and the two scholars were duly condemned.

"Dollinger's work in the theory of development, that is the notion that moral truths and religious dogmas were not fixed for eternity but instead changed and developed as man's civilization and understanding advanced, was to eventually lead him to irreconcilable conflict with the Church. Miss Gertrude Himmelfarb, writing in her masterly biography, "Lord Acton: A Study of Conscience in Politics," asserts that it was from Dollinger and not from Newman that Acton adopted his own theory of development. "The theory...", Miss Himmelfarb notes, "is more popularly known in the form given it by Newman in his "Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine" of 1845.... Newman was unfamiliar with German theology, with the work of Drey, Mohler or Dollinger, and it appears that he arrived at the theory independently." 14

The fundamental idea of course was not new; its origins go back at least as far as the efforts of such men as Gottfried Leibniz, Jean Mabillon, John Robinson and Petavius. 15 Inherent in this way of studying religion were implications which eventually took both Acton and Dollinger to the very limits of the orthodoxy of the nineteenth-century Church. Ironically enough, it was the influence of this same theory that led Dollinger to

leave the Church after the Vatican Council and persuaded Acton to remain in it. Although Acton never in his life doubted a dogma of his religion, 16 he did not fear the most rigorous historical criticism of church history or doctrine.

He was convinced, for example, that the Resurrection was an historical fact in the same sense as the Battle of Waterloo was an event and could be documented by all the usual rules of historical evidence. He had little patience with historians who refused, for one reason or another, to deal with facts. Of F.C. von Baur he once wrote, "According to Baur, the business of history is not so much with facts as with ideas; and the idea, not the fact, of the Resurrection is the basis of the Christian faith. Doctrines are developed out of notions, not out of events. Whether or not the belief is true, he refuses to inquire. In the most characteristic passage ever written by a German historian, he declares that it is a question beyond the scope of history." 17

In Acton's interpretation, the theory of development meant that "the action of Christ who is risen on mankind... fails not, but increases; that the wisdom of divine rule appears not in the perfection but in the improvement of the world; and that achieved liberty is the one ethical result that rests on the converging and combined conditions of advancing civilization....History is the true demonstration of Religion." 18 This view, that God will ultimately

make clear in his own good time what may appear to us now to be wrong or unjust, enabled Acton to reconcile his submission to the Vatican decrees with his conscience. As will be seen, Acton believed that God would not allow his Church to remain for long in a grossly imperfect state; that time would "perfect" the doctrine of papal infallibility. As we also know, Dollinger did not agree with his former student's interpretation and left the Catholic Church shortly after the Council.

In 1857, a journey to Rome confirmed the worst fears and suspicions of the now theologically liberal Dollinger and his twenty-three year old student. They went, not to indulge in disputations with the conservative curia, but simply to read manuscripts in the Vatican library. Acton himself, probably because he lacked clerical status, was refused admission and had to rely on Dollinger's summaries of them. Dollinger's first and only impression of Rome left him, according to Acton, "despondent, without confidence and without respect." He was appalled not by any indications of self-interest or immorality but simply by the lethargy and inefficiency. He was convinced that few men in Rome cared deeply about any aspect of the Church and almost none had the slightest interest in scholarship. Acton himself thought that Pius IX was definitely the intellectual inferior of his predecessor. "Now nobody feels," Acton wrote, "that the Pope will think less of him because he knows nothing at all." 19

"Dollinger had, in particular, two unfortunate experiences which seriously affected his own, and Acton's attitude toward the hierarchy. In a conversation with the secretary of the Inquisition, Modena, that gentleman admitted he knew no German and then went on to note that a German book could be placed on the Index of Prohibited Books if a critic translated just one heretical or otherwise unsound sentence from it. Modena's only reply to Dollinger's suggestion that such a sentence could easily have its whole meaning distorted by being torn out of context was the unruffled assertion that "It is our rule." 20 Dollinger's audience with the pope was an even worse experience for him. His puritan sensibilities were shocked by the elaborate ceremonials and by the sight of women prostrating themselves before the papal chair. He found the pope himself to be unbearably and indecently arrogant. Pius IX had assured his liberal priest-professor from Munich that "only when the world had learned to bow before the Apostolic Chair would the welfare of mankind be assured." 21

The expedition to Rome was one of many undertaken by Dollinger and Acton together. Once a year, during Acton's residence at the university from 1850 to 1858, they set off on a tour of Italy, England, Austria, Switzerland or Germany, stopping to see old friends or to meet new ones or to attend scholarly conferences. They explored libraries and bookstores voraciously; they applied at first hand the modern historical techniques of manuscript research learned from von Ranke's lectures on

the "new" history at Munich. These journeys revolutionized the attitudes of both Dollinger and Acton toward history as well as the Church. For Dollinger it meant that the work of decades was suddenly obsolete. For Acton, however, it meant that the young historian had found his purpose in life: to aid in that "full exposition of truth (which is) the great object for which the existence of man is prolonged on earth." 22

Looking back on his Munich experiences after many years of independent scholarship, Acton was inclined to revise his original estimate of the university and even of Dollinger. The Munich faculty, he wrote, was "not remarkable for originality or freshness, or warmth, or play of mind." He thought the professors too committed to "defending a settled cause" to "start a voyage of discovery." Dollinger, Acton thought, was overly interested in the romantic school of historical writing and in criticizing Protestant versions of history. 23 Apparently Dollinger was successful in teaching Acton many important aspects of the historian's craft; he was not, however, able to impart to his student the attitudes and techniques needed for sustained work. Dollinger himself predicted that if Acton did not write a major book before he was forty he never would. 24 As in his reminiscences of Oscott, Acton had the feeling in later life that Munich had somehow let him down.

Although he spent eight years attending lectures and studying at the University of Munich, he never took

a degree. (This oversight was corrected in 1872 when the faculty of Munich awarded Acton an honorary doctorate.) It is doubtful, however, if this changed his attitude toward German universities. In 1867, almost ten years after leaving Munich, Acton wrote an essay on German education which might well have been written about one of the many "multiversities" of our own century. The function of the German universities, he wrote, "was to prepare candidates for public employment and to teach things necessary to be known in order to obtain a salary under government or in the Church, as a doctor or a schoolmaster. They existed to promote certain public objects of society, not to promote the independent ends of literature and science. They suffer alike from the want of liberty and the want of discipline. They are subject to the patronage of the State and they exert no effective restraint over the lives of the students. The very theory to which they owe their fame and influence has done harm, by the utter sacrifice of educational to scientific purposes; for it supplies a more perfect machinery for the production of good books than of good men." 25

Acton's many tours with his professor reinforced his taste for travel and his talent for observation. In 1853, he was offered an opportunity to go much farther afield than his usual book-hunting expedition. Lord Ellesmere, an older relative, had been appointed chief British commissioner to the New York Industrial Exhibition; Acton was invited to come as secretary and general aide de

camp. In the diaries he kept of his American travels, Acton was able to add to his list of illustrious personages: he met, among others, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Charles Dana, William Prescott, James Russell Lowell, the scientist Louis Agassiz, the English geologist, Sir Charles Lyell, and the Catholic essayist and philosopher, Orestes Brownson. Of this distinguished company, only Brownson made a good impression on the young and somewhat haughty Acton.* He kept up a correspondence for many years with Brownson and the American philosopher sent contributions from time to time to journals Acton was editing.

America was a disappointment to the young baronet, however. Even before he landed, he wrote of New York City that "the city cannot be seen for it is very flat and quite surrounded with shipping." He recorded that there was "great anxiety about the washing. It is said that there is but one laundress in the city." After landing, his worst fears were realized. "The typical Yankee face," he noted, "is not a very intelligent face... it is a selfish face." He was later to add in a burst of fair-mindedness that the people he met were "perhaps not the best specimens." 26

*During his years as Regius Professor at Cambridge, Acton was to say that he had an aversion to "bright young men;" this is probably because he was one himself, with all the faults and virtues of that class.

Acton, Lord Ellesmere and other members of their party were invited to the home of a social-climbing New York businessman who had "one of the largest houses on 5th avenue, the street where all the great people live." His name was Mr. Haight and Acton's first impression was that he was a "dirty old fellow - looked rather like Lord Brougham*." Acton guessed that he had made his fortune either in "hat-hands or drugs." There was a large "library" which housed some half-dozen books. The granddaughters of his host, Acton found to be incredibly vulgar with "detestable twangs." He added, however, that "there was no shyness that I could see, they were rather free and easy, indeed, as I had an instance of." Acton says no more about the young ladies of the household, but he does describe the hostess as "vulgar, affected, pompous" and unimaginably "ignorant." Mr. Haight himself would have made "a good character in a novel;" in fact, Acton understood that he had been featured in some satirical articles in New York. All in all they were "the most vain, purse-proud and boorish" family Acton had ever met. 27

Acton's visit to Harvard convinced him of the intellectual superiority of Munich despite the many weaknesses of that centre of Bavarian culture. "Surrounded with a few trees," he wrote, "appears a couple of red brick buildings of rather tumbledown appearance, and two

*One of the leaders of the Whig party and a rather formidable gentleman, but one whom Acton quite obviously disliked.

small edifices of stone....This is Harvard College, the oldest and principal university in the United States.... It is supported entirely by private means....The students number about 600. They pay about \$80 a year...they pass for the most dissipated set of students in the Union...."

"Nothing is studied for its own sake," he went on, "but only as it will be useful in making a practical man; thus rhetoric is cultivated, as each man may be called upon to speak in the course of his life, indeed he is very like to speak often without being called upon. Mathematics and certain of the sciences are pursued because they correspond to the utilitarian character of the country. There is no demand for learning (for its own sake).....Learning may become desirable sometime or other; I should not wonder if this was to happen out of vanity; more men may have leisure after a time, and will be able to devote themselves to occupations which are their own reward. This is seldom the case now, as money is the great object of life. These deficiencies are well-known to the members of the university, many of whom have studied in Germany...." 28

From Harvard, Acton crossed the Charles River to attend a Massachusetts State Constitutional Convention which was being held at that time. Sitting with Charles Dana, Acton was overwhelmed by raw democracy in action. The casual language and manners of the legislators were in sharp contrast to the more elegant House of Commons, where Acton

was himself to sit a few years later. "A half-madman," he notes, "made a speech suggesting equality in all things...there was talk of votes for women and such-like."²⁹ Even more than by the thought of votes for women, Acton was shocked to hear that the state of Maine had passed a law prohibiting the sale of liquor. "This specimen of bureaucratic interference," he wrote, "appears strange in such a free country." ³⁰

The remainder of his American journey only confirmed Acton's suspicions of the superficiality and materialism of American life. Six years later he was to write to a friend that a visit to America was a quick cure for an infatuation with democracy. ³¹ It should be said, however, that the mature Acton was in substantial agreement with Alexis de Tocqueville, whom he said was "of all writers... the hardest to find fault with. He is always wise, always right and as just as Aristedes (sic)." Russell Kirk's description of Tocqueville, that he was "the best friend democracy ever has had, and democracy's most candid and judicious critic," ³³ could properly be applied to Lord Acton, who in 1878 wrote that "American independence was the beginning of a new era....The greatest statesmen in England," he continued, "averred that it was just. It established a pure democracy; but it was democracy in its highest perfection, armed and vigilant, less against aristocracy and monarchy than against its own weaknesses

and excess. Whilst England was admired for the safeguards with which, in the course of many centuries, it had fortified liberty against the power of the crown, America appeared still more worthy of admiration for the safeguards which in the deliberations of a single memorable year, it had set up against the power of its own sovereign people. It resembled no other known democracy, for it respected freedom, authority and law....Ancient Europe opened its mind to two new ideas - that Revolution with very little provocation may be just; and that democracy in very large dimensions may be safe." 34 In the last lines of the last lecture that Lord Acton delivered at Cambridge he said that federalism in America "has produced a community more powerful, more prosperous, more intelligent, and more free than any other which the world has seen." 35

Although in the course of his development, Acton changed his mind about American democracy (as he did about many things), his first conclusions about absolutism in Russia (which he visited in 1856) were to remain essentially the same all of his life. It impressed him then, as it did in his last days as Regius Professor, as "an amalgam of power and servility." 36

"Russia," he was to write a few years after his visit there with Lord Granville, "has existed a thousand years; it is the most populous of the European nations, the most united and vastest state in the world. And yet it has

accomplished nothing for mankind, and has not produced a monument or an idea that men will be unwilling to forget. The Russians have created nothing; but they have not assimilated the foreign elements which their rulers have introduced. They have preserved the national character unchanged, in spite of the elaborate efforts of the government; and under an incessant despotism they have retained the art of providing for themselves. They do not resist the interference of the State; but they do not require it." 37

Acton's stepfather, who had recently succeeded his own father as the second Earl Granville, was sent as the representative of Queen Victoria at the coronation of Tsar Alexander II. The diplomatic earl and his scholar stepson worked well together at the embassy, but they were of essentially different temperaments. Granville was the Whig milord who could get on well with almost anyone; Acton could charm his high-born friends with his learning and his fellow scholars with his knowledge of high society, but the young baronet was fundamentally much more withdrawn and serious-minded than his guardian.

There was an air of levity about Granville which doubtless made him a welcome member of the irrepressible Melbourne's cabinet but which was alien to the young and sensible Acton. Granville, who then held the ponderous title of lord president of the Privy Council, never hesitated to mock himself or his position. In a letter to

a friend, he once described a dinner party he had attended: "The house beautiful, the china of the softest paste, the wine excellent, the Lord President rather drunk." 38

Although he was not without literary interests, it was de rigeur for a Whig earl to take nothing seriously. He wrote to his good friend Lord Canning (then governor-general of India) that he was working on a Life of Madame de Chevreuse in the "Revue des Deux Mondes," adding the customary remark, "It seems very amusing." About the earnest, industrious young Gladstone, he commented in the same letter, "He is devoted to Homer. He is going to rehabiliter Helen, whom he has discovered to be a much injured woman." 39

Still, the gentlemanly earl did have some influence on his brilliant stepson's way of looking at the world. For instance, in describing the Tsar's sister (the widow of the Empress Josephine's brother) Acton wrote: "The only (member of the imperial family) I thought really pleasant was the Grand Duchess Marie; so easy, so grande dame, so clever, so insolent, so civil." 40 Insolence is a quality the aristocratic Granville would have appreciated in a woman; it is difficult to imagine the bourgeois Dollinger sharing this taste.

The brief visit to the seat of autocracy lasted only from August to September. But it was long enough to convince Acton that he "would rather be a citizen of the

humblest republic in the Alps than a subject of a superb autocracy which overshadowed half of Europe and of Asia." 41 Four decades later Acton was to draw upon his brief experience with Caesarism to write with prophetic power that out of the Renaissance came the idea that "the State alone governs, and all other things obey. Reformation and Counter-reformation had pushed religion to the front; but after two centuries the original theory, that government must be undivided and uncontrolled, began to prevail. It is a new type, not to be confounded with that of Henry VIII... or Louis XIV, and better adapted to a more rational and economic age. Government so understood is the intellectual guide of the nation, the promoter of wealth, the teacher of knowledge, the guardian of morality, the mainspring of the ascending movement of man. That is the tremendous power, supported by millions of bayonets, which grew up in the days of which I have been speaking at Petersburg, and was developed, by much abler minds, chiefly at Berlin; and it is the greatest danger that remains to be encountered by the Anglo-Saxon race." 42

When the young Acton returned to England from Petersburg, he was just over his twenty-first year. The years of preparation were almost over; it was almost time for him to decide what he was to do with his talents and privileges.

NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO (THE EDUCATION OF LORD ACTON)

1. Gertrude Himmelfarb, "Lord Acton" (Chicago, 1952), p.15. Besides the very thorough chapter on Acton's education in Miss Himmelfarb's biography, the interested reader may consult a chapter by the Cambridge historian Herbert Butterfield, entitled "Acton: His Training, Methods and Intellectual System" in "Studies in Diplomatic History Presented to G.P.Gooch," ed. A.O. Sarkissian (London, 1961).
2. Wilfrid Ward, "The Life and Times of Cardinal Wiseman" (London, 1897) vol.1, p.348.
3. "Ibid.," p.343.
4. "Ibid.," p.349.
5. "Ibid.," p.353.
6. Lord Acton, "Selections from the Correspondence of the First Lord Acton," ed. J.N.Figgis and R.V.Laurence, (London, 1917) pp. 1-2.
7. "Ibid.," pp. 256-57. Acton in 1890, thanked Gladstone for securing his appointment as a Fellow of All Souls. He added that King's College, Cambridge, and "a famous college at Oxford" had offered him fellowships at the same time. "All this has flattered me unduly," he noted, "as both universities refused me as an undergrad."
8. M.Grant Duff, "Out of the Past" (London, 1903) vol.II, p.190.

9. Himmelfarb, "Lord Acton," p.19.
10. Acton, "Correspondence," p.8.
11. "Ibid.," p.24.
12. Acton, "History of Freedom," p.xviii.
13. Himmelfarb, p.69.
14. "Ibid.," p.23. The reader interested in learning more about Dollinger may consult Acton's essay on his teacher in "The English Historical Review," V, 1890, pp. 700-44.
15. Fasnacht, "Acton's Political Philosophy," p.48.
16. Duff, "Out of the Past," vol. II, p.195. Acton is quoted as saying "I am not conscious that I ever in my life held the slightest shadow of a doubt about any dogma of the Catholic Church."
17. Lord Acton, "Historical Essays and Studies," ed. J.N. Figgis and R.V.Laurence (London, 1908) p.369.
18. Lord Acton, "Inaugural Lecture on the Study of History," in "Lectures on Modern History," (London, 1926) p.12.
19. Add. MSS. 5751, (Cambridge University Library; unless otherwise indicated "Add.MSS." always refers to this source.)
20. Himmelfarb, "Lord Acton," p.28.
21. "Ibid.,"
22. "Home and Foreign Review," July, 1863, p.163.
23. Himmelfarb, "Lord Acton," p.23.
24. For more on Acton's early training consult E.L.Woodward, "The Place of Lord Acton in the Liberal Movement of the Nineteenth Century," "Politica," IV (1939), pp.248-65 and Sarkissian, "Studies in Diplomatic History."

25. "The Chronicle," April 13, 1867, p.57.
26. Lord Acton, "Lord Acton's American Diaries,"
"Fortnightly Review," CX, 1922, pp. 728-33.
27. "Ibid.," pp. 740-41.
28. "Ibid.," pp. 929-31.
29. "Ibid.," vol. CXI, p.74.
30. "Ibid.," vol. CX, p.733.
31. Acton, "Lord Acton and his Circle," p.95. Acton described "several years' residence in the United States" as a "homoeopathic cure for democracy." This letter was written in 1859 when Acton was twenty-five years of age.
32. Lord Acton, "Lectures on the French Revolution," ed. J.N.Figgis and R.V.Laurence (London, 1910) p.357
33. Russell Kirk, "The Conservative Mind," (Chicago,1960) p.226.
34. Acton, "History of Freedom," pp. 84-85.
35. Acton, "Lectures on Modern History," p.314.
36. "Ibid.," p.285.
37. "Home and Foreign Review," January, 1863, p.285.
38. Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice, "Life of the 2nd Earl Granville" (London, 1905), vol.I, p.128.
39. "Ibid.," p.129.
40. "Ibid.," p.205.
41. Fasnacht, "Acton's Political Philosophy," p.206.
42. Acton, "Lectures on Modern History," p.289.

CHAPTER THREE

THE JOURNALISM OF CHURCH AND STATE

Acton returned to England in 1858 after having spent the greater part of eight years studying in Germany and most of the other major countries of Europe. He immediately noticed the sharp contrast between the stirring intellectual life of Germany and the stagnant state of Catholic thought in his own country. His duty, he believed, was plain: he should employ his wealth and education as best he could in order to bring liberalism to his fellow Catholics, Catholicism to his fellow liberals and the discoveries and techniques of German historical research to both. As Herbert Butterfield has put it, "He conceived it his mission to reproduce something like the Munich circle in England to educate his coreligionists, to raise the standards of their scholarship and to provide intellectual leadership and something like a programme for their politics." 1

That English Catholicism badly needed intellectual and political leadership for a variety of reasons there can be no doubt. In the United Kingdom as a whole, it would appear at first glance that Catholics were a very respectable minority, about one-fifth of a population of twenty-five million. Almost all British Catholics, however, were Irish, and Ireland at that time, although nominally an equal partner in a tripartite kingdom, was scarcely the master of its own destiny. Most of her people were

uneducated and many were near starvation. Catholics as well as Anglicans were forced to pay for the support of the established Church. Despite Catholic Emancipation only one English M.P. was a Catholic (a younger son of the duke of Norfolk); the ancient universities no longer barred Catholics by statute (as they did Jews) but in practice continued to discriminate against them. Dogged at almost every turn by Protestant prejudice, Catholics were further weakened by the fact that they themselves were disunited. Many English and Irish Catholics regarded the ties of blood as stronger than the ties of religion and consequently failed to support each other politically and economically. The older English Catholics tended to be anti-Roman while the newer converts were often "more papist than the pope."

Acton saw as one of his chief tasks the gradual removal of anti-Catholic prejudice from the minds of intelligent Protestants. He knew that the primary reason for this conviction held by most educated Englishmen was a distrust of the freedom and sincerity of Catholic scholarship. In an age of discussion freedom of the mind must be king. In 1858 Acton and Richard Simpson (who shared Acton's liberalism in both secular and clerical politics) took over "The Rambler." Simpson put the matter well. "I know," he wrote, "for I have experienced the thing,* that the great prejudice against the Church among

*Simpson was an Oxford convert.

educated Englishmen is not a religious one against her dogmas, but an ethical and political one; they think that no Catholic can be truthful, honest or free, and that if he tries to be he is subjected to persecution." 2

From the start, it was clear that one of Acton's primary aims was to overcome by example the belief of English Protestants that Catholics could not be good and honest scholars. Although the "Rambler" was only a decade old, it was already regarded as a serious threat by the English Ultramontanes, who had their own organ in the "Dublin Review," founded by Wiseman. "I have thought and read a good deal upon political subjects," Acton wrote to Simpson in 1858 at the age of twenty-four, "and have read a great lot of the famous writers, to try to find out a clear view which I could rely on in public life. I will endeavour to turn these studies to account and to pursue them farther in the service of our common undertaking."

"Now the first point," Acton continued, "...is that I am very far from agreeing with any of the more famous Catholic writers, or with any of the political parties in England...there is a philosophy of politics to be derived from Catholicism...and from the principles of our constitution...as remote from the absolutism of one set of Catholics as from the doctrinaire Constitutionalism of

another.* I conceive it possible to appeal at once to the example and interest of the Church and to the true notion of the English Constitution...that the true notion of a Christian State, and the true, latent, notion of the constitution, coincide and complete each other." 3

True to his word, Acton threw himself with all his energies into his chosen career. He usually wrote one long article himself for each issue, collaborated closely on several others and, in addition, would often review twenty or thirty books in several languages. He was no rich young dilettante supporting a little magazine with his family's money and occasionally writing an editorial or meeting a contributor for lunch at a fashionable club. The fact that he did work so hard is doubly remarkable since he could have easily spent his time in leisurely and genteel scholarship in between the rounds of weekends at the country houses of the great Catholic families.

Acton had also hoped to take part in the founding of a great Catholic university in England; when this was found to be impossible, he devoted his efforts to the

*This is apparently a reference to the "Correspondant," a French liberal Catholic journal, one of whose contributors was Acton's first teacher, Bishop Dupanloup. Their motto was the words of Canning: "Civil and religious liberty for the whole world." At this time in his career, Acton thought such a goal to be doctrinaire, believing as he did that serfdom in Russia and slavery in the U.S. was justified by circumstances.

further education of literate Catholics by means of the "Rambler." Although the bimonthly's circulation was never more than three thousand (small even by nineteenth-century standards), under Acton's guidance it became recognized as one of the most learned and influential periodicals in Europe. According to the "Times," "Its notices of the current literature...(were) most complete; some of its contributors were men of the highest distinction in various countries. 4

There were well over forty contributors from a dozen countries; almost all were friends of the young editor that he had met on his travels. In keeping with the practice of the time, the articles were unsigned, but, besides Acton, Simpson and Newman, other contributors are known to have included Lord Sherbrooke, Prof. Wilhelm Roscher from Leipzig, Orestes Brownson from Boston, Peter Renouf, Denis McCarthy, and William Palgrave. Although he was only twenty-four when he began his editorship, Acton impressed his personality on the "Rambler" from the very beginning. He assigned the various articles, indicated the sources he wished consulted, the questions which should be answered, the pitfalls which should be avoided and the general form the articles should take. As Mr. F.E.Lally put it, "His mastery of detail was phenomenal." Due to his influence the bimonthly "virtually lost its general character and became more and more a journal of political education." 5

The intellectual success of the "Rambler" would not have been achieved, of course, without the contributions (both literary and financial) of Acton's good friend and coeditor, Richard Simpson. He was fourteen years older than the young baronet and could date his Catholicism only from his twenty-fourth year, when he gave up his Anglican vicarship and joined the Roman communion. Simpson was a man of considerable private means who, like Acton, could have had a life of ease and luxury or at least of peace and quiet if he had wished. A graduate of Oriel College, Oxford, and a secure member of the English establishment, he chose to be a rebel throughout most of his life. Having left the Church of England because he was independent-minded, he did not adopt an attitude of meek submission within his new Church.

In one of his first articles for the "Rambler" in 1859, Simpson ventured to criticize the conduct of some Catholic bishops in regard to a Royal Commission. This was the opportunity that Cardinal Wiseman (who had been viewing the "Rambler" with increasing misgivings from the year of its founding) was waiting for. The encroachment upon episcopal prerogatives gave Wiseman the excuse he needed to threaten censure. Wishing to avoid a direct clash with the hierarchy, both Acton and Simpson agreed to resign as editors on condition that John Henry Newman took over direction of the offending journal. Dr. Newman, after some hesitation, agreed and made a sincere effort to preserve the principles of liberal Catholicism without

incurring the displeasure of the hierarchy. His tactics of conciliation were to be of no avail, however.

One of his own articles, which appeared in his second issue, was sent by Wiseman to the Congregation of the Index in Rome for formal censure. The essay was entitled "On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine" and, according to Wiseman, it implied the fallibility of the Church. The result was that Newman also resigned and the "Rambler" was returned to its former owners, Acton and Simpson. For appearances' sake, Simpson remained a contributor, while Acton and John Moore Capes were responsible for the editing.

Acton was constantly in trouble with the hierarchy of the Church, not because he was a weak or indifferent Catholic, but precisely because he took his religion so seriously. He was always regarded with suspicion by the party leaders of the Whigs and Liberals for the exact same reason. To Acton, politics and religion were inextricably intertwined. "Have you not discovered," he once wrote to Mary Gladstone (daughter of the prime minister)"...what a narrow doctrinaire I am, under the disguise of levity?... Politics come nearer a religion with me, a party is more like a Church, error more like heresy, prejudice more like sin, than I find it to be with better men." 7 He insisted that the statesmen, and the historian, must realize that men could "lose their souls by political, as they do by domestic error." 7

In 1862 Acton wrote to his collaborator Simpson a brief but brilliant analysis of the dangers inherent in a State dominated by a religious government. "...a religious government," he wrote, "depends for its existence on the belief of the people. - Preservation of the faith is ratio summa status, to which everything else must yield. Therefore not only the civil power enforces the religious law, but the transgressions of the religious must be watched and denounced - therefore espionage & religious detectives, and the use of the peculiar means of information religion provides to give warning to police. The domain of conscience (is) not distinct therefore from the domain of the state - sins, crimes, and sins against faith, even when private, without proselytism, are acts of treason. Seclusion from the rest of the world necessarily follows, if the rest of the world has not the same religion, or even if it is not governed on the same principles. For liberty is extremely contagious. Therefore travel and commerce, facilities of communication &c. (are) necessarily proscribed; for they would be solvents of a state founded on religion only. But all these prohibitions restrain material as well as intellectual well-being. Poverty and stationary cultivation, that is to say, in comparison with the rest of the world, retrogression, (are) the price of such a (government.) Two things put an end to this. The economical dependence on other countries (which) needs ensues, ultimately break down the seclusion, as the determination of capital to exploit undeveloped resources is resistless in the long run - and the increase of

communication gradually destroys barriers and brings the forbidden knowledge and desires into the sequestered community. All this is perfectly applicable to Tibet and Maroc..." 8

Acton was almost as fearful, however, of the completely secular or unreligious State. Democracy without religion, he was convinced, would sooner or later lead to despotism or anarchy. Like Burke and Tocqueville he stressed again and again that nations lacking the self-governing force of religion are unfit for freedom. Unless there are checks from within, he agreed, there must surely be checks from without. He always opposed those who ignored the moral nature and purpose of the State and simply treated it as "a police organization for the protection of property." 9

He found as much to fault in religious quietism and secular liberalism as in Ultramontaniam. Both the radical secularists and the religious quietists, Acton maintained, shared a common error: they both believed that Christianity (or any religion) should have no effect on politics, that there was an absolute divergence between Church and State. Acton firmly denied this. The essence of Christianity, he claimed, was its foundation upon the individual conscience; upon the idea that the soul was more sacred than the State. 10 "The essence of Whiggism," he once wrote, "is the acknowledgement of the supremacy of the higher law." 11

Acton believed that the State has a divine origin and purpose; that Church and State "have the same origin and the same ultimate objects." 12 The great object of the Christian statesman is, "by keeping the two spheres permanently distinct - by rendering to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's - to make all absolutism, of whatever kind, impossible." 13 He once wrote to Simpson that "All liberty consists (ultimately) in the preservation of an inner sphere exempt from State power. - That reverence for conscience is the germ of all civil freedom, and the way in (which Christianity) served it. That is, liberty has grown out of the distinction (separation is a bad word) of Church and State." 14

Although Church and State have many aims in common and are not fully separable, he thought, neither should they be united. "The State aims at the things of another life but indirectly," Acton wrote. "Its course runs parallel to that of the Church; they do not converge." 15 Acton regarded the admiration of the Ultramontanes for the theocracies of the ancient Jews and Greeks as anti-Christian, not ultra-Christian. The union of Church and State (with either subordinate to the other) was a pagan ideal, he maintained, not a Christian one. In the Middle Ages, the characteristic dualism of Christianity (at least of the Western branch) came to its highest fruition in the struggle between emperors and popes. Acton was convinced that the outcome of that balancing of forces

was a great increase in liberty, which would not have come about if the bishop of Rome had followed the lead of his colleague at Constantinople and allowed his see to be subordinated to the State. Neither would it have come about if the contrary had happened.

In Acton's view the truly Christian State was the truly liberal State; there could be no conflict between the principles of ethical Christianity (unencumbered by the tendencies toward corrupting power inherent in any institution) and the principles of disinterested liberalism. He thought, in fact, that the ideal liberal would be a Christian clergyman. 16 The ideal commonwealth he believed to be Pennsylvania in the eighteenth century, founded by the Quakers on a constitution which guaranteed liberty, equality and toleration. 17

He insisted that by his standards England was the most truly Catholic state in Europe, despite its break with the Holy See. This was because in most of the self-proclaimed Catholic nations of Europe, the Church had subordinated itself to absolute monarchies. 18 The secular liberals, however, were concerned with freedom for the State but not for the Church; this path, according to Acton, also led to an unhealthy concentration of power. The emancipation of the individual became a sophisticated means of enslaving him since the limited powers once enjoyed by the Church and other independent institutions and corporations, as

Tocqueville had also pointed out, were replaced by an absolute State. The French Revolution did not end the centralizing tendencies of the ancien régime; it accelerated them. For these reasons, the permanent answer must be a free Church in a free State, the slogan of the liberal Catholics. 19

For Acton, conscience was all. Though he did not believe that the conscience was infallible, 20 he held it to be the best moral guide given to us and the one to be most relied upon, even, if necessary, against the express commands of pope, king, council or House of Commons. A man who acted against the persistent urgings of his own conscience, in Acton's eyes, would almost certainly lose his soul. Acton believed there was a greater moral risk, therefore, in membership in the Catholic Church than there was in attending Quaker meeting-houses. This was because the Catholic Church had the strongest hierarchical structure and had at various times and places enforced opinions that were perhaps perilous to the soul.

"A Liberal," he once wrote, "does not believe that Catholicism, Lutheranism, Calvinism...offer a sufficient security against moral error. They all have promoted persecution. Therefore, he gives higher value to Socinians, Independents, Baptists, and to systems of philosophy that do not persecute. He holds that a sound morality and escape from sin is more easy to find in philosophy than in religion. He checks his theology with philosophy.... He grounds himself, not indeed against the lower types of

clergy, but against the priesthood of the great Churches." 21

And yet Acton often said that communion with Rome was dearer to him than life. Many of his friends recalled that he had told them there was no doctrine of the Church which he had "the slightest difficulty in believing." 22 Acton recognized that the sacraments and dogmas were never the sufficient instrument of salvation or of earthly liberty and morality, but he was certain that, for himself at least, they were the necessary means of spiritual salvation. 23

Acton believed that, "Principles make a strong man, maxims a wise man, doctrines a complete man." 24 He was sure that rigorously scientific men who studiously ignore the transcendent were in a very real sense incomplete. He was not one of those who, like his distant relative Edward Gibbon, valued religion as a utilitarian device for holding society together (although he knew, of course, that a moral creed had infinite social value). Nor did he share the attitude of those aesthetes for whom religion, especially the Catholic Church, was a psychological escape from the barrenness of their own times. Acton believed in the Catholic Church, quite simply, as the means for his personal salvation.

In Acton's lifetime England as a nation gradually abandoned certain religious norms (Anglican Protestantism), partly through his and his associates' efforts at the

"Rambler" and other such journals. In place of the old structure, there gradually grew up a system of limited toleration for certain dissenters (not at first including Catholics, Jews or atheists); this was eventually replaced by an almost secular establishment which tolerated all religions (as well as nonreligion) while granting certain unimportant favours* to one (the Church of England by Law Established). Thus the goal of Acton's first teacher, Bishop Dupanloup (civil and religious liberty for the whole world), was to come to fruition at least in the British Isles. Although the young Acton, as we have seen, did not entirely approve of this objective, the more mature Acton derived considerable satisfaction as the transition from intolerance to tolerance was gradually accomplished (with at times crucial help from Lord Acton in both houses of Parliament). The new era represented a change from less liberty to more, and from a time of less respect for the individual conscience to one of almost complete freedom in matters of thought and spirit. For Acton, this was the Christian State, insofar as it could be realized on earth: a State where every man has the right and the duty to obey his own conscience.

Acton's frequently professed loyalty to the doctrines and sacraments of the Church was not enough for the Ultramontanes, however; these churchmen believed that Christianity was threatened most seriously by the increasing growth of science and secularism. Only unswerving obedience to the authority of the Church, they reasoned, could

*Such as the right to crown the monarch.

combat these increasing social evils. The liberal Catholics, they thought, were stabbing the Church in the back.

Science, to Acton, was no threat to his faith; he emphasized again and again that science could endanger the Catholic Church only if it rejected geology, anthropology and all the other new studies, and permitted them to be used by enemies of the faith. 25 "We must not pursue science," he once wrote, "for ends independent of science. It must be pursued for its own sake, and must lead to its own results." 26

From Acton's viewpoint, the real enemies of conscience and the Church were those overzealous clerics who knew and then taught that the end justifies the means; that because science sometimes disturbs the faith of partially educated persons, it is right to censor science or to limit education; or, in the extreme case, that assassination is moral if the victim is a Protestant. According to two of his colleagues at Cambridge University (writing after Acton's death), "In Acton's view the supreme evil is the telling of lies and the shedding of blood in order to secure ecclesiastical power...He wished to attack Ultramontaniam...in the root and stem...The root and stem, are, in Acton's view, a certain corruption of the conscience. Christianity to Acton is primarily a system of ethics; whatever violates that on principle is anti-Christian. What Acton felt to be the root of evil

was the notion that acts otherwise reprehensible could take on a different colour if they were done to promote religion, e.g., the notion that truth may be suppressed for the sake of edification. Out of this main root grows the notion that the Church in self defence, as an organization, may develop a machinery for putting assailants out of the way. Such machinery was developed... in the Medieval Inquisition. This was what Acton meant when he spoke of the system of austere immorality established at Trent. Austere in the sense that it condemned sexual vice, and enjoined self-denial, the system of Trent was immoral in that it enjoined persecution and the suppression of inconvenient truth." 27

The papacy as an institution, Acton once wrote to his good friend and fellow historian, Lady Blennerhassett, aims at power and since power tends to corrupt, we must always keep the dangers inherent in Church authority in proper perspective. "It is well that an enthusiast for monarchy," he wrote, "be forced to bear in mind the story of Nero and Ivan, of Louis XIV and Napoleon; that an enthusiast for democracy be reminded of St. Just and Mazzini. It is more essential that an enthusiast of the papacy be made to contemplate its crimes, because its influence is nearer the Conscience; and the spiritual danger of perverted morals is greater than the evil of perverted politics... The corruption which comes from revolutionary or absolutist sympathies is far less subtle and expansive. It reaches the lower regions of the mind and does not poison that which

is noblest." 28

Acton emphasized, in the same letter, that he did not "prefer the Sorbonne to the Congregations or the Councils to the Popes." He was not a proponent of national or conciliar Catholicism. He regarded those Catholics who wish to transfer supreme authority to a council of the church as no better than those, like De Maistre, who wanted to lodge all power in the pope. In this, his religious views reflected his secular politics; he was not so much interested in who was to rule (people, king or aristocracy) as he was in limiting the power of any government and guaranteeing the supreme rights of conscience. "The essence of Whiggism," he had written, "is the acknowledgement of the supremacy of a higher law," 29 a law which must be respected by popes and councils as much as by kings and majorities. His position within the Church, he told Lady Blennerhassett, was nothing but the "adjustment of religious history to the ethics of Whiggism." 30

Although the "Rambler" devoted a good part of its efforts to criticizing the Ultramontane view, it did not confine its unsolicited advice to Catholics only. As Acton once remarked to Simpson, the "Rambler" was a double-barrelled gun, one for shooting its friends and one for its enemies. The positivists, for instance, that scientific school of thought which sought to explain the world without reference to the transcendent, were the recipients of a salvo every

few months. Henry Thomas Buckle's monumental "History of Civilization," for example, was reviewed by Acton. In outlining his plan of attack to Simpson, Acton wrote, "Setting aside the theory, the learning of the book is utterly superficial and obsolete. He is altogether a mere humbug and a very bad arguer. He has taken great pains to say things that have been said much better before in books he has not read. He has no knowledge of the classics and still less of theological literature. We can expose him completely." 31

In "The Protestant Theory of Persecution," possibly the most important article that Acton ever wrote for the "Rambler," the young historian took the surprising position (in the light of his later views) that Catholic religious persecution was somehow less objectionable than similar activities carried out by Protestants. Acton reasoned that while Catholics persecuted heretics for practical causes (in order to preserve the fabric of society which rested on a special moral order), Protestants justified their intolerance on purely speculative grounds by punishing religious errors as errors and not as dangers to the social order. Acton admitted that Catholic persecutions were probably more bloody, but he maintained that Protestant persecution was a greater sin against conscience.

This was not an isolated essay on Acton's part; during most of his youth, as we have seen on other occasions, he

held the view that freedom and intolerance are relative conditions, appropriate or inappropriate to different stages of civilization. On these grounds, he refused to condemn slavery in America and serfdom in Russia. "To say that persecution is wrong, - nakedly," he once wrote to Simpson, "seems to me first of all untrue, but at the same time it is in contradiction with solemn decrees, with Leo X's Bull (against) Luther (and others.)" 32

"The theory of intolerance," he maintained in another essay of about the same time, "is wrong only if founded absolutely upon religious motives; but even then the practice of it is not necessarily censurable. It is opposed to the Christian spirit, in the same manner as slavery is opposed to it. The Church prohibits neither intolerance nor slavery, though in proportion as her influence extends, and civilization advances, both gradually disappear....The law naturally follows the condition of society, which does not suddenly change....The exclusion of other religions - the system of Spain, of Sweden (and others) - is reasonable in principle, though practically untenable in the present state of European society."

Continuing in his Burkean vein, Acton wrote, "The acquisition of real definite freedom is a very slow and tardy process....These liberties are the product of a long conflict with absolutism, and of a gradual development, which by establishing definite rights revives in positive form the negative liberty of an unformed society. The

object and the result of this process is the organization of self-government, the substitution of right for force, of authority for power, of duty for necessity and of a moral for a physical relation between government and people. Until this point is reached, religious liberty is an anomaly." 33

For his own country and his own time, however, Acton was certain that religious persecution was morally and politically wrong. In fact, "The Protestant Theory of Persecution" was meant to be an attack on intolerance in general and was only in part a defence of Catholic as opposed to Protestant forms of persecution. The essay was certainly in the Burkean tradition and even John Stuart Mill would have disagreed with little of it; it is in comparison with Acton's later writings, as he gradually developed a more uncompromising and abstract libertarianism, that the early essay seems illiberal and complacent.

In the short time of two or three years, as it happened, Acton almost completely reversed his earlier position. In a review published in 1863 in the "Home and Foreign Review" he concluded that the Albigensians were almost certainly destroyed not because of their antisocial doctrines, but primarily because of their theological heresies. 34 He gradually became convinced that Catholics, as well as Protestants, were more interested in eradicating those errors which they believed were dangerous to souls than those which threatened society. 35 In a notebook

probably dating from 1866 and 1867, he goes even farther and maintains that the Spanish Inquisition was dedicated primarily to maintaining the authority of the church hierarchy and only secondarily to protecting either society or the souls of men.

"(The) object of the Inquisition," he wrote, "(was) not to combat sin - for the sin was not judged by it unless accompanied by (theological) error. Not even to put down error. For it punished untimely or unseemly remarks the same as blasphemy. The object was only unity. This became an outward, fictitious, hypocritical unity. The gravest sin was pardoned, but it was death to deny the donation of Constantine (a forged document which claimed that the first Christian Emperor had "willed" the Western Empire to the Pope). So men learnt that outward submission must be given. All this (was) to promote authority more than faith. When ideas were punished more severely than actions - for all this time the Church was softening the criminal law...and the Donation was put on a level with God's own law - men understood that authority went before sincerity." 36

Although it probably seemed to Acton and Simpson that they spent a good part of their time battling with the enemies of the Church, most outsiders saw the Ultramontane "Dublin Review" and the "Rambler" mainly as the antagonists in fratricidal quarrels. The "Sunday Review," for instance, a nonsectarian journal, noted with some amusement

that "it is clear, from the extraordinary freedom with which names and persons are handled, and from the eagerness of bishops and dignitaries to enter into the lists, that an amount of pugnacity exists among Roman Catholics which by no means finds sufficient vent in its onslaught on Protestantism." 37

Despite occasional lapses, Acton always tried to give an intellectual opponent the benefit of any doubts and always to treat him with courtesy and scrupulous fairness. He once wrote to Gladstone that "it always seems to me a valid test of sincerity whether a man begins by appreciating, and even it may be, fortifying and strengthening the adversary's position, supplying the gaps and correcting the flaws of his arguments before he declares it untenable. To set up (weak opponents), mere material for demolition, betrays the infancy of art." 38

Even in writing short book reviews, Acton's conscience was always present, forcing him to put aside such considerations as friendship and kindness. "If books are to be noticed at all," he once reminded his coeditor, "it must be done uprightly, on their merits, and with even scales. I sat down with the best resolution of speaking favourably of (James Burton) Robertson, who had begged for a notice, but I found so little good to say that I am afraid he will hardly be grateful and that we have not much assisted the sale of his book. However, I urged Wallis to notice it, who has an easier conscience, or a more

shifting standard and he said, long ago, that he was doing it." 39 On another occasion he insisted to Simpson that the "Rambler" should set up a high and pure standard and not swerve from it. "You want things to be brought to bear," he wrote, "to have an effect. I think our studies ought to be all but purposeless. They want to be pursued with chastity, like mathematics." 40

If the editors of the "Rambler" had been as chaste as vestal virgins were supposed to be, and had they been scholars as disinterested as hermit monks, the hierarchy of the Church still would not have been satisfied. To them, disagreement was rebellion; the English hierarchy were the most devoted readers of each issue as they searched for some plausible excuse for having the irritating journals suppressed once and for all. Their opportunity came in 1861 when Acton gave a sympathetic hearing to his old professor's views in an article entitled "Dollinger on the Temporal Power." 41 Dollinger's suggestion that the pope should extricate himself from the conflicting forces of Italian nationalism and Roman democracy which threatened to sweep away the Papal States by voluntarily renouncing his temporal power and seeking refuge in Germany, was, to the Ultramontanes, a proposal worse than heresy: it was treason - even ingratitude (the ultimate sin of all politicians). Cardinal Antonelli, Pope Pius' secretary of state, demanded that the "Rambler" unequivocally support the papacy when its very existence (as an independent state) was in immediate danger.

At this juncture, Newman tried to intervene to make peace between Acton and Rome; Acton, he tactfully suggested, should not waste his time on ephemeral topics but should instead retire to Aldenham and there write the great work he was entirely capable of producing. Acton, however, replied that he considered the matter to be a political and not a theological issue and therefore not within the legitimate censoring power of the Church. "In political life," he insisted to his former collaborator, "we should not be deterred I suppose, by the threat or fear of even excommunication, from doing what we should deem our duty." 42

Nevertheless, Acton chose to avoid papal censure by suspending publication of the "Rambler." He and his friends immediately founded a new journal, the "Home and Foreign Review," however, and soon were back at the same stand with exactly the same ideas but with a different cover. Although Acton worked as hard as or harder than before (in one issue he wrote thirty-one of the sixty-three reviews himself, the rest being divided among nine reviewers) the circulation of the new "Review" never rose above a thousand. 43 Still, as the hierarchy were only too well aware, the influence of the journal was great, not only among leading Catholics but among important Anglicans and agnostics as well. According to the "Dictionary of National Biography" the short-lived "Home and Foreign Review" was "the high-water mark of the Liberal Catholic movement" in the nineteenth century. "Probably no review of the reign of Queen Victoria maintained so high a standard

of general excellence."

Excellence, of course, was not enough for Acton's enemies in the curia; subservience was more to their taste. Almost upon the first appearance of the new "Review" Cardinal Wiseman condemned it in a formal statement. He cited "the absence for years of all reserve or reverence in its treatment of persons or of things deemed sacred, its grazing over the very edges of the most perilous abysses of error, and its habitual preferences of uncatholic to catholic instincts, tendencies and motives." 44 Despite what a lawyer might call the vagueness of the indictment, it was clearly only a matter of time before the "Review" would be forced to stop printing. When the end finally came, it was to be Dollinger again who forced the issue.

At a Catholic Congress in Munich in 1863, Dollinger criticized the traditional scholastic philosophy and asked that the medieval analytic method be replaced by the principle of development to encounter scientific error with scientific weapons. When Acton published a laudatory account of this speech in the January, 1864, issue of the "Home and Foreign Review," the curia's response was swift. In March, 1864, Pope Pius published a brief which had been previously addressed to Dollinger's superior, the archbishop of Munich. The pope censured Dollinger's views and declared unequivocally that the opinions of all Catholic writers were subject to the authority of the Roman congregations.

In a letter to Newman shortly afterwards, Acton wrote: "I have to give you the important news of the suppression of "The Home and Foreign Review!....I have determined not to risk a censure, but to take the significant warning... and put an end to the "Review" after the appearance of the next number. In an article...I shall find means of giving a full and intelligible explanation of my motives, which will be as satisfactory as it can be made without renouncing any of our principles. I shall sign this paper in order to make the act and the declaration entirely my own." 45

In the last issue of "The Home and Foreign Review" (April, 1864) Acton's first signed article was published, under the title "Conflicts with Rome." He argued that the true interests of the Church would be best served by cherishing both political and intellectual liberty. The true interests of the Church, he maintained, are not always the same as those of the Church government. Both conscience and political wisdom may make it imperative to overthrow a Catholic king or obey a Protestant one. The apparent interests of religion, he noted, might have much to say against our accepting the fraudulence of the Donation of Constantine or the course of the earth around the sun. Still, he held that it was religion itself that prevented considerations of temporary expediency from prevailing.

"It would be wrong," he continued, "to abandon

principles which have been well considered and are sincerely held, and it would also be wrong to assail the authority which contradicts them. The principles have not ceased to be true, nor the authority to be legitimate because the two are in contradiction. To submit the intellect and conscience without examining the reasonableness and justice of this decree, or to reject the authority on the ground of its having been abused, would equally be a sin, on one side against morals, on the other against faith." He would rely, he wrote, on books and more serious scientific studies to be the agent of eventual change. If we understand the importance of the concept of development in Acton's thought, we will understand how he could reconcile his idea of the supremacy of conscience with submission to authority. He could do this because he was convinced that the present government of the Church would in time change and that his principles would one day be vindicated (as indeed, they have been in the twentieth century). He would no more leave the Church over a disagreement with the curia than he would renounce his British nationality because he was deeply aggrieved by the Disraeli cabinet.

"...I will not provoke ecclesiastical authority," he concluded, "to a more explicit repudiation of doctrines which are necessary to secure its influence upon the advance of modern science. (Again, Acton was looking to the future.) I will not challenge a conflict which would only deceive the world into a belief that religion cannot be harmonized with all that is right and true in the

progress of the present age. But I will sacrifice the existence of the "Review" to the defence of its principle, in order that I may combine the obedience which is due to legitimate ecclesiastical authority, with an equally conscientious maintenance of the rightful and necessary liberty of thought...the principles it has upheld will not die with it, but will find their destined advocates and triumph in the appointed time."

At the age of twenty-six Acton had written to Newman of his position as "editor in the midst of a hostile and illiterate episcopacy, an ignorant clergy, a prejudiced and divided laity." 46 Simpson, in a similar mood, had complained to Orestes Brownson that the aristocratic Catholic families use Catholic books only as decorations for their chapels while the "lower orders" are interested only in sentimental novels or trash. 47 With all these obstacles, it is little wonder that the efforts of Acton and his small circle of friends to unite science and religion and Catholicism with liberalism were doomed to failure.

However, the end of Acton's brief journalistic career was not to be - quite yet. In the autumn of 1866, a new weekly to be called the "Chronicle" was founded. T.H. Wetherall was to be editor, Acton's close friend Sir Roland Blennerhassett was to finance it, and former writers from the "Rambler" and "The Home and Foreign Review" were to staff it. This time, however, it was to be a secular journal, with no religious connections, although, of course,

it would appeal mainly to liberal Catholics. During most of 1867 Acton acted as its Roman correspondent, a fact which, it will be easily imagined, did not please the pope.

The "Chronicle," while not as scholarly as Acton's previous journals, was very strong on foreign affairs and published good reviews of political and literary works. Its life was also short, however, and the last issue came out in February, 1868. As Gladstone remarked, "It was too Catholic for the Liberals and too Liberal for the Catholics."

The last nonacademic journal with which Acton was to be regularly associated was the "North British Review," which was taken over by Wetherall and other liberal Catholics in 1869. It was in some ways odd and in some ways fitting that this journal was originally founded by the antiestablishmentarian, evangelical Scottish Free Kirk group. Acton published two long historical essays in the first issue under the new editor; one concerned the coming Vatican Council, the other was on the Massacre of St. Bartholomew. 48

E.L. Woodward, writing in "Politica," considers Acton's journalistic years to be largely a wasted effort which ultimately hurt his effectiveness both as an historian and as a member of Parliament. Acton, according to Woodward, fell into "the dangerous habit of writing history to

persuade instead of writing it merely as history. It associated him with men of sharp wit and great talent but of little judgment. It brought him into conflict with the authorities of his church which was severe enough to use up much of Acton's energy, to chill his enthusiasm and to leave him in the isolation which had been dangerous enough in his first years." 49

It is doubtless true that despite his announced intentions, most of Acton's historical articles were polemical. This, however, might just as well be a virtue as a detriment, a point of view which, it must be admitted, would seem to be preferable to bias concealed behind the thin veil of objectivity. The fact that Acton did divide his time between editing, historical scholarship and his parliamentary duties necessarily meant that some of his activities had to suffer. As it happened, Acton usually chose to neglect his political obligations.

NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE (THE JOURNALISM OF CHURCH AND STATE)

1. Herbert Butterfield, "Lord Acton" (Pamphlets of the English Historical Association, No. G9: London, 1948).
2. Acton, "Acton and his Circle," p. xlvii.
3. Acton, "Acton-Simpson Correspondence," vol. I, p. 6.
4. "The Times" (London) June 20, 1902.
5. F. E. Lally, "As Lord Acton Says" (Newport, R. I., 1942).
6. Lord Acton, "Letters to Mary Gladstone" (London, 1904), p. 314.
7. "Ibid.," p. 130.
8. Acton, "Acton-Simpson Correspondence," vol. II, p. 252.
9. "The Home and Foreign Review" (April, 1864), p. 723.
10. Acton, "Lectures on Modern History," p. 33.
11. "Home and Foreign Review," Jan. 1863, p. 253.
12. Acton, "Acton-Simpson Correspondence," vol. I, p. 121.
13. Acton, "The History of Freedom," p. 205.
14. Acton, "Acton-Simpson Correspondence," vol. II, p. 251.
15. Acton, "History of Freedom," p. 251.
16. Add. MSS. 4952
17. Acton, "History of Freedom," p. 84. Despite the comment of Figgis and Laurence in their introduction to Acton's "Correspondence" (p. xx) that Acton had "no mind for Quakerism," it is clear that Acton admired the Quakers, probably as much for their lack of organization as for their liberalism and morality.
18. "Ibid.," p. 210.

19. Gertrude Himmelfarb, "Lord Acton," p.44. For a fuller understanding of Acton's religious views this is the best analysis available.
20. "Ibid."
21. Add. MSS. 4973.
22. Oscar Browning, "Memories of Sixty Years" (London, 1910), p.16.
23. Himmelfarb, "Lord Acton," p.229.
24. Add. MSS. 5684.
25. See "The Rambler," XI, 1859, pp.73-90.
26. Add. MSS. 5742.
27. Acton, "Correspondence," p. xvii.
28. "Ibid.," p.56.
29. "Home and Foreign Review," Jan. 1863, p.253.
30. Acton, "Correspondence," p.56.
31. "Ibid.," vol.II, p.21.
32. "Ibid.," vol.II, pp.227-28.
33. Acton, "Goldwin Smith's Irish History," in "History of Freedom," pp. 252-53.
34. "Home and Foreign Review," II, 1863, p.218.
35. For further comment on this problem, see Himmelfarb's "Lord Acton," p.49.
36. Add. MSS. 5536.
37. "Saturday Review," XIV, 1862, p.195.
38. Acton, "Correspondence," p.214.
39. "Ibid.," vol.II, p.52.
40. "Ibid.," vol.I, p.142.
41. Acton, "History of Freedom," pp.301-374.

42. Wilfrid Ward, "Life of John Henry Cardinal Newman" (London, 1912), I, p.527.
43. W.H.Gladstone, "The Political Correspondence of Gladstone and Granville" (London, 1952), p.458.
44. Himmelfarb, "Lord Acton," p.58.
45. Acton, "Essays on Church and State," p.30.
46. Ward, "Newman," I, p.510.
47. Acton, "Lord Acton and his Circle," p.lxiv.
48. Published in "History of Freedom," pp.101-149.
49. See E.L.Woodward, "The Place of Lord Acton in the Liberal Movement of the Nineteenth Century," "Politica" IV, (1939), pp.248-65.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

On November 28, 1857, at the age of twenty-three, Acton received a letter which was to launch him on his political career. It began "My Dear Sir John,...It would give me the greatest pleasure to see you in Parliament. I am sure you would discharge your duties there with independence, and in a thorough Catholic spirit. If this expression of my high opinion of you can be of any service to you in your efforts to attain an honourable position, which I think you well deserve, you are at liberty to make use of what I write with any of our Bishops and Clergy. Should any of them wish for a more direct communication from me, I shall be most happy to give it." It was signed "N. Card. Wiseman," and was doubtless regretted by the author to the end of his days.

The endorsement was certainly important to Acton, however; in the House of Commons at the time the only seats open to Catholics* were from Ireland, and in these constituencies the clergy were often decisive. The Whig

*In the 1860s the only English seat held by a Catholic was a pocket borough of the Duke of Norfolk's, represented by one of his younger sons. Disraeli, in his Reform Bill of 1868, allowed the senior English peer to retain his borough so that English Catholics might have at least one vote.

managers, who were given the task of locating an appropriate seat for the stepson of the lord president of the council, shopped around for several months. Dublin was considered, then County Clare and one or two others; finally Carlow was hit upon. The electorate was small (236), so the expenses would not be great; the population was about 85 percent Catholic, and the most influential local priest, Father James Maher, was all for the Shropshire baronet.

The candidate himself, however, was by no means eager to take to the hustings (and, in fact, never did). He expressed his doubts in a letter to his sponsor, Lord Granville. "There is a sort of fastidiousness produced by long study which public life possibly tends to dissipate, but although the profession of anything like independence of party appears ridiculous, I am of the opinion that to a Catholic a certain sort of independence is indispensable. Reasons of religion must separate me occasionally from the Whigs, and political convictions from the Irish party. I am free, moreover, from the motives which generally make decided partisans, for I am conscious of no political ambition, and I have an aversion and an incapacity for official life. I must therefore most positively declare that I cannot undertake always to vote for Lord Palmerston's Government or with any other....I could not of course promise the Catholics of Clare more than I have promised you. I hope, if I am Whig enough for the Government, that I shall be Catholic enough for them." 2

Granville was apparently satisfied. After all, the partly reformed House of Commons was different from the automatically ratifying assembly that it is today; no one then expected able men of independent means to follow orders slavishly. In the nineteenth-century House it was even possible to change someone's vote by an especially well-reasoned speech; a modern M.P. who admitted to being so influenced would be thought weak-minded and probably lacking in character as well.

"I am trying to get Johnny Acton in for some place in Ireland," wrote Granville to Canning, then in India. "I am glad to find that, although he is only a moderate Whig, he is also a very moderate Catholic." 3 The optimistic earl, even forgetting about his stepson's obvious reluctance, wrote to Canning a few months later that "He has, I am glad to say, a yearning for public life." 4

If Acton had indeed changed his mind about a political career, the change was short-lived. From the ease and solitude of Munich he wrote to Simpson in the spring of 1859 that "...I have heard of the dissolution, and Lord Granville wants me to come and try my chance in Ireland. I fear I shall be obliged to try it pour acquit de conscience, and because an election is cheaper than being Sheriff, but I do not feel sanguine." 5

During the campaign Acton confined himself to paying the expenses and writing one platitudinous letter to his

chief local supporter, Father Maher. His first and last appearance in Carlow was not to be until after the polls closed. It is very doubtful, in fact, that the candidate himself would have made much of a difference. Then, as now, most elections were decided along party lines with some allowances for religious or ethnic biases one way or the other. Although the population of Carlow was over 9,000, only 236 were qualified to vote - a little over $2\frac{1}{2}$ percent, or about 10 percent of the adult males. This was less than the average percentage for the United Kingdom as a whole, where about 15 percent of the adult males had the franchise. There was, of course, the £8 householder qualification which kept away all but the most affluent gentlemen in the district, 98 of whom were Protestants, and 134 of whom were Catholics.

The year of Acton's debut in politics, 1859, was a bad year for the Liberals in Ireland. The Ecclesiastical Titles Bill passed by the Russell administration mortally offended all Catholics. The bill, which forbade the reestablishment of the Catholic hierarchy in England, was a dead letter from the start, but that made no difference to the bishops of Ireland. The bishops' suspicions that Lord John Russell was an enemy of the Church were strengthened when the Liberal leader declared himself in favour of Italian independence. Since Italian unity would be at the expense of the pope, almost every Catholic bishop in Ireland was supporting Lord Derby and the Conservatives at the 1859 election. As if those were not albatrosses enough for a Liberal candidate, it happened that the last

Liberal M.P. for Carlow, Mr. John Sadleir, resigned in haste after some financial scandals came to light. These would have been heavy obstacles for an experienced politician; for a novice they were expected to be insurmountable.

One of the local Conservative newspapers commented "that his chances of success are small is admitted by the Radicals themselves unless bribery to a large scale will be resorted to," 6

Bribery, in fact, was fairly common at the time. In the aftermath of the 1859 election no less than nine M.P.s were unseated as a result of proven charges of bribery made against them, their agents or followers. Acton himself was to be unseated in 1866 on just these grounds, although he and his agents were declared innocent of any involvement. According to James J. Auchmuty in his most thorough essay on "Acton's Election as an Irish M.P.," 7 some electors in previous Carlow elections had been offered and took £100 for their vote. With the increasing democratization of the franchise, the market value of votes has, of course, dropped considerably.

Although only a select few were privileged to choose an M.P., it was the custom at most elections for the agents to buy drinks for "the boys" so as to whip up a show of popular enthusiasm for their candidate. Since "the boys" could not themselves vote, this practice was perfectly

legal, although at times things would get out of hand and respectable members of the electorate would be "persuaded" to cast their vote for the candidate of the mob. When Acton's name was formally put in nomination (in his absence), crowds of supporters from both parties were on hand to express their views noisily. The "Saunders Newsletter" for May 3, 1859, reported that Acton was introduced as "a distinguished scholar who promised to be one of the first literary men in Europe." Although this was "greeted by tremendous cheers from the rabble," who were presumably admirers of men of learning, the newspaper (which did not hide its Tory leanings) added that the respectable citizens wanted to know where the candidate was.

Acton was politically fortunate in one respect only; his opponent, John Alexander, was one of the largest of the local landlords. Since landlords are rarely popular anywhere and since they ranked just above priest-murderers in Ireland at the time, we may conclude that this was the principal reason why the final count showed 117 votes for Sir John Acton, and 103 for John Alexander, Esquire.

The new M.P. had the distinction of winning in one of the three Irish constituencies which switched from Conservative to Liberal; in Ireland as a whole the Tories had a solid majority of seats for the first time in thirty years. To celebrate this unexpected victory, a dinner was held in Acton's honour at which he thanked his supporters

and gave chief credit where it was due, to Father Maher. He also pronounced himself in favour of a new Reform Bill, of the secret ballot, of Irish tenant rights, and against jury-packing and involvement in continental affairs.

Father Maher responded by congratulating his new representative and predicting great honour and success for him at Westminster. He added, almost as an afterthought, that it would do him no harm if he took an Irish wife.

Although women of course could not vote (Acton had once described an American radical democrat who suggested such an idea as "half-mad"), the canny priest had an eye for the source of political power. With considerable relish, he told the banquet that whenever he "found an elector hesitating to do his duty to his country he was anxious to have a chat with his mistress...." He was told by one Liberal lady that if her husband did not do his duty in the election (there were no secret ballots) she would go to America. The good father triumphantly concluded that only one of the votes promised to him had failed of delivery. 8

On June 10, 1859, Acton cast his first vote in the House of Commons, joining the majority of thirteen which threw out Derby and the Conservatives and brought in Palmerston, Russell and the Liberals. By this initial ballot he also helped to make the young Gladstone chancellor of the exchequer.— He certainly owed his stepfather that

much, but in his first years in Parliament Acton was not especially happy with the Liberals; he was the weakest of partisans and sometimes the despair of his patrons. "Johnny Acton," Granville confided to Canning, "has thrown us over." 9 Acton once joined other liberal Catholics in refusing to vote with the government to support Italian unity over the opposition of the pope. Since at that moment in history, the Liberal leaders were united only in their common support of Italian nationalism, this was an especially hard blow to Granville and his friends.

Of course, they had been warned. In his pre-election statement to the electors of Carlow, Acton had said quite plainly "I am no partisan but I had rather reckon on Liberal principles than on the fears of the Tories. I am sure we cannot make friends of the Tories, and I do not think it wise to make enemies of the Liberals." 10 Nor did Acton make any secret of his low opinion of most of the Liberal leaders. Lord Palmerston's "jaunty manner, the intense masculinity of the aged buck, the large sophisticated ignorance were all abhorrent" 11 to the young historian. Gladstone, later to become one of his closest friends, he condemned at the time for having left the Conservative party and come over to the Liberal. 12 The new chancellor, he wrote in the "Rambler," was like the politician described by Edmund Burke as having "a disposition to hope something from the variety and inconstancy of villainy, rather than from the tiresome

uniformity of fixed principles." His new radicalism, Acton added, had "neither the merit of sincerity nor the excuse of blindness." 13

In his first years in politics he saw little to choose between the two parties. Both had their faults and both, no doubt, had their compensating virtues. Acton wrote to Simpson in 1858 that "...we (Catholics) need no longer humiliate ourselves and eat dirt to obtain the support of the liberal...party. We have got about as much as we shall get from them, and it would be well to see whether this alliance is a safe one." 14

These were the years when Acton was Burkean to the core; he took for his own the great Irishman's empirical, antimetaphysical view of politics. He scorned the political economists and others who wanted to turn a great art into a mere science. "(Edmund) Burke," he wrote to Simpson, was a "teacher for Catholics. In the writings of his last years (1792-1797) whatever was protestant or partial or revolutionary of 1688 in his political views disappeared, and what remained was a purely Catholic view of political principles and of history." 15

Like the older Burke, Acton at this time was distrustful of principles in politics; he preferred to proceed by a slow and gradual weighing of interests. 16 The ideologues who wanted to disengage principles from men and parties, he thought, wanted to reduce government

from an art to a science; such men looked upon Parliament as a machine for producing legislation; their only interest was to see the largest amount of laws produced by the quickest and most rational methods. Men impatient with tradition, who were usually Benthamites or socialists, regarded political parties as a nuisance because they obstruct this process. The ideal government of the rationalists, he believed, would be non-political; it would be bureaucratic, with laws and regulations for every conceivable eventuality.

Political parties with all their imperfections and human failings were, Acton argued, all that stood between us and this awful fate. Each made up for the deficiencies of the other and together they kept each other within reasonable limits. A radical idea had first to gain acceptance within the "miniature government" of the party organization, which was itself a coalition of diverse interests. Only after it had been tamed and put into a more moderate form was it offered for debate in the House of Commons as a whole. Then a further process of amendment and compromise took place before the new law would go forth into the country moderately certain of being acceptable to most and of giving offence to only a few. To the idealists who disdained the role of the "trimmers," Acton replied that to know the truth was not enough; it must be put into action, and to do that in a democracy compromise was a necessity. Parties who wish to accomplish a programme of reforms must deal with the

elements of power in a society and the constitution must reflect the existing distribution of power if stability and peaceful change are to be assured.

The Whigs and Tories, or Liberals and Conservatives as they were coming to be called, were coalitions of varied interests who each agreed on a limited agenda but who disagreed about everything else. The Whigs, Acton thought, tended to be more concerned with politics, economics and philosophy while the Tories paid more attention to social values, to religion, patriotism, community and tradition. They were the party of passion while the Whigs were men of philosophy. Acton knew, however, that all this was changing before his eyes and that both parties were becoming more and more spokesmen for definite economic interests. The Tories represented land and the Liberals manufacturing; the social and philosophic issues of English history were being forgotten in the mundane, day-to-day struggle over higher or lower tariffs. Since at the time Acton had practically no interest in business or economics (he thought the whole thing rather sordid) it is little wonder that he viewed both parties with almost equal detachment. The simple fact that most of his friends were Liberals probably tipped the balance. 17

By 1863, however, Acton had arrived at a position on these questions almost entirely different from that previously held. In a review of T.E. May's "Constitutional

History of England" published in the "Home and Foreign Review," 18 Acton relies on the younger Burke to refute the Burke of 1792-97 whom he had only recently extolled to Simpson. "Burke," he wrote, "whom (Mr. May) quotes, does not admire, as he supposes, the balance and conflict of parties, but the concentration of the constitutional idea in a single party whose function it is to preserve the national institutions*.... 'When bad men combine (the younger Burke noted in his "Thoughts on the Present Discontents," 1770) the good must associate; else they will fall one by one in unopposed sacrifice in a contemptible struggle.'...The constitution may be assailed on different sides," Acton continued, "only that party which faces all attacks is constitutional. A party that defends only one breach, and resists only one form of encroachment or change, has its centre of gravity beyond the limits of the constitution....Every compromise marks an imperfect realization of principle - a surrender of right to interest or force. The constitution stands by its own strength, not by the equal strain of opposite forces."

In this important essay we see the beginnings of the great change in Acton's intellectual position. The elder Burke of the "Reflections on the French Revolution," the unyielding opponent of ideology and abstraction, was losing his appeal to the mature Acton. Now he turned

*"In effect," Mr. Harvey Mansfield concludes about the younger Burke, "he demoted statesmanship to conservatism." Acton was about to do the same in favour of the Liberal party.

more and more to the younger Burke, the idealistic Whig, the upholder of principle, of the "Thoughts on the Present Discontents." As he grew older Acton was to become still more devoted to moral principles without regard to practical consequences; he was, in fact, to turn completely against the philosophy of compromise that he had preached so often in his own first years in politics. Mr. James J. Auchmuty notes, "That (Acton's) private papers record judgements of Burke which conflict with his public statements and that in the last 25 years of his life he increasingly hardened against Burke's policy of balance and compromise present problems still to be dealt with." 20

With each passing year, Acton was to become more and more committed to the Liberal party and to its new leader, Gladstone. This was also a remarkable reversal on Acton's part. This same man - whom he had dismissed as made useless by ambition in domestic matters and unsafe in foreign affairs - he would soon be describing as "a wise and resolute leader, at whose call the nation has risen, for the first time in history, to the full height of its imperial vocation." 21 In later years, when Gladstone was considering resigning the leadership of the party, Acton begged him to stay on, saying that only he could hold the party together and safely lead the country in foreign affairs. 22 Oddly enough, it was not Gladstone's successes so much as his failures which attracted Acton. Above all, one commentator notes, it was Gladstone's "refusal to admit that nations, in their dealings with one another, are subject

to no law but greed" that won Acton's admiration. "Doubtless one who gave himself no credit for practical aptitude in public affairs, admired a man who had gifts that were not his own. But what Acton most admired was what many condemned. It was because he was not like Lord Palmerston, because Bismark disliked him, because he gave back the Transvaal to the Boers, and tried to restore Ireland to its people, because his love of liberty never weaned him from loyalty to the crown, and his politics were part of his religion, that Acton used of Gladstone language rarely used and still more rarely applicable, to any statesman." 23

The friendship, of course, became mutual. Even though Gladstone was fully aware of Acton's opinion of him in 1861, he sent the young editor a note praising his essay on "The Political Causes of the American Revolution."²⁴ "I have read your valuable and remarkable paper," he wrote. "Its principles of politics I embrace; its research and wealth of knowledge I admire; and its whole atmosphere, if I may so speak, is that which I desire to breathe. It is a truly English paper." It is just possible, of course, that some political motivation may have been mixed with scholarly interest on the chancellor's part; the fact remains that this letter began a close friendship which lasted until the death of the Grand Old Man of British politics in 1898.

As Acton became closer to Gladstone and to the Liberal party he became more and more hostile toward the Tories and

their leaders. In the same year that he began to turn against the older Burke, he denounced Toryism in unqualified terms as a party which "subsisted by the deliberate suppression of political thought; made the denial of principle pass for a principle, and the repudiation of obligations for a duty; and carried, under pretext of expediency, measures which it declared to be wrong...it was ready to question (the very existence of public right) if it appeared in antagonism with any cherished interest of some portion of society. (The interests of the Church and the landlord) did duty instead of a political idea.... Therefore the most illustrious chiefs of the party either were not reared in its arms, or deserted it in the maturity of their powers; and they are all reckoned by their party either converts or apostates." 25

The full measure of Acton's contempt for what John Stuart Mill called "the stupid party" is revealed in a peroration he once directed at the Tory prime minister who served longer in that high office than any other. "Lord Liverpool," he began, "governed England...chosen not by the nation but by the owners of the land. The English gentry were well content...Desiring no change they wished for no ideas. They sympathized with the complacent respectability of Lord Liverpool's character, and knew how to value the safe sterility of his mind. He distanced statesmen like Grenville, Wellington and Canning, not in spite of his inferiority, but by reason of it. His mediocrity was his merit. The secret of his policy was

that he had none. For six years his administration outdid the Holy Alliance. For five years it led the liberal movement throughout the world. The Prime Minister hardly knew the difference....In the same spirit he wished his government to include men who were for the Catholic claims and men who were opposed to them. His career exemplifies, not the accidental combination but the natural affinity, between the love of conservatism and the fear of ideas." 26

His ideas on foreign affairs also began to change shortly after he entered the House of Commons. In this sphere as well he grew closer to the general Liberal position, outraging his Irish constituents in doing so. The "Carlow Sentinel" (On Jan.7, 1860) complained: "He is the stepson of the Lord President of the Council (who, of course, favoured Italian unity even at the expense of the Pope) and as blood runs thicker than water he naturally prefers the interests of his stepfather to those of the Holy Father." He was never an uncritical nationalist, however, and he often warned Gladstone that they must not admit "the priority of National Independence over individual liberty....We do not find that Nationalists are always Liberals...." 27

In the House of Commons itself, the gentlemen's club that Acton once called "the noblest assembly in the world," the young M.P. did not take an active part. He spoke at question time on only three issues in his years in the House of Commons; out of forty-eight votes that were

recorded during this period, Acton is listed for only twenty-seven. 28 In 1860 he voted to extend the franchise slightly, but was absent on the Secret Ballot Bill which was of considerable interest to Irish voters. He also failed to vote on the Endowed Schools Bill, which would have aided Dissenters, and on an English Reform Bill. The next year he was absent for the vote on a Trustees of Charities Bill which would have permitted Catholics to serve as trustees. He also failed to vote for an Irish National Education Bill which would have provided education for all classes and was presumably of great interest to his constituents. In 1863 he failed to vote on the Affirmations Bill which would have eased sensitive consciences other than those of Catholics. In his last year as M.P. for Carlow (an election year) he voted on ten of the thirteen recorded issues. One of his votes was for the abolition of religious tests at Oxford, a matter in which he held a personal interest.

Although Acton wrote some 475 pages of articles and 77 pages of current events for his two journals, while he was in the House he never once spoke in a debate, even one on foreign affairs (which was the concern of most of his writing). In addition to his retiring personality his reasons might have been in part practical. The gentlemen of England who guided the House were not much interested in advice from experts, especially from young men who had acquired their education abroad.

Acton served on three committees, however, and it would be here if anywhere that one would expect him to make his influence felt. Acton did attend the meetings of the Poor Law Committee (where he was one of three Catholic members) fairly regularly, coming to twenty-one of thirty-four sessions in its first year. The problems dealt with by this committee are still, in great measure, with us today; Acton saw then what many are only beginning to see now, that poverty cannot be cured by make-work projects run by governments; that the only genuine solution is to erect a framework in which it is possible for the poor and unskilled to acquire skills and real jobs earning wages for producing goods or services. He predicted with considerable accuracy that a welfare policy directed by the government only would have the effect of making the poor permanently dependent on that government and, of course, of increasing the power of the state and of decreasing the liberties of all citizens.

"The avoidance of a Poor Law," he wrote to Simpson in 1862, "by means of public works not actually necessary is characteristic of centralized absolutism. It nurses artificially a proletariat, a classless community which, instead of being absorbed in its own places, is permanently relying on the State to provide for it....depriving it of the possibility of becoming independent and self-supporting. Thus a constant danger menaces society, and the need of a strong hand perpetually saving society and converting dictatorship into a regular form of government is kept

always before it." 29

Acton devoted most of his parliamentary efforts to "The Select Committee to Enquire into the Constitution and Efficiency of the Present Diplomatic Service of this Country." This was an elite group chaired by R.M. Milnes, later Baron Houghton; both Russell of the Liberals and Disraeli of the Tories were members. Acton attended about half of the sessions and usually took an active part in the questioning of witnesses. It was here that Acton's cosmopolitan background and wide acquaintance with the courts of Europe was most valuable.

The diplomatic service of the time was widely known as a system of outdoor relief for the aristocracy, a source of jobs for younger sons who were not virtuous enough for the Church nor yet quite stupid enough for the army. The key to reforming this unabashed old-boy network lay in two factors: an examination would at least weed out the most incompetent and a restriction of the number of years junior diplomats were required to serve without pay would permit at least some of the upper-middle class to apply. Acton was in favour of a stiff examination requiring a knowledge of several languages coupled with a mandatory provision that the first twelve candidates must be appointed. This utopian idea was, of course, thrown out - after all, one never knew who might show up at a public examination. However, an examination stressing handwriting was instituted: the first halting

step in the rise of the meritocracy. Acton tried to have the period of unpaid service limited to no more than two years, which, at least theoretically, would have allowed some of the middle-middle class to compete. The committee decided to limit such service to four years. They also recommended an interchange of officers between the Diplomatic Service and the Foreign Office, which at the time were separate. Large salaries were also allocated to the major embassies so that a man need not be very rich to accept such a post. Although not all of Acton's attempts to democratize the service were accepted then, he had the satisfaction of seeing all of them come about within a few decades. "The most characteristic Liberal invention of the nineteenth century," he once noted, "was open competitive examination for the Civil Service." 30 Acton himself played a considerable part in putting the invention to work.

Acton's third committee was on the Birth, Marriages and Deaths (Ireland) Bill, but he took almost no part in its activities, probably considering it too impossibly boring. He paid very little attention to Irish affairs and to the economic interests of his constituents, a part of his character which was not popular back in Carlow. Acton generally spent his time on those matters which interested him, such as diplomacy and the extension of civil liberties, especially in matters of conscience. Although he missed some important votes on these issues, when he was there he always voted for the liberalizing

measure. He also strongly opposed conscription. "Forced military service," he wrote, "...is entirely incompatible with what I call the Catholic notion of the State." 31 "A people," he warned, "that relies on a permanent system of compulsory military service resembles the statesman who declared himself ready to sacrifice not only a part, but the whole of the constitution, in order to preserve the remainder. It is a system by which one great liberty is surrendered and all are imperilled, and it is a surrender not of rights only, but also of power." 32

Acton's use of the qualifying word "permanent" would seem to imply that he would not oppose conscription in a genuine emergency, where all liberties really were endangered.

The good electors of Carlow, however, had very little interest in diplomacy, and not much in civil liberties except possibly for Catholics. They expected their M.P. to look after their interests, which meant obtaining subsidies for their industries. The "Carlow Sentinel" for May 25, 1861, observed in a burst of fair-mindedness that "we will do him the justice of saying that no young gentleman ever entered the House of Commons who pays so little regard to the wishes, feelings or interests of a constituency whether Conservative or Liberal."

There is little doubt that Acton enjoyed neither politicians nor Parliament. Like most men who were born part of an inner circle, he vaguely resented others from the outside who were attempting to push their way in. As Archbishop Mathew remarks, "He early possessed a familiar intercourse with the great and a contemptuous knowledge of those who gained by devious paths the intimacy of politicians. The climber and the political middleman was a type distasteful to him; he was not a man who reined in his contempt," 33 Shortly after his election, the "Carlow Sentinel" for Jan. 7, 1860, reported, some of Acton's Liberal supporters called on him in London. Presumably these were the type of gentlemen immortalized as "Taper" and "Tadpole" in Disraeli's novels. Acton, who had only been in Carlow once in his life, failed to recognize them until they gave their names. After what must have been a desultory and awkward conversation, he politely bowed them out and bid them good morning.

There were constant complaints in the Carlow press (Liberal as well as Tory) that their M.P. paid almost no attention to his district. This, added to his independent voting policy, made it unlikely that the Carlow machine would want to renominate him. As it happened, in the election of 1865, the National Association of Ireland together with the Catholic hierarchy demanded that all candidates pledge themselves to support at least two parts of a three point platform. Since Acton had always refused to give such assurances to his political associates, we

may assume that this was the decisive reason why he chose to stand for an English constituency at the next election. He decided to enter his name at Bridgnorth, the nearest town to his family estate at Aldenham. The published accounts of the election campaign indicate that it was quite costly to Acton; he spent over 699 pounds, more than both his opponents combined. As in all elections, of course, no one knows how much was really spent. 34

Acton was elected by one vote, but this victory does not seem to have been very welcome to him. He confided to Simpson that his greatest ambition was to get out of Parliament "in some honest way" and get back to his books. He obviously felt he would be disappointing his family and friends if he followed his inclinations and resigned from the House. In the following year his wish was at last granted, although perhaps not in just the way he would have preferred. As a result of a ballot scrutiny, Acton's one-vote margin vanished. "Hansard" for March 22, 1866, notes "that it was proved to the committee that the said Mark Philip Lee had been bribed with the payment of £4 by Charles Selby Bigge, under the pretext of travelling expenses; but that it was not proved that such bribery was committed with the knowledge and consent of the said Sir John E.D. Acton or his agents."

Although he stood again for Bridgnorth, he was defeated in 1868 and never again sat in the House of Commons. There is little doubt that he allowed himself

to be pressured into a career that was not suited to his interests or talents. We must also conclude that both the mature Acton with his rigorous standard of public morality and historical judgment as well as the younger Acton who so admired Burke would never have condoned the halfhearted devotion to duty of the member for Carlow and Bridgnorth in the 1860s. The famous address of Edmund Burke to the electors of Bristol was certainly not unfamiliar to Acton: "It ought to be the happiness and the glory of a representative," he had said, "to live in the closest union, the closest correspondence, the most unreserved communication with his constituents."

The elevation of William Ewart Gladstone to the premiership in 1869, however, gave Acton the opportunity to keep one foot in public life without the disagreeable necessity of being concerned about constituents - a problem which has been the ruination of more than one otherwise brilliant statesman. In his first honours list in August, 1869, Gladstone recommended Nathaniel Rothschild and two Roman Catholics for the peerage. One of these was a younger son of the duke of Norfolk, the other was Sir John Dalberg Acton, eighth baronet, now to become Lord Acton, first Baron Acton. The queen refused to accept Rothschild* and only agreed to the two Catholics

*Nathaniel Rothschild was the first Jew ever nominated for an English peerage (as Acton and Howard were the first Catholics proposed in centuries). Apparently merit will out, however, since Baron Rothschild took his seat in the House of Lords in 1885, with the public blessing of the queen and empress.

after much respectful persuasion on the part of the prime minister. Acton, he wrote to his sovereign, "is of the first order, and he is one of the most learned and accomplished, though one of the most modest and unassuming men of the day." 35 Granville also wrote to reassure the queen regarding this departure from the conventions of the Constitution. Probably his most effective argument was the point that, if Cardinal Manning* had any say in the matter, Acton would never receive any honour or preferment. In fact, Manning, writing to Gladstone in a rather injured tone in 1870, remarked, "I shall say no more about Lord Acton whose career has been a disappointment to his truest friends, not Catholics only. He might have done much in public life and among us." 36

Acton's stepfather, Earl Granville, reluctantly agreed with the Cardinal's judgment. "I presume there is not Protestant or atheist whom Manning dislikes more than Acton," Granville wrote to Gladstone. "I am, however, afraid he may be right about the latter's public life. If anything will spur him into action it will be the knowledge of Manning triumphing in his not having done so." 37

For a young man of thirty-five a peerage in a premier's first honours list was a rare distinction. Gladstone's motives in recommending this early promotion were, as usual, mixed. Doubtless personal friendship

*The cardinal and the queen were not on the closest of terms.

and genuine admiration for Acton's scholarly attainments played a large part as did party service and loyalty and the desire to keep the defeated M.P. in public life. A last factor might have been decisive in persuading Gladstone to nominate Acton some years before the usual time in such cases. The Vatican Council was to meet later in the year, and if Acton were to go to Rome with the title of Lord as a subtle indication of the favour in which he and his views (unofficially of course) were held by the British government, Gladstone had every reason to believe that his protégé's influence would be increased greatly.

NOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR (THE HOUSE OF COMMONS)

1. Acton, "Correspondence," pp. 29-30.
2. "Ibid.," pp. 28-29.
3. Fitzmaurice, E., "Life of Granville," vol.I, p.227
4. "Ibid.," p.262
5. Acton, "Acton-Simpson Correspondence," vol.I, p.166.
6. "Saunders Newsletter," May 3, 1859.
7. Auchumuty, James J., "Acton's Election as an Irish M.P.," "English Historical Review," LXI, 1946, p.394.
8. "Carlow Post," June 11, 1859.
9. Fitzmaurice, I, p.387.
10. Auchumuty, "EHR" p.401.
11. Mathew, David, "Lord Acton and His Times," p.20.
12. Himmelfarb, G., "Lord Acton," p.90.
13. "Rambler," I, 1859, p.407. In a private note Acton was even more damning: "He has not the instincts of a gentleman...nothing handsome or chivalrous." (Add. MSS. 5528).
14. Acton, "Acton-Simpson Correspondence," vol.I, pp.6-7.
15. "Ibid.," p.7.
16. Add. MSS. 5528.
17. The preceding analysis of Acton's ideas on political parties is derived from his own writings of this period and from an article by his coeditor Simpson on "The Theory of Party" ("Rambler," I, 1859, p.332). Acton collaborated with Simpson on this article and publicly accepted the views as being the same as his own.

18. "The H. & F. Review," July, 1863, p.715.
19. See Harvey C. Mansfield, Jr., "Statesmanship and Party Government:" "A Study of Burke and Bolingbroke" (Chicago, 1965), p.7.
20. For his further excellent study of Acton in politics, see James J. Auchumuty, "Acton as a Member of the House of Commons," "The Bulletin of the Faculty of Arts," Farouk I University, Alexandria, vol.5, 1950.
21. See the editorial in the "North British Review," July 1, 1869.
22. Acton, "Correspondence," pp.198-99.
23. Acton, "History of Freedom," p.xxiii.
24. Reprinted in Acton, "Freedom and Power," p.196.
25. "H. and F. Review," April, 1863, p.635.
26. Quoted in Acton, "History of Freedom," p.xii.
27. Acton, "Correspondence," p.135.
28. Auchumuty, "Acton as a Member of the House of Commons," p.8.
29. Acton, "Lord Acton and his Circle," p.291.
30. (This letter will be published presumably in the third volume of the "Acton-Simpson Correspondence.")
Quoted in Fasnacht, G, "Acton's Political Philosophy" p.184.
31. Acton, "Acton-Simpson Correspondence," vol.I, p.209.
32. "Rambler," Sept., 1860, p.295.
33. Mathew, David, "Acton: The Formative Years," (London, 1946), p.4.
34. Auchumuty, "Acton as a Member of the House of Commons," p.5.
35. John Morley, "Life of W. E. Gladstone," (London, 1903),

II, p.430.

36. Fitzmaurice, II, p.17.

37. "Ibid," pp. 135-36.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE VATICAN COUNCIL AND AFTERMATH

1869, the year in which Acton was raised to the peerage, also marked the beginning of a five-year period of his life in which he unwillingly found himself constantly in the midst of passionate controversy. All the old quarrels with the hierarchy and the ultramontanes which the young scholar wished to forget were revived again in sharper and more bitter forms. These years, in fact, were to be a turning point in Acton's life; by 1875 he wearied of all politics, secular and sacred, and wished only to be left alone with his books, his family, and a few intimate friends.

Nine years previously, by 1860, it had become clear to Catholic and Protestant alike that the temporal power of the papacy which had dominated central Italy and at times much more for over a thousand years was in rapid decline. Italy was united, except for the area around Rome guarded by French troops and the new Kingdom of Italy under the House of Savoy was preparing to deprive Pius IX of the last remains of his worldly power. Acton, when a Member of the House of Commons and an unofficial representative of British Catholics, made a half-hearted attempt to put the case for papal independence before the

British public.* Most Englishmen, however, preferred to see Rome the capital of a modern liberal monarchy than under the personal rule of a reactionary pope.

Pio Nono (as he was called) had once been described by Metternich as the one factor he had never contemplated - "a liberal Pope!" Ever since his maltreatment at the hands of Italian rebels in 1848, however, the reigning pontiff had become more and more ultramontane. The "Syllabus Errorum" was published in 1864 in which the defiant Pius proclaimed that it was an error to assert that the Vicar of Christ can or should reconcile himself to "progress, liberalism or modern civilization." As his earthly power waned, Pius IX stubbornly maintained his spiritual sovereignty. He canonized more saints during his reign than had all his predecessors for a century and a half. He proclaimed a new dogma in 1854: the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary. Although there was a long tradition in the church that the Mother of God had herself been conceived without original sin, this pious belief had never been officially defined and was not regarded as an article of faith binding on all Catholics

*At that time he wrote to his collaborator, Richard Simpson, "I am afraid I am a partisan of sinking ships, and I know none more ostensibly sinking just now than St. Peter's." (December 7, 1859, Downside Abbey MSS, Quoted in McElrath, Damian et al, "Lord Acton: The Decisive Decade," Louvain, 1970, p.30).

until the decree of 1854.

On the eighth of December in 1867 an Ecumenical Council was summoned to meet in the Vatican in December of 1869. It was well known that Pius IX was about to proclaim a second new dogma: that of papal infallibility. Acton reacted immediately; in the liberal Catholic journal, "The Chronicle," he expressed the view that the ultramontanes were once more attempting to concentrate power in Rome at the expense of the great body of the faithful. 1

He also wrote in October of 1869 a long review, entitled "The Pope and the Council," 2 of a book of the same title published in Germany under the pen-name "Janus." The author of this book was generally regarded to be Professor Dollinger. In this work, Janus-Dollinger presented (in full) the historical arguments in opposition to infallibility.

Not content with mere words, Acton set out for Rome and arrived in November of 1869. He immediately made contact with two influential opponents of infallibility. Lord Odo Russell was acting as unofficial representative of Her Majesty's Government at the council; he was, conveniently, the son-in-law of the foreign minister, Lord Clarendon, and a nephew of a recent prime minister, Lord John Russell. He was also, needless to say, a Protestant. His estimate of the key role his fellow

Liberal peer was to play in the affairs of the council is given in a letter from Lord Clarendon to the British ambassador in Paris. "How right Odo has been throughout," the foreign minister wrote, "in declaring the Pope would end by having his way in all things. He has stood alone against all the representatives of the Catholic powers and all the opposition bishops plus Acton, who is worth them all put together." 3

The second confidant of Acton in Rome was Johann Friedrich, theologian to the liberal Cardinal Prince Hohenlohe, brother of the prime minister of Bavaria. It was Acton and Friedrich who regularly sent on to Dollinger detailed information about the secret plans of the papal forces in the council. This maddeningly accurate stream of intelligence was published in the "Allgemeine Zeitung" under the pseudonym Quirinus, and became known as the famous Quirinus letters.

These letters revealed the internal politics of the council to the outside world. The wide varieties of pressures which were applied to the recalcitrant minority of bishops included threats of imprisonment, strict censorship of all documents pertaining to the work of the council, the banning of private meetings of more than twenty bishops, and the opening of letters by the ever-alert Roman Post Office. In addition, the vast armory of papal privileges, titles, sees, and honours of all sorts, was freely used by a pope determined to have his way.

Although the Quirinus Letters were sent to the publisher by Dollinger under the pseudonym they were based largely on information supplied by Acton; they may fairly, therefore, be said to represent his views and impressions while in Rome. The first letter will reveal how strongly Acton and his friends felt about the impending proclamation.*

"Rome, December, 1869. The Council is opened. It is, we may say, in full swing, and the situation has to certain degree revealed itself. Two great questions are in every mind, and on every tongue - first: 'Wherein will the freedom promised to the Council consist and how far will it extend?' and secondly 'Will Papal Infallibility be erected into a dogma?...' The Spanish Prelates - men selected by Queen Isabella and the nuncio at Madrid, simply for their thorough-paced ultramontaniam - pure absolutists in Church and State, would gladly see the new dogma ready-made at once, but they have to be restrained for a while... That great ecclesiastical polypus, with its thousand feelers and arms, the Jesuit Order, works for it under the earth and on the earth.... And thus, if Papal Infallibility becomes a dogma, what inevitably awaits us is, that...

*It should be remembered, however, that Acton strongly denied that he was 'Quirinus' and he stated several times that there were many things in the letters of which he did not approve. (Acton to Wetherell, July 25, 1870, Woodruff MSS, quoted in McElrath, Damian et al, "Lord Acton: The Decisive Decade," p.24).

the Jesuits will for the future be the regular stewards of this treasure, and the architects of the new dogmas we have to expect. It is enough to know the earlier history of the Society to know what this means, and what immense capital of power and influence it will place at their command. 'Rulers and subjects' - that will henceforth be the relation between the Jesuits and the theologians of other Orders.... Their Order is now really, and in the fullest sense, the...breastplate of the High Priest - the Pope - who can only then issue an oracular utterance when he has consulted his breastplate, the Jesuit Order." 4

On the first of January, 1870, in a letter to Gladstone, Acton revealed his view that the coming proclamation of papal infallibility was primarily a political and only secondarily a theological matter. In Acton's mind the essential problem was a growing centralization of power in the Catholic Church, and Acton from principle opposed centralization wherever he found it - in a college, a nation, or a religious institution. "We have to meet," he warned his prime minister, "an organized conspiracy to establish a power which would be the most formidable enemy of liberty as well as science throughout the world. It can only be met and defeated through the Episcopate, and the Episcopate is exceedingly helpless." 5

Several bishops of the United Kingdom, in what must have seemed a response to Acton's letter to Gladstone,

presented a protest to the council on March 15, 1870. English and Irish Catholics, they declared, were granted the full privileges of citizenship in the United Kingdom because of their solemn and repeated declaration that their faith did not teach the dogma now being proposed for adoption by the council. These declarations, they noted, were made by the British bishops and were permitted by the Holy See at that time and these understandings are the conditions under which British Catholics now hold seats in Parliament and other offices of the crown. The bishops concluded that those promises can not be forgotten or overlooked by themselves without dishonour. 6

The French prelates, like their British colleagues, realized their essential helplessness in a council completely controlled by their opponents. Archbishop Dubroy of Paris, like most of the minority, saw that intervention by the European Powers, especially the French and Austrian governments, was the only hope left. In the end, the Catholic nations declined to intervene, as did Protestant England. Much as Gladstone (who later wrote a pamphlet on this question) would have liked to have done something to assist the cause of the dissenters, he lacked support from the continental states and from his own cabinet and so was powerless. He had to let his friend Acton know that the minority bishops, like the Confederacy a decade previously, could expect no help from the British Empire.

The council dragged on through the long Roman summer and more and more bishops, for various reasons, began to drift away. On July 13th, the preparatory vote was taken. Of the 764 bishops on hand at the height of the council only about 680 remained and of those 88 voted non-placet (outright opposition), 62 voted placet juxta modum (acceptance with reservations), and about 80 or 90 more abstained despite their remaining in Rome. Thus barely half of the members of the council voted to give their unqualified assent to the new dogma. 7 As Acton was to point out, this was contrary to the historical practice of ecumenical councils which normally required consensus or at least an overwhelming majority in order to define dogma. In the final session, on 18th of June, only two dissenting bishops remained to hear the doctrine announced, recorded their non-placets and then grant their obedience to the pope.

The important words that were promulgated that day are these: "We teach and define that it is dogma divinely revealed: that the Roman Pontiff, when he speaks ex cathedra, that is, when in discharge of the office of Pastor and Doctor of all Christians, by virtue of his supreme apostolic authority he defines a doctrine regarding faith or morals to be held by the Universal Church, by divine assistance promised to him in blessed Peter, is possessed of that infallibility with which the divine Redeemer willed His Church should be endowed for defining doctrine regarding faith or morals; and that therefore

such definitions of the Roman Pontiff are irreformable in themselves, and not from the consent of the Church." 8

It should not be forgotten that this great power was never employed by a pope in Acton's lifetime and has, in fact, been used only once: in 1950 Pope Pius XII solemnly proclaimed the doctrine of the bodily assumption of the Virgin Mary into Heaven. In the opinion of many theologians it was meant to be used and will only be used to define matters of speculative theology - such matters as the immaculate conception of Mary or the bodily assumption. In our own time (much as Acton predicted) the Second Vatican Council called by Pope John has stressed the collegiality of all the bishops, including the bishop of Rome. In 1870, however, the new dogma was viewed very much in a political sense and sent repercussions throughout the Christian world. As someone observed, the bishops entered the council shepherds and came out of it sheep. Pope Pius had his spiritual supremacy, but many regarded it as a pyrrhic victory; a few weeks after the proclamation, the French troops withdrew and the army of the King of Italy marched into Rome.

Acton himself was now exhausted by the single most intense period of his long-standing struggle with the hierarchy of his church as well as by the oppressive heat of the Italian summer. He retired with relief to the coolness and tranquility of his beloved Tegernsee in the mountains of Bavaria. In England, Archbishop Manning

rejoiced at the victory for ultramontaniam while Newman quietly deplored but submitted. His friend, Bishop Kenrick of St. Louis, wrote to Acton from America to offer what was a typical explanation for submission on the part of the minority. "I could not defend the Council or its action," declared the bishop of the western plains, "but I always professed that the acceptance of either by the Church would supply its deficiency." 9 This was a position substantially the same as Acton's own; the historian later told friends that his submission to the council's will was an act of pure obedience which he felt he owed the church, and did not signify a change of heart.

Professor Dollinger was to be more intransigent. He wrote to his own archbishop in Munich stating that the decree offended him as a Christian because it went against Christ's warning against establishing a kingdom in this world; as a theologian, because it was opposed to the basic tradition of the church; as a historian, because it ignored the lessons of history on the dangers of universal sovereignty; and as a citizen, because it might well lead to a disrupting split between Church and State. A few weeks after the letter was sent Dollinger received his reply: he was excommunicated.

The following year Dollinger and other recalcitrant priests and scholars met in Munich to issue their defiant "Declaration of Whitsuntide" which denounced the 1870 decree as illegal and affirmed once again their faith

in the dogmas of the ancient church. This charter of the newly-founded Old Catholic Church carried Lord Acton's name as a signatory but the English dissident stopped short of heresy and repudiated his "signature" as soon as he heard of it.

After this brush at the theological brink, Acton did his best to avoid further controversy and to settle down in his library to write relatively safe historical essays. In November of 1874, however, his hard-won peace was suddenly shattered by the publication of Gladstone's pamphlet, "The Vatican Decrees in their Bearing on Civil Allegiance." During the council, when the "Schema de Ecclesia" was promulgated, Acton had unwittingly given a hostage to fortune when he wrote to the premier that "most assuredly no man accepting such a code could be a loyal subject or fit for the enjoyment of political privileges." This seed flourished in the Liberal leader's fertile mind and finally bore fruit in his pamphlet. The Vatican decrees, Gladstone argued in his usual persuasive manner, had altered the status of English Catholics who had received emancipation in 1826 on the assumption that they were loyal citizens of the realm, but who were now obliged to transfer their primary allegiance to Rome.

Acton had tried to persuade his friend not to publish the pamphlet, but the day it reached the public he wrote to "The Times" defending English Catholics while trying not to arouse the Curia too much. He was only partially

successful in both these objectives.

Acton attempted to convince his fellow countrymen that Catholics have been as loyal historically as any other group of English subjects. He argued that some popes in the past for various reasons had sometimes promulgated canons which the average Catholic simply did not accept in practice. "I will explain my meaning by an example," he wrote. "A Pope who lived in Catholic times.... decided that it is no murder to kill excommunicated persons. This rule was incorporated in the Canon Law....Again, the greatest legislator of the medieval Church laid down this proposition; that allegiance must not be kept with heretical princes....This principle was adopted by a celebrated Council, and is confirmed by St. Thomas....The "Syllabus" which you cite has assuredly not acquired greater authority in the Church than the Canon Law....Yet these things were as well known when the oath was repealed as they are now. But it was felt that whatever might be the letter of the Canons, and the spirit of Ecclesiastical Laws, the Catholic People might be honourably trusted....Whether there is more truth in your misgivings," Acton concluded, "or in my confidence the event will show, I hope, at no distant time." 10

"The Times" editorially described Acton as having treated the decrees as a "nullity." Cardinal Manning, realizing that this would be the general interpretation of Acton's letters, saw his long-awaited opportunity to

humble the pride of a leader of the Catholic aristocracy that he, Manning, had always distrusted and to end what influence Acton had with the laity. The cardinal demanded assurances from Acton that he had no heretical intent and asked him to explain clearly his exact position on the Vatican Decrees.

Acton's first letter (which is not now known to scholars) was apparently unsatisfactory since the cardinal immediately sent the following note.

"My dear Lord Acton, I have to thank you for your letter dated yesterday (November 15th): from which I gather, with much satisfaction, that your answer to my first question, whether in your letter to "The Times" you intended to repudiate the Vatican Decrees, is in the negative.

"I am not, however, able to gather what answer you desire to give to the second question, namely, whether you adhere to the doctrines defined in the Vatican Council: unless you intend to describe yourself as one of 'those who adopt a less severe and more conciliatory construction' of those decrees.

"If I am right in this inference, I would still ask you to enable me to understand what that construction is.

"I see with great pleasure in your note that you had

written an emphatic repudiation of the statements of "The Times;" and I regret much that any advice should have defeated your judgment of what is at this moment urgently needed for your own sake. Let me therefore ask you to enable me to reassure the minds of a multitude of those who at this time believe of you what "The Times" has sent all over the world.

"Believe me, my dear Lord, yours faithfully,

Henry E., Archbishop of Westminster" 11

Acton, of course, did not miss the meaning of the veiled threat in the silken line, "...what is at this moment urgently needed for your own sake." He immediately consulted a few close friends and began to draft a reply. This first sketch has been published in Acton's "Correspondence," and is doubtless more revealing of the true state of the historian's mind than the letter he actually sent to Manning.*

*Lionel Kochan in his "Acton on History" maintains that the authentic Acton can be better comprehended from his not-for-publication notes than from his articles and public letters. Throughout most of Acton's life he was all too keenly aware that he was perpetually in a small minority no matter where he went and so tried to avoid controversy by constantly relying upon nuances or enigmatic subtleties. "His notes represent what he would like to have said, and his published works constitute what is blurred and incomplete." (Kochan, op cit., p.36.) Certainly in the case at hand this assumption would seem to hold true.

Acton's first draft is as follows (the words in brackets are alternative suggested phrases):

"My dear Lord, I gave no answer to the question, which did not seem to me to arise out of the terms or the spirit of my letter to Mr. Gladstone.

"But I must decline the inference which a passage of my letter of this last Sunday has suggested to you. I have no private gloss or special interpretation for the decrees of the Vatican Council (Trent).

"The acts of the Council are the law which I obey. I am not concerned (bound) to follow the comments of divines or to supply their place from (with) private judgements of my own. I am content to adhere implicitly with an absolute reliance of God's Government of his Church to the construction she herself shall adopt in her own time.

"Command. Submit accept." 12

In the end, a more cautious, more conciliatory and more ambiguous letter was sent to the archepiscopal palace in Westminster. Writing on November 18th from the Athenaeum, Acton began once more with the familiar salutation, "My dear Lord..." and continued, "I could not answer your question without seeming to admit that which I was writing expressly to deny, namely that it could be founded on anything but a misconstruction of the

terms of the spirit of my letter to Mr. Gladstone.

"In reply to the question which you put with reference to a passage in my letter of Sunday, I can only say that I have no private gloss or favourite interpretation for the Vatican Decrees. The acts of the Council alone constitute the law which I recognize. I have not felt it my duty as a layman to pursue the comments of divines, still less to attempt to supersede them by private judgements of my own. I am content to rest in absolute reliance on God's providence in His Government of the Church.

I remain, my dear Lord, yours faithfully,

Acton" 13

Acton's bland phrase that he did not feel it his duty as a layman "to pursue the comments of divines" could not have endeared him to a hierarchy that had been fulminating against Acton's steady (and annoyingly erudite) stream of comments on all manner of ecclesiastical issues for the past two decades. Still, the letter was not, on the face of it, evidence of heresy. On the other hand, it was, to say the least, restrained, in its submission to the authority of the Holy See.

Manning, as might be expected, was still not satisfied and made clear his intention to refer the matter to Rome for a final decision. Genuinely concerned that

he might suffer the blow of excommunication, Acton wrote a long and earnest letter to his old friend Newman seeking his advice as a fellow devout Catholic who was also not an ultramontane. This letter, which has only recently been published for the first time, was meant to be private, and Acton, as he often did in his notes to himself, explained his innermost thoughts on the decrees with a frankness that he did not dare permit himself in his public writings. For this reason, we have in his private statement convincing evidence that Acton did subscribe to the doctrine of development, that is, that the decrees, in God's own time, through the natural evolution of the church, would ultimately be interpreted in a more liberal spirit.

"I shall give myself a day or two to answer (the cardinal)," Acton wrote on December 4th from Aldenham. "I will try to explain my position to you, if I may do so without presuming too much. The decrees have never been a difficulty to me not because I have ever examined them and found that they approved themselves to my judgment, but because, be they what they may, I am sure it will be all right, and if it is not evidently all right now, that is not my business. I take it that no interpretation holds that is inconsistent with tradition, and with former decrees. And if one does not see how the new and the old can be reconciled, time will show it, and the new will be digested and assimilated, and will be worked into what was there before. I feel no impulse to do this as well as

I can for my own satisfaction, or to choose an interpreter. Indeed I have felt no more curiosity to read these decrees through than those of Trent, and know about them both only casually, imperfectly, and partly at second hand.

Therefore, just as I have kept aloof from the Germans, (Professor Dollinger and the others who signed the Declaration of Whitsuntide) who think that they ought to raise their voice and hand against the Council, I have gone through no process of study, comprehension and agreement with respect to the several propositions that it lays down. I take them in the raw state, without the least resistance, subject to the process they have to go through, and to the law of interpretation which upholds the continuity and consistency of doctrine; but I do not guess what that process will effect, and do not attempt to apply the law myself. I am in the same condition with regard to hundreds of canons of former Councils; and I daresay you know how little most of us, native Catholics, care to master details. If therefore I am asked whether I accept the decrees with a definite understanding and inward conviction of their truth, I cannot say either yes or no. But this is the question which the Archbishop - taking his letter and his pastoral together - wants an answer to. I certainly cannot satisfy him.

"I hope you will understand that, in falling under his censures, I act from no spirit of revolt, from no indifference and from no false shame. But I cannot accept his tests and canons of dogmatic development and

interpretation, and must decline to give him the only answer that will content him, as it would, in my lips be a lie...."

Acton then turned to his plan to circumvent the cardinal by making his peace with his own bishop. "Now the Archbishop is not my diocesan - I have neither house nor lodging in London - and my own bishop not only admits that I have said nothing contrary to Church or Council, but, when I thanked him for his recognition...he... acquiesced silently in the remark about my Catholicity. If I say this now, they may drive him into a corner. But it seems right to intimate that I have been in correspondence with my own bishop, and so decline the other jurisdiction...." 14

Acton soon thereafter put into practice his proposal to Newman and wrote a much more friendly and natural letter to his own bishop, Brown of Shrewsbury, in which he speaks more from the heart than from the head and substitutes Christian humility for noble pride.

"To your doubt whether I am a real or pretended Catholic," he wrote, "I must reply that, believing all the Catholic Church believes, and seeking to occupy myself with no studies that do not help religion, I am, in spite of sins and errors, a true Catholic, and I protest that I have given you no foundation for your doubt. If you speak of the Council because you supposed that I have

separated myself in any degree from the Bishops whose friendship I enjoyed at Rome, who opposed the Decrees during the discussion, but accept them now that it is over, you have entirely misapprehended my position. I have yielded obedience to the Apostolic Constitution which embodied those decrees, and I have not transgressed, and certainly do not consciously transgress, obligations imposed under the supreme sanction of the Church. I do not believe that there is a word in my public or private letters that contradicts any doctrine of the Council; but if there is it is not my meaning, and I wish to blot it out." 15

Fortunately, Bishop Brown was content that his famous parishioner was orthodox and a good Catholic in every sense that mattered. Manning, however, was determined that his old enemy should not slip through his fingers that easily; on the recommendation of his theologians he referred the Acton correspondence to Rome.

In April of 1875, Acton was certain he would suffer the same fate as his old professor, Dollinger. "It is simply at the choice of authorities," he confided to Lady Blennerhassett, "Pope, Cardinal, bishop or priest, when I am excommunicated....It can only be a question of time." 16 He was convinced that the Curia and its supporters had finally found the excuse they needed to rid themselves of a long-standing thorn in their sides, and would take it, after waiting long enough to put on a show of judicious and careful consideration.

Gladstone's attitude, however, was one of total unconcern; although for half a century a world symbol of liberalism, the premier was at heart an English country gentleman and a remark about Acton's troubles with the hierarchy made a few years later illustrates his basic sangfroid. When someone suggested his old friend might be excommunicated, Gladstone reacted as though he were a young English captain staring down a thousand rebellious Afghans: "His work may be put on the Index: but that is all. They will never excommunicate an English peer." 17

In the event, Gladstone was exactly right. Much as Manning and the pope would have liked to, they did not quite dare stir up a new storm when there was so little to be gained and so much in the way of worldwide good will to be lost. His own bishop was willing to vouch for his bare orthodoxy and he was, after all a layman; better, thought the Curia, to let sleeping dogs lie.

Relieved that yet another unwanted controversy had quietly faded away, Acton resolved to return to Aldenham and take no more part in public life. That resolution, like many others, however, was easier to make than it was to keep.

NOTES TO CHAPTER FIVE (THE VATICAN COUNCIL AND
AFTERMATH)

1. Acton, "The Next General Council," "The Chronicle," vol.I, July 13, 1867, pp. 368-70.
2. Acton, "The Pope and the Council," "The North British Review," October, 1869, pp.127-35.
3. Letter, June 15, 1870, Quoted in Noel Blakiston, "The Roman Question," p.445.
4. Quirinus, "Letters from Rome on the Council," "First Letter," pp. 59, 66, 74, 78-79.
5. Acton, "Correspondence," p.91.
6. Acton, "Lord Acton's Letters to Mary Gladstone," pp. 54-55.
7. Himmelfarb, "Lord Acton," p.106.
8. Quoted in Mathew, David, "Lord Acton and his Times," pp.202-03. (From Bishop Ullathorne of Birmingham, "Pastoral Letter," of October, 1870.)
9. Lally, F.E., "As Lord Acton Says," p.108.
10. Acton, "Letter to The Times," November 9, 1874.
11. Acton, "Correspondence," pp.151-52.
12. "Ibid.," p.153.
13. "Ibid."
14. Acton to Newman, December 4, 1874 (Birmingham Oratory MSS., quoted in McElrath, Damian et al, "Lord Acton: The Decisive Decade," pp.113-14).
15. Leslie, Shane, "Henry Edward Manning," p.233.

16. Acton to Lady Blennerhassett, April 13, 1875
(Woodruff MSS., quoted in McElrath, Damian et al,
"Lord Acton: The Decisive Decade," p.118)
17. Tollemache, Lionel, "Talks with Mr. Gladstone,"
London, 1903, p.103.

CHAPTER SIX

ALDENHAM AND THE HISTORY OF LIBERTY

After his literally soul-rending experiences in Rome, Acton wanted nothing more than to settle down with his family and books (and a few close friends) in his country home at Aldenham Park. His most recent flare-up with the haughty Cardinal Manning, culminating with the sword of excommunication hanging over his head for months, reinforced the historian in this decision.

Aldenham in Shropshire became his principal refuge, and he visited London only briefly while en route to his winter hideaway at Cannes. His wife's family home in Tegernsee, high in the Bavarian mountains, became his favourite resting-place in the autumn. In these years Acton avoided controversy with the same determination that most students bring to avoiding study; for Acton at this time, the calmness of nature, his books, and his growing family were world enough.

Acton had married his younger cousin, the Countess Marie Anna Ludomilla Euphrosyne Arco-Valley, in the summer of 1865. Acton, who was then thirty-one, had known his bride of twenty-four since she was nine years old; they had grown up together when Acton was in Bavaria to study with Professor Dollinger. It was Marie's father, the Count Johann Maximilian Arco-Valley, who first brought

Dr. Dollinger and the young Acton together.

As is often the case with the marriage of cousins, the match had been planned at least six years before by Acton's mother. When Lady Granville lay dying, Acton granted her last wish that he marry "little Marie." There is a note in Acton's handwriting which tells us of this deathbed promise. "Then she said," Acton recalls, " -Et la petite Marie - partly as a question. I made them leave me alone with her, and asked: 'Si j'avais l'espoir d'épouser Marie, est-ce-que vous l'aimeriez?' These words seemed to give my poor mother more pleasure than anything which happened during her illness. This was when she had asked most eagerly - Est-ce vraisemblable? and I answered: Je l'ai désiré beaucoup depuis des années. She was extremely agitated with the pleasure this gave her and seemed to have waited for it long." 1

The marriage did not actually take place until six years later, which might have been because there was some hesitation on the part of one or both of the principals involved. It is more likely, however, that both families simply thought it best to wait until Marie reached a more suitable age. During this period Acton was also travelling a good deal and working furiously editing journals and standing for and sitting in Parliament. The delay, therefore, does not seem to be very important.

Until recently none of the correspondence between

Acton and his wife had been published and previous biographies of Acton, therefore, passed over with little comment his relationship with Lady Acton and their children.² At least one Acton student, in fact, has speculated that their marriage might not have been particularly happy.*

There seems, however, little evidence to support this conclusion and considerable reason for believing that Acton was indeed happy in his family life, despite his troubles with the outside world. Acton made it a practice to write to his wife when they were separated almost every day and to send a telegram on those days when he could not manage his usual fairly long letter.

During his engagement, for instance, Acton made a visit to Italy and sent his fiancée a letter from Naples beginning, "My own dear Love." He went on to say that

*Lionel Kochan, in his "Acton on History," writes that "...it does not seem to have been a happy alliance. Acton was by character far too interested in ideas and the outside world to be much given to introspection. The very rare passages of this sort amongst his notes are thereby of enhanced significance. In a confused way, one such note speaks perhaps of an unhappy family and married life. Acton asks: 'May one resist the state? Or cashier a king? Or be a husband of two wives? Or deceive a questioner? Or keep a slave? Or torture a prisoner? Or burn a witch? Or go to King Lear? Or back one's opinion?' (Add.MSS.5645) It is apparent that his family life was not able to console him for the isolation of his later years." (Kochan, pp.24-25).

"I sent off an imperfect letter to you this evening in order to save tomorrow's post. I had set down my conversation with the Cardinal because I should like, if possible, to make my correspondence with you a tolerably complete journal of all I see and hear and do." The letter was signed, "Your affectionate, J. Emerich," 3

The next day, Thursday, February 2, 1865, he wrote, "My dearest Marie...When I came home from Mass this morning they brought me your dear despatch. It was very sweet to know that you were thinking of me, and I thanked you, Darling, a thousand times. Only two more days now, and my Love will be in my arms." 4 Another time when he was uncertain as to her itinerary he wrote to apologize for having "left you for several days without any news of myself, or one word of love." 5

Acton did not, like so many husbands, become less attentive as courtship and the first years of marriage gradually faded into a more settled existence. Five years after their wedding he was still writing almost every day to "My own sweet Love," and sending a telegram when the press of work did not allow for a full letter. 6

Nor would it be accurate to conclude that their relationship was a limited one; it is doubtless true that Marie Acton was not a scholar in her own right but she seems to have shared her husband's interests and friendships as much as any wife and probably more than most.

Two months before his wedding, Acton wrote to "My own dearest Marie" assuring her that she was "the one joy, the supreme blessing, of my life, and that the sweetest occupation of each day is to look back upon the past times spent with you, and forward to the happy future which you will fill. Your admirable soul becomes continually better known to me; and the more clearly I see, the more confident and rejoiced I am in thinking of a life whose welfare will be part of your own, and so much your work." 7

All in all, Acton and his young bride seem to have been well matched; they both came from deeply religious and cosmopolitan backgrounds. Although her father was Bavarian, Marie's mother, the Countess Anna Margareta Maria Pelina Marescalchi came from one of the leading Italian families. More important than that, Marie's mother (as we have seen)⁸ was a second parent to the young Acton; he said many times that his happiest moments were spent with the Arco-Valley family and friends at Tegernsee.

Of Acton's six children, two unfortunately did not survive childhood. His eldest daughter, Mary Elizabeth, was born in August of 1866 and married, relatively late in life, Edward Herbert of an old Monmouthshire family connected to the Earls of Pembroke. Mary Elizabeth died in 1955 - the longest-lived of Acton's immediate family.

A second daughter, Annie Mary, was born in the autumn of 1868.

Richard Maximilian was the third child (born in Bavaria in 1870) and the eldest son and heir to the title. He took up a career his eminent father had often considered but never actually entered, diplomacy. After serving with distinction in the First German War (as old-fashioned Englishmen still call it)* he represented the King in several European nations, turning to advantage his unusual background.

Acton's second son and namesake, John, was born in May 1872 and died in infancy ten months later.

A fifth child, Elizabeth Mary, suffered the same unhappy fate at the age of seven in 1881. Acton's deep faith sustained him at her bedside; he comforted her with the words, "Be glad, my child, you will soon be with Jesus Christ." 9 Afterwards, he wrote to his friend Mary

*Having been born in Bavaria (a fact of little consequence in a time now lost to the world forever) Richard Maximilian was officially declared a British subject by Act of Parliament in 1911. He had, of course, entered the House of Lords as the Second Baron Acton in 1902. Unlike his father, he was not turned away by Cambridge and studied at Magdalene College before entering the diplomatic service. In the war he was decorated with the French Legion of Honour and received a knighthood, the KCVO. He followed in his father's footsteps in one other respect: he was a Lord-in-Waiting to King Edward VII and to King George V. Richard Maximilian's eldest son, the Third Lord Acton, eventually moved his family to Rhodesia. The Hon. Richard Acton (great-grandson of the historian) studied at Trinity College, Oxford, where he and the author met when they were both members of the Oxford Carlton Dining Club.

Gladstone that "She has taken with her one of the strongest links that attached me to this world...." 10

A youngest daughter, Jeanne Marie, was born in 1876; her life also was destined to be cut short at the relatively young age of 43.

Besides his own family, Acton was fortunate to enjoy the friendship of at least two remarkable women. Charlotte von Leyden, who came from the same circle of aristocratic German Catholic families as did the Arco-Valleys, has been described as "perhaps Acton's closest friend." 11 He often spoke of her as one of the cleverest women he knew 12 and referred to her in a letter to Marie Acton as "the beautiful Charlotte." 13 Herself an historian of some note, she also shared Acton's interest in the liberalization of the Catholic Church. In 1870 she married one of Acton's parliamentary colleagues, Sir Rowland Blennerhasset, Liberal MP for Galway City.*

At one time he chided her for being too verbose in her writing (a fault some would lay at his own door!). "You observe the golden rule (in your biography of de Staël)," he wrote, "to state no fact without stating

*Lady Blennerhasset was the author of studies of Madame de Staël, Georges Sand, Cardinal Newman, and Talleyrand. She also contributed two chapters to Volume X of "The Cambridge Modern History," Chapter II, "The Doctrinaires" (a school of early nineteenth-century French liberals) and Chapter V, "The Papacy and the Catholic Church."

the evidence. But there is a silver rule, to give no unnecessary evidence." 14

The letters of "his Egeria" 15 to Acton, sometimes in French, sometimes in English, were written in a more personal style than was most of his correspondence. It is clear that they had a warm and sympathetic relationship. Upon his death, she wrote three detailed and laudatory obituaries.

Mary Gladstone, another young woman with wide interests in religion, literature, and politics, was close to Acton from the time they first met at her father's country home in 1878 until her relatively late marriage to the Rev. Henry Drew in 1886. Acton was forty-six and Miss Gladstone thirty when they began to correspond regularly; the Prime Minister's daughter was a reserved young woman, generally preferring the company of books* to young men. She had had one of those romantic flirtations with dashing young men that Victorian ladies liked to reminisce about in the

*Mary Gladstone once asked Acton to write out for her a list of the one hundred most significant books. This list is given in one of her own works, "Some Hawarden Letters," published in 1917. Lord Acton's letters to Mrs. Drew (as she became) were published in 1904 after being edited by their mutual friend, Herbert Paul. This volume was dedicated by "M.D." to Lady Acton. Mrs. Drew's "Diaries and Letters" appeared in 1930 and her book, "Acton, Gladstone and Others," was published in 1930. After Acton's death she wrote an admiring essay on his contributions to liberalism, entitled "Lord Acton's Legacy to Liberals," for the "Optimist" (III, 1908, pp. 34-39).

sunset of their lives. In Mary Gladstone's case, it happened in Rome, when she was visiting that city with her father, Lord Acton, and other friends. The young man was the handsome Marquis of Lorne, eldest son of the Duke of Argyll, who was not content with a Premier's daughter but went on to marry a Princess of Great Britain. 16

Acton, as is well known, became a great admirer of Gladstone and saw in him almost the ideal statesman; it was quite natural, therefore, for him to become a good friend of the Liberal leader's unmarried and intellectual-minded daughter. Doubtless Acton took the opportunity in some of his correspondence to subtly pass on an idea or a proposal to the head of the government but there seems little doubt that their friendship was long-lasting and sincere. David Mathew in his "Lord Acton and His Times" explains Acton's friendship with a few women by implying he liked sometimes to have someone he could talk down to (one would think enough men were available for that purpose, especially in Parliament and the Church). "It was part of Lord Acton's social gifts," Mathew writes, "that he could easily gain the interest of women. He had a didactic turn and therefore did not need the conversation of equals. He loved to teach, whether it was Mary Gladstone or his own daughters." 17

Anyone who reads Acton's lengthy correspondence with his wife, his mother-in-law, and women relatives and friends (in which he frequently solicits their advice on a

variety of subjects) may judge for himself whether Acton found as many equals in one sex as in the other.

On the other hand, it would be decidedly premature to enrol Acton among the pioneers of the movement for women's liberation. In a letter to Gladstone, written from Cannes in 1891, Acton showed himself no more enthusiastic about women's suffrage than as he did almost forty years before in Boston when he reported hearing someone "half-mad" call for votes for women. 18 Although in most respects Acton gradually shed his Burkean garments to walk in the unencumbered purity of liberalism as he grew older, he insisted on retaining one last conservative figleaf; the exclusively male suffrage. His excuse for this exception to his general policy, ironically enough, was that women were mostly Tories!

He did concede that male-dominated society has often denied equal opportunity to women; he refers to them as "the perpetual victim of man." All things considered, however, he did not see female suffrage as a liberal principle. "It now seems to me," he told Gladstone, "that there is no higher law deciding the question and that it falls within the computations of expediency. As I believe that the votes of women will be mainly Tory, I do not feel bound, by any superior consideration, to sacrifice the great interest of party."

"If it can be shown," he explained, "that the

majority of women will probably be Liberal, or that they will divide equally, I should say that the balance is, very slightly, in favour of giving them votes."

Acton hastily added that Liberalism's Grand Old Man must think his motives sordid. He was concerned, he said, about recent setbacks to the Liberal Party (the coming loss of Irish seats, the inevitable retirement of its leader, etc.); these, he thought, must be counterbalanced if the Tories were not to become the permanent government. "A few years ago," he wrote, "(party advantage) would not have weighed with me against the necessity I thought I saw of redressing the balance of power in favour of the perpetual victim of man,"* 19

If Acton's normal defence of minorities, of the weak against the strong, of Catholics, Jews, the poor, and others lacking in power to protect themselves, lapsed when

*If Acton thought that he had earlier in his life favoured women's suffrage, his memory must have been at fault. Obviously, he opposed it in his youth. On March 30th, 1884, he wrote to Mary Gladstone that "I think women's suffrage an evil in many ways. Girls and widows are Tories, and channels of clerical influence, and it is not for them so much as for married women that your argument tells. If we ever have manhood suffrage - dissociating power from property altogether, it will be difficult to keep out wives. The objections to voting wives are overwhelming." ("Letters to Mary Gladstone," p.294.)

it came to women, it is only fair to recall that few men of prominence (with the exception of John Stuart Mill) were arguing for women's rights until after the turn of the century. Indeed, the fact that in 1891 he was willing to consider seriously giving them the vote probably put him ahead of his time even among Liberals.

In any event, Acton certainly did not view women (as did many men of that time or other times) as inherently inferior to his own sex. He corresponded with many women on all sorts of serious subjects, discussed his (and their) articles with them, and shared his extensive collections of books with them as well as with his male friends. Lady Blennerhassett remarked, in fact, that her greatest joy in visiting Tegernsee or Aldenham was to visit Acton's books - next to Lord Acton himself, of course.

The three country houses to which Acton retreated all were well stocked with books: Tegernsee had about 4,000, 20 Cannes somewhat less, and Aldenham held about 60,000 though some estimates went as high as 80,000 volumes or more. 21

Acton had begun collecting books from an early age. His schoolboy letters are full of requests for money for books and more books. His stepfather, Lord Granville, half-complained in 1859 that Johnny Acton was filling the house with books. "I can hardly open a book," he wrote, "without finding marks or notes of his." 22

Acton continued to scribble notes in the margins of his books and papers throughout his life. One of his librarians later wrote that "Seen among his books, so familiar to him that they appeared to be not mere bundles of paper and leather, but sentient realities, he was a never-to-be-forgotten figure. His knowledge of books... was so complete that he never seemed to be speaking of dead and forgotten writers but of living persons....His industry was colossal, and equalled by the rapidity with which he read. Knowing so much, he had the art of only looking for that which was new to him. Nearly every volume of his collection bore his special marks - a pencil tick to indicate a salient fact, and a thin slip of paper for a point of more importance." 23

A large Papal and Italian library was acquired at the Libri sale in 1860; in the same year, the death of Lady Granville brought Acton the ancient and valuable Dalberg collection; a year later one of his favourite professors at the University of Munich, Ernst von Lasaulx, bequeathed his library of ancient literature and philosophy to the student who was sure to care for it. Over the years the library at Aldenham steadily grew; when he was in the House of Commons, Acton told a fellow MP that he already had 30,000 volumes. 24

Acton's books, as Gibbon said of the scrolls of one of his Romans, were decidedly for use, not ornament. He said himself that there were no fine copies, unless by

accident. One friend said of the rooms in which they were housed that they had none of the charms of a library. "It was rather a gigantic bookstore, in which its owner could always find what he wanted, but which would never have suggested to the ordinary man the idea of a studious leisure." 25 Acton always urged students to beware of being seduced by the merely aesthetic; most of his books were in the cheapest paper editions available and at one time he had many of them bound at eighteenpence a volume. 26

They were not arranged in any imposing manner in some grand ballroom, such as the Duke of Marlborough's leather-bound, gold-stamped library at Blenheim Palace. A visitor would receive the impression he was entering a jumble of shabby rooms overcrowded with the books of thirty or forty professors. On the left of the entrance hall was Acton's study - his desk, library catalogue, bibliographical works, indexes of manuscripts from a dozen countries - his working tools. Next was a kind of inner hall, a billiard room, in which on the left side were English, Scottish, Irish, and Colonial history, and that of the United States. On the right were arranged histories of the various kingdoms and dukedoms of the German Empire. Above was a gallery. Two drawingrooms, one large and one small, were on the right of the entrance hall; on their shelves were English, French, Italian, and German belles-lettres. Acton estimated that only about one in a hundred of his books could be called "light literature."

Most of them were in ecclesiastical history,* philosophy, theology, and modern European history, especially French, German, and Italian. Less than a tenth of his books were in the English language, since Acton was concerned with accumulating books that were not readily available elsewhere in England.

Manuscripts and copies of original documents filled the next anteroom - many from the Vatican and Venetian diplomatic archives. After this, a visitor finally entered the library proper, a vast room with tall French windows opening onto a formal garden. It was in this room, which included an iron gallery, that the bulk of the collection was kept. On the left side were Greek and Latin classics and on the right, the Fathers of the Church. There was a large alcove assigned to the many Italian states. French history dominated the end of the room directly across from the entrance. 27

*Although probably more than half of Acton's books bore some relation to the Church, not all of them would have gladdened the eye of a parish priest. Acton's own chaplain, Father David Williams, wrote to his bishop in 1883 that "I could say a great deal about the library here, which I prefer not to write. It is easy to trace a particular line of reading. The marks left are very numerous - Against the Jesuits - The Temporal Power - Crimen Sacerdotium etc. etc." (Letter dated February 10, 1883, Shrewsbury Diocese MSS, quoted in Mathew, op.cit., pp. 240-41).

A single example may give an idea of the extent and thoroughness of this "scholar's monument" as it has been called. When this vast array of scholarship was catalogued for the Cambridge University Library (where it now forms a proud part) one section alone, political philosophy, was found to consist of 286 pages of titles. At least forty-five of these works refer to one author alone, Machiavelli. Editions of "The Prince" in several languages from every century from the sixteenth to the end of the nineteenth are included. 28 Nor was this a particularly favourite book of Acton's; this complete collection of almost all major works of a leading political thinker as well as important studies of his thought was representative and by no means exceptional in the Acton library.

Seeing the extent of the raw materials brought together by Acton has compelled more than one observer to ask why the historian did not publish more of his own work. A friend of John Morley, for instance, left Aldenham feeling not elated but depressed. "...He beheld the most pathetic sight of wasted labour that ever met human eyes," Morley reports, "the most impressive of all testimony to the vanity of human life. 'There were shelves on every subject,' the friend noted, '-Renaissance Sorcery - the Fureros of Aragon - Scholastic Philosophy - the growth of the French Navy - American Exploration - Church Councils - and many books were full of hundreds of cross-references in pencil, noting passages bearing on some particular

development or evolution of modern life or thought. There were pigeonholes, cabinets, with literally thousands of compartments, into each of which were sorted scores of little white papers with references to some particular topic.. It is better to have produced one solid monograph on the minutest point - better to have edited a single Pipe Roll or annotated a single short Chronicle - than to have accumulated for forty years unwritten learning that goes down to the grave and is lost." 29

Although this is by no means an uncommon criticism, even a cursory review of Acton's work would lead one to conclude it was unfounded. It is perfectly true that Acton never published a book in his own lifetime. Indeed, he published only a few articles under his own name; most appeared anonymously or signed with initials.* By the age of forty, however, he had published over four hundred reviews and short articles in serious journals with a high standard. In addition, his substantial scholarly essays

*Acton's entry in "Who's Who" (based on information supplied by him) curiously mentions only one lecture in print. The unusually brief biography (only seventeen lines compared to fifty-two for the almost forgotten novelist Arthur William A'Beckett) reads, in part: "Publication: Lecture on the Study of History, 1895. Owned about 7,000 acres." For the full entry, see footnote 30.

filled over a thousand pages of print. Most of these essays, in fact, were far more pregnant with insight than were most of the leading historical works of the day; Acton was to receive four honorary doctorates on the strength of these specialized articles. At the end of his life, the bibliography of his published works came to 36 closely-printed pages. (See Appendix) About four hundred and fifty titles comprise his "Complete Works." About eighty of these are major essays or lectures, the rest short reviews covering a wide range of subjects. Exclusive of correspondence, these published works would come to over five thousand pages and, if in book form, would easily equal ten volumes. Acton's letters, many of which are minor essays on historical or political problems, already comprise six published volumes, with more to come at this writing. The rich supply of papers in the Woodruff archives alone will in due time account for at least a dozen volumes. In short, there will some day be a "Complete Works of the First Lord Acton" consisting of upwards of fifty volumes of some four hundred pages each.

One of the first of a series of grand projects conceived by the young Acton was a "History of the Popes." After his return from his studies in Europe in the late 1850s Acton devoted a considerable amount of his time to research on what was planned to be a definitive work on the medieval and early modern papacy. An extensive article entitled "The Political System of the Popes" was published in three instalments in "The Rambler" in 1860-61. The

great work was never finished; Acton's attention instead turned to America and he resolved to write a history of the origins of the American Constitution, comparing it with the democracies of the ancient world. The result of this research was an article, "The Political Causes of the American Revolution," which appeared in "The Rambler" in 1861 and which favourably attracted the attention of Gladstone. Acton's interest in America continued throughout his life. In 1866 he delivered a lecture on the meaning of the American Civil War to his neighbours in Bridgnorth and over the years he wrote reviews of books on the Great Republic of the West, including a study of Bryce's "The American Commonwealth" in 1889. The magnum opus on the American Constitution, however, never appeared.*

In 1863, Acton returned to German history and published an edition of some recently discovered manuscripts thought to have been written by Frederick the Great of Prussia as advice on the art of ruling. In an essay for "The Home and Foreign Review" (January 1863) he defended the authenticity of "Les Matinées Royales, ou L'Art de Régner" which had aroused a storm of controversy in Prussia;

*An enterprising scholar someday may collect Acton's writings on the United States (which come to about two hundred pages and which have mostly not been published in book form) in one volume with some such title as "Lord Acton on Democracy in America."

the Crown Princess of Prussia wrote to her mother, Queen Victoria, to complain of this libel on the great king's reputation. As it turned out, Acton was almost certainly mistaken. In a private letter to Douglas Woodruff, one of Acton's former colleagues and a biographer of Frederick, wrote that the king "...only wrote the two "Testaments" described in my book. The "Matinees" are ignored by biographers because they are a fake - one of many such concoctions in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. we must remember that Acton was writing before the vast (and still unfinished) "Politische Korrespondence" began to appear. 31 One might add that Leopold von Ranke, perhaps the greatest of German historians, was also taken in.

Acton also considered attempting a major study of James II and VII, the last Catholic king of England and Scotland. In 1862, he wrote for "The Home and Foreign Review" a fascinating (and incomplete) investigation of the eldest son of Charles II - a mysterious man who was apparently a bastard fathered by Charles with an unknown high-born lady while he was in exile in Jersey. Ten years later, Acton published an edition of "The Letters of James II to the Abbot of La Trappe." Again, however, the major work was never finished.

One of Acton's favourite interests (he had many) was federalism. On several occasions he contemplated devoting a number of years of his life to exploring in depth this

solution to a perennial political problem. "Nationality," perhaps his most important political essay, was published in 1862 and periodically a review or short essay on this subject was written. But Acton never did for federalism what Tocqueville did for democracy.

A series of volumes on the Reformation - telling the whole truth based on original manuscripts - suggested itself. This is a task which Acton was admirably, almost uniquely equipped to complete. A brilliant and thought-provoking essay, "The Protestant Theory of Persecution," duly appeared in "The Rambler" (March 1862). Seven years later "The Massacre of St. Bartholomew" was published in the "North British Review" (October 1869), and in 1877 "Wolsey and the Divorce of Henry VIII" was written for the "Quarterly." Dozens of reviews touching on the Protestant Revolt also were written over this thirty-year period. Manuscripts were collected, copied, read, annotated, and edited, including Nicholas Harpsfield's "Narrative of the Divorce of Henry VIII" (1877). Although the above-mentioned work would have been enough to secure a reputation for most historians, and probably a chair and an LL.D., it was still, when all is said and done, not the grand panorama of the Reformation that Acton was fully capable of creating.

At least three other significant challenges attracted Acton's attention. He had always been fascinated by the use of power, and Machiavelli (even more than the spurious testaments of Frederick the Great) was a man from whom

much could be learned. Accordingly, Acton collected no less than forty-five editions of "Il Principe" as well as dozens of books and countless manuscript materials related to sixteenth century Italy. This would have been a study worthy of his talents; in the end, however, Acton contented himself with writing a twenty-one page introduction to L.A. Burd's edition of "Il Principe" (1891).

A massive study of Dollinger's life and work also beckoned Acton for years. In the end, he wrote a forty-four page article (as always filled with ideas others could pursue) for the "English Historical Review" ("Dollinger's Historical Work," Volume V, 1890).

It will become apparent, from the recital of all these "great works" seriously planned by Acton at one time or another, that the famous "History of Liberty" - the "greatest book never written" - was simply one (although the most famous) of a series of "Madonnas of the Future."*

*Mary Gladstone, after hearing Acton discuss his "History" in fascinating language wrote, with some exasperation, "It is extra-ordinary the way he tingles with it to his fingers (sic) ends and yet can sit patient and quiet over wife and children and wait and wait another year before writing it. What an extraordinary man." (Mary Gladstone Drew, "Her Diaries and Letters," October 8, 1879, p.173.) A few years later Acton began to call his unfinished work "The Madonna of the Future" - after the artist in the Henry James story who devoted his life to a single painting: after his death, the canvas was found to be blank.

Historians and biographers since the 1880s have speculated about why Acton who "loved liberty with all the ardour of Milton, and investigated it with all the science of Locke" 32 never completed the work to which, directly or indirectly, he had devoted most of his life. A wide number of explanations have been offered, most of which do not stand up under examination.

Miss Himmelfarb has suggested that Acton was hesitant to be as morally strict in his "History" as he believed he ought to be. She advances the theory that Acton was reluctant to step upon as many cherished values as he would have to in such a work. 33 Mr. Kochan agrees with this thesis: "In a word," he writes, "the reason why Acton did not write his 'History of Liberty' lay in his lack of courage to affront a hostile world unaided." 34

If Acton's inability to finish projected designs were due to his dislike for controversy, then how are we to explain his many articles and short reviews, which certainly aroused the antagonism of large numbers of churchmen and politicians? It can hardly be maintained that Acton avoided controversial subjects; on the contrary, despite his professed dislike of argument, almost all of his writings are polemical. On the other side of the coin, we have to ask how this theory would explain his putting aside a major history of the American Constitution. Surely, that would not have aroused much animosity toward Acton in nineteenth century England. Or the great work

on "Federalism" that never appeared - this was hardly a subject that would lead men to walk out of clubs when Acton entered. When he first came to the "Rambler" he told Simpson, "I have much to say about Burke" and it is well known that the ideas of Burke dominated his thought at that time. One might reasonably have expected this to mean a series of important articles. In fact, Acton eventually wrote a five-page review of Thomas Macknight's "History of the Life and Times of Edmund Burke" ("The Rambler," April 1858).

Other historians have speculated that Acton never finished the "History" because he could never definitely decide what were the causes of the French Revolution - or more generally, that he could never complete what he regarded as sufficient research to enable him to write with authority. As it happens, his lectures on the French Revolution at Cambridge University do provide definite views on its origins. It is true that Acton read more widely and in more languages than most historians before beginning to write, but the plain fact that he did write a large amount of presumably adequately researched

material would seem to weaken this theory.*

Other students of Acton have suggested that his break with Dollinger so shattered his life that he could not concentrate on historical work. The quarrel with Dollinger, however, reached its height in 1883, some time after Acton cheerfully acknowledged that he would never write a book about liberty. Another possibility is that personal tragedy (the loss of his son in 1873 and of his daughter in 1881) not unnaturally interfered with his researches. While all of the factors mentioned doubtless affected his writing of the great history, none of these theories account for the half dozen or so other grand designs begun at other times and similarly never completed.

*I believe myself that Acton never seriously planned to write a "History of Liberty." He surely knew himself well enough by his fortieth year to realize that he was a man who seized upon a passionate interest for several months or a year, wrote an incisive essay on the subject, and then went on to another problem to be approached for an equally short time with an equal amount of enthusiasm. Were it true that he was serious about finishing the "History," he would have felt too guilty about his lack of progress to joke about it as openly as he did. ("The Madonna of the Future," etc.) At one time he jokingly referred Mary Gladstone to p.50,000 of his great work... wherein would be discussed the Revolution of 1688. ("Letters to Mary Gladstone," p.101). Moreover, if Acton were serious about writing a multi-volume "History" there would certainly be among his papers or in his letters some plan of the work. No such plan has been found. The nearest approach to such an outline is a curious notebook (Add. MSS.4867) with lines numbered up to 11,000 and with a title entered here and there.

The simple answer that Acton was lazy or was incapable of putting his thoughts on paper will hardly do either; we have seen that his published writings (not counting his voluminous correspondence) came to 5,000 printed pages in his lifetime. If he had concentrated this great effort into one ten-volume work, he clearly could have finished it.

Can we not solve the Riddle of Acton by concluding that he was one of those brilliant and insightful scholars whose multitude of interests were insufficiently disciplined by an orderly sense of priorities? Most of our best scientists and scholars have asked themselves what it is that they can do well, preferably what they can do best, ideally what only they can do - and then have devoted most of their energies to that one isolated task. The result, of course, has been new knowledge and, perhaps, progress. Acton's talents and interests were by no means limitless. By his own admission, Acton knew little of science, practically nothing of economics, surprisingly little of philosophy, and not very much of the non-European world. His interest in art, music, and literature was minimal to say the least. The extensive bibliography of his own works reveal he had passionate interests to which he turned again and again. These were modern French, German, Italian, English, and to a lesser extent, American history. He was well versed in medieval history, but less so in the classical era. Throughout all his historical work he sought to

throw light on the relation of the individual to God; at least half of his published work directly concerns the place of religion in society.

Acton was far more cosmopolitan and more wide-ranging than his peers in the historical profession. If he had devoted as much of his energies to any one subject (even a broad one) as Edward Gibbon did to the Roman Empire, as John Motley did to the Dutch Republic, or as Henry Adams did to the early United States, we could have confidently expected a work in the first rank of histories.

There is little use in lamenting that he did not. What Acton did do was to provide his contemporaries and all future readers of his works with a rich vein of ideas from which they may extract nuggets at their leisure. As was often said of Tocqueville and Burke, books can be and have been, written from one of his paragraphs. Acton was above all a great teacher, and the greatest teachers are those who can inspire their students to go beyond what they themselves have learned.

Anyone who reads Acton's two essays, "The History of Freedom in Antiquity" and "The History of Freedom in Christianity" will immediately see that the grandness of the language is equalled by the pregnancy of the thought. How many volumes could be written as commentaries on the opening paragraph?

"Liberty, next to religion," Acton began, "has been the motive of good deeds and the common pretext of crime, from the sowing of the seed at Athens, two thousand four hundred and sixty years ago, until the ripened harvest was gathered by men of our own race. It is the delicate fruit of a mature civilization; and scarcely a century has passed since nations, that knew the meaning of the term, resolved to be free. In every age its progress has been beset by its natural enemies, by ignorance and superstition, by lust of conquest and by love of ease, by the strong man's craving for power, and the poor man's craving for food. During long intervals it has been utterly arrested, when nations were being rescued from barbarism and from the grasp of strangers, and when the perpetual struggle for existence, depriving men of all interest and understanding in politics, has made them eager to sell their birthright for a pottage, and ignorant of the treasure they resigned. At all times, sincere friends of freedom have been rare, and its triumphs have been due to minorities that have prevailed by associating themselves with auxiliaries whose objects often differed from their own; and this association, which is always dangerous, has been sometimes disastrous, by giving to opponents just grounds of opposition, and by kindling dispute over the spoils in the hour of success. No obstacle has been so constant, or so difficult to overcome, as uncertainty and confusion touching the

nature of true liberty. If hostile interests have wrought much injury, false ideas have wrought still more; and its advance is recorded in the increase of knowledge, as much as in the improvement of laws. The history of institutions is often a history of deception and illusions; for their virtue depends on the ideas that produce and the spirit which preserves them, and the form may remain unaltered when the substance has passed away." 35

Acton has been accused by some scholars 36 of using a simplistic definition of liberty, or using "freedom" as a meaningless "hurrah-word," or making an idolatrous god out of liberty - that is, worshipping liberty as the highest of all values.

Anyone who reads Acton carefully will have difficulty coming to this conclusion. In the first place, he defines liberty very precisely:* "By liberty I mean the

*Acton offered many definitions of liberty in many of his works, but all are essentially the same and none, I believe, contradicts the definitions cited here. When he was younger, for instance, he wrote to Simpson (January 5, 1862) that "All liberty consists in...the preservation of an inner sphere exempt from state power - That reverence for conscience is the germ of all civil freedom..." ("Acton-Simpson Correspondence," vol.II, p.251). In his later years, while Professor at Cambridge University at the end of the century, he declared that a free government must be "so exercised that the individual shall not feel the pressure of public authority, and may direct his life by the influences which are within him and not around him." ("Lectures on the French Revolution," p.33.)

assurance that every man shall be protected in doing what he believes his duty against the influence of authority and majorities, custom and opinion. The State is competent to assign duties and draw the line between good and evil only in its immediate sphere. Beyond the limits of things necessary for its well-being, it can only give indirect help to fight the battle of life by promoting the influences which prevail against temptation - religion, education and the distribution of wealth." 37

Acton makes it quite clear that by liberty, he does not mean the power to do whatever one chooses, regardless of God, of one's own conscience, or of society. His use of the phrase, "every man shall be protected" presupposes an organized, indeed mature, society, which encourages right actions and discourages wrong deeds - and which protects persons in their rights from malefactors. He is equally concerned to protect individuals who are honestly following an informed conscience (which he thought was "the audible voice of God, that never misleads or fails" 38 *) from both tyrannical rulers or mob rule. He recognises explicitly that the State's role is protection of the person in his rights and, in an advanced society, the State

*He also said, however, that the idea ~~the~~ conscience was infallible was "indefensible." ("Correspondence," pp.79-80.) These are not, of course, questions which can be answered with a pat phrase or a neat system.

should remove obstacles to the full development of each citizen's potentialities. That is, the role of the State is to encourage the school and church and other private institutions in helping individuals to realize their liberty in the full sense of the word.

"Liberty," Acton went on to write, "is not a means to a higher political end. It is itself the highest political end. It is not for the sake of a good public administration that it is required, but for security in the pursuit of the highest objects of civil society, and of private life." 39

Acton, of course, was choosing his words carefully. He said liberty was the highest political end but he goes on to stress that only through liberty, through individuals exercising their free will, can one expect to have a virtuous and just and enlightened society. It is liberty, which makes the full development of man possible. Politics - the State - is the means to an end. On reading "The History of Liberty in Antiquity" and his other writings, it becomes reasonably clear that Acton knew precisely what he meant when he spoke of liberty. Far from making a god of "liberty," Acton was certain in his own mind that "the rights of man on earth are the consequences of the rights of God in heaven,"

In a larger sense, of course, all of Acton's writings can be read as forming a large and continuous "History of Liberty;" this was the goal and the passion that

informed most of his work and this profound concern for the freedom of the individual conscience is above all what Acton has to teach us today.

NOTES TO CHAPTER SIX (ALDENHAM AND THE HISTORY OF
LIBERTY)

1. Add. MSS. 4862.
2. A number of valuable letters of Acton to his wife have recently been published by Fr. Damian McElrath, O.F.M. (in collaboration with James Holland, Ward White, and Sue Katzman) "Lord Acton: The Decisive Decade," 1864-74, Louvain, 1970.
3. Woodruff MSS. Quoted in McElrath, op.cit., pp.57-58.
4. "Ibid.," p.58.
5. "Ibid.," p.60.
6. "Ibid.," p.91.
7. "Ibid.," p.65. A photograph of Lady Acton is published opposite p.572 in the "Dollinger-Acton Briefwechsel, vol.I, Munich, 1863.
8. See Acton's relationship to Countess Anna Arco indicated the previous chapter, "The Education of Lord Acton,"
9. "Letters of Lord Acton to Mary Gladstone," p.87.
10. "Ibid.," p.209.
11. Kochan, Lionel, "Acton on History," p.28.
12. "Letters....Mary Gladstone," p.141.
13. Woodruff MSS. Quoted in McElrath, op.cit., p.93.
14. "Correspondence," p.270.
15. Egeria was a nymph who was the intellectual companion of a Roman king.
16. Mathew, David, "Lord Acton and His Times," p.172.
17. "Ibid.," p.250.

18. See Chapter, "The Education of Lord Acton," p.38.
19. "Correspondence," p.235.
20. Acton, in an undated letter to Viscount Bryce, once invited him to visit Tegernsee. It is "by the side of a beautiful lake," he wrote, "with splendid mountains of six or seven thousand feet to scale, and endless walks in the forest. There is a villa there belonging to my kinsfolk, in which I have three or four thousand volumes at your service. It is only two hours from Munich." (Bryce MSS, Acton Papers in the Bodleian Library, Oxford.)
21. Grant Duff, Mountstuart, "Out of the Past," vol.II, p.192.
22. Fitzmaurice, Edmond, "The Life of the 2nd Earl Granville," vol.I, p.358.
23. Tedder, H.R., "Lord Acton as a Book Collector," (in "Bibliographical Tracts," 1894-1905) British Museum; no pagination.
24. Grant Duff, op. cit., p.193.
25. "Ibid.," p.192.
26. "Ibid.," p.193.
27. Tedder, H.R., op. cit., (no pagination) Also, a letter from Acton to "Mr.Gladstone" (as he always addressed him) outlining the contents of the library, May 23, 1890. Published in "Correspondence," pp.232-33.
28. Lally, F.E., "As Lord Acton Says," p.188.
29. Morley, John, "Recollections of Viscount Morley," vol.II, p.234.

30. The "Who's Who" entry for Acton (from "Who Was Who," 1897 - 1916) reads as follows:
- Acton, 1st Baron (cr. 1869), Sir John Emerich Edward Dalberg-Acton, Bt.; cr. 1643; K.C.V.O.; cr. 1897; D.C.L., LL.D.,; Professor of Modern History, Cambridge, from 1895; Royal Commissioner on Historical MSS.; Trustee, British Museum; b. Naples, 1834; s. father, 7th Bt., 1837; m. Countess Marie Arco-Valley, 1865. Educ. Oscott, under Cardinal Wiseman; Munich, under Dr. Dollinger, Lord-in-Waiting to Queen Victoria till 1895; M.P. Carlow, 1859-65; Bridgnorth, 1865-66; Romanes Lecturer, Oxford, 1901. Publication: Lecture on the Study of History, 1895. Owned about 7000 acres. Heir: s. Richard Maximilian Dalberg-Acton. Address: Aldenham Park, Bridgnorth. Club: Athenaeum. (Died 19 June 1902).
31. G.P. Gooch in a private letter to Douglas Woodruff, published in Acton, "Essays on Church and State," p.474.
32. "Letters to Mary Gladstone," p.64.
33. Himmelfarb, "Lord Acton," pp. 145-46.
34. Kochan, "Acton on History," p.33.
35. From "The History of Freedom in Antiquity," republished in Acton, "Essays in the Liberal Interpretation of History" (edited by W.H. McNeill) pp. 243-44.
36. Watt, E.D., "Freedom as an Incantation in the Thought of Lord Acton."

37. Acton, "Essays in the Liberal Interpretation of History," p.245.
38. Acton, "Lectures on Modern History," p.31.
39. Acton, "Essays in the Liberal Interpretaion of History," p.263.

CHAPTER SEVEN

POLITICS AND MORALITY

The years between 1870 and 1895 were for Acton a time of self-doubt, unhappiness, and even failure. His hopes, so long nourished, of a diplomatic or political career were, in the end, rewarded with little or nothing. His dream of a great work of history was never to be more than that. From 1878 to 1885 he published nothing at all, save for one review. He quarrelled more and more with his friends; his ties to Dollinger and Newman almost (but not quite) reached the breaking point. He suffered the death of two of his children. He was forced to sell much of his property and even his great library. We have seen that from 1870-75 his very salvation (in his own view) was at stake; he only narrowly escaped excommunication at the hands of the hierarchy of his own church. His political party which he came more and more to regard as not merely a party but a means to earthly salvation regarded him as a well-meaning but rather exotic Germanic scholar.

The happy days that were to come at Cambridge near the end of his life must have seemed far off to the bewildered and besieged Acton of the 1870s and 1880s. His goal in life, of course, had never been to become a professor. Given his political interests and his family connections he always assumed that he would one day sit

in the cabinet or at least fill a major diplomatic post.*

His own father, Sir Richard Acton, had been in the diplomatic service of Naples, and his stepfather, Lord Granville, had been foreign minister of Great Britain. A close friend was prime minister of his own country, another friend and relative was prime minister of Italy (Marco Minghetti). He was on close terms with the crown princess of Prussia and with the royal families of Bavaria and Wurtemberg. It seemed natural that he should represent Her Majesty at one of the German or Italian courts.

Acton was, in fact, seriously considered for a number of embassies and legations. In 1871, after the struggle in Rome was finished, Odo Russell wrote to Lord Granville saying that Acton ought to be appointed to the vacancy in Berlin, an embassy "for which he is more admirably qualified than any man living." ¹ As it turned out, however, Russell himself was appointed the ambassador to the new German Empire.

*Assumed is the proper word. Born as he was into the ruling class, he neglected to notice the rising tide of meritocracy which had made it almost impossible for a Liberal government especially to give high political positions to persons without the requisite political service if not qualifications.

With Russell's death in 1884, Lord Acton was again considered for the post. He had been somewhat instrumental in easing Franco-German relations after the war and had, on other occasions, used his wide-ranging contacts throughout Europe to help the cause of peace. Lord Granville wrote to Gladstone on August 26, 1884, that "The Crown Princess (eldest daughter of Queen Victoria who had married the future Kaiser Frederick William III)...would prefer Acton but I told her that it would be impossible and (I) believed almost equally for a person unconnected with him to put him over the heads of the whole Corps Diplomatique.

"That it was quite on the cards that he might be as good as Ampthill (Odo Russell was created Lord Ampthill) - but that he had never done any official business and that he had neglected to distinguish himself in Parliament." 2

Gladstone replied a few days later that "I am sorry you should be precluded from considering Acton." 3

This appointment, as before, was kept within the circle of experienced diplomats and Sir Edward Malet was translated from Brussels to Berlin. At the beginning of Gladstone's last premiership, Acton essayed one final attempt at a foreign mission. He suggested himself for the legation at either Munich or Stuttgart (the capital of neighbouring Wurtemberg). He wrote to his friend in a diffident, half-humorous manner: "I may of course fairly say that there are no complications between this country

and Bavaria (although part of the German Empire, the Kingdom of Bavaria proudly maintained a Foreign Office until 1918) that would give me any opportunity for mismanagement; and I not only know Germany pretty well, but I enjoy a measure of favour with the Royal Family. You will laugh, but it is a fact due to family and social connections." 4

Acton must have been disappointed that the man he always called "Mr. Gladstone" did not feel able to reward his friend with a political post.* He never allowed this fact to diminish one iota the almost unlimited admiration he felt for the Grand Old Man of British politics.

*Besides a natural desire to make a name in the political field, Acton was doubtless somewhat anxious for a dignified position which carried a salary. If we recall that he never in his life earned any money - he gave more money to the publications he was associated with than he received - it will explain his necessity to rent out Aldenham and to sell his family estate, Schloss Herrnsheim, in 1879. Later he was unable to continue to retain his family chaplain and in 1890 he was so hard-pressed that he even had to put up his library for sale. Fortunately, Gladstone secretly arranged for Andrew Carnegie to buy Acton's collection with the proviso that Acton would keep it for his lifetime. Acton never knew who his benefactor was and after his death the books were given to the Cambridge University library where they now remain. A major cause of Acton's financial troubles was his refusal to touch any money from his grandfather, the prime minister of Naples. He believed these gains to have been ill-gotten through bribery and corruption.

In a letter to his daughter, Mary Gladstone in 1880, Acton was almost unstinting in praise of her father. Future generations of Englishmen, he wrote to her, will "say that Chatham knew how to inspire a nation with his energy, but was poorly furnished with knowledge and ideas; that the capacity of Fox was never proved in office, though he was the first of debaters; that Pitt, the strongest of ministers, was among the weakest of legislators; that no Foreign Secretary has equalled Canning, but that he showed no other administrative ability; that Peel, who excelled as an administrator, a debater and a tactician, fell everywhere short of genius: and that the highest merits of the five without their drawbacks were united in Mr. Gladstone." 5

Warming to his theme, Acton went on to write that Gladstone's only fault was that he was too virtuous and honest himself to understand or deal with the sordid motives of lesser men. He admitted that there were other men who could equal or surpass Gladstone in particular talents. Hamilton and Cavour, he thought, accomplished work as great; Turgot and Roon were unsurpassed in administrative skill; Clay and Thiers were as able parliamentarians; Berryer and Webster could equal his oratory, and Guizot and Radowitz came close to him in fullness of thought. But Acton believed that "in the three elements of greatness combined, the man, the power, and the result - character, genius and success - none reached his level." 6 In other letters, Acton asserted

that Gladstone had no peer among modern statesmen with the possible exception of Edmund Burke. " I admit of no comparison (of Mr. Gladstone)," he wrote, "except with the Burke of 1770-80." 7 And later, he wrote, "It is impossible not to be struck by the many points of resemblance between Burke and your father - the only two men of that stature in our political history - but I have no idea whether they would have been friends or bitter enemies." 8

Acton in the 1880s had thus come almost to reverse his opinion of Gladstone and Burke. In his youth, Acton had been uncritically enthusiastic about Burke and restrained, to say the least, in his estimate of Gladstone. He had told Pope Pius IX on a visit in 1857, for instance, that Gladstone's ambition had made him useless and that he was unsafe in foreign affairs. 9 As we have seen, however, Acton had changed many of his important ideas as he grew older. He used to be tolerant of the social and economic conditions which led to slavery in certain countries: in 1863 he even published a pamphlet entitled "Human Sacrifice" in which he argued that we ought not to condemn people of other places and other times who practiced, in good faith, ceremonies that we could not fully understand. 10

Perhaps partly because of a feeling of guilt about his earlier lack of unyielding moral principles and his past willingness to consider extenuating circumstances,

Acton became, in his later years, an unbending moralist. He became, as he himself put it, a "hanging judge." He could no longer tolerate the least compromise, the least allowance for human weakness, the least concession to differences of time or place. He reversed the usual process of idealistic, puritanical youth gradually giving way to moderation and tolerance with the onset of maturity and responsibility. Whatever the reasons there may have been for this sharp change of attitude, Acton's conversion to rigorous standards of judgment was certainly hard on his friends.

His intellectual mentor, the man to whom he once confessed he owed everything - Professor Dollinger - wrote a preface for an article commemorating the recent death of Bishop Dupanloup in the February 1879 issue of "Nineteenth Century." The article itself was written by another of Acton's closest friends, Lady Blennerhassett, and the subject of the obituary was Acton's old teacher from his schooldays in France. Acton was shocked and angry that Dollinger could praise Dupanloup who, although regarded as among the more liberal bishops, nevertheless defended the Syllabus of Errors and submitted to the Infallibility Decree. Acton's reaction in this manner is the more difficult to understand since Dollinger had been excommunicated for his failure to submit while Acton himself had satisfied his bishop as to his orthodoxy.

In a mood of complete pessimism, Acton wrote,

"Men are always divided on more points that they know of. Time brings on occasions that bring out their differences. Every colleague of today is a future opponent, if he only lives a few years." 11 Acton concluded that his old master preferred to ascribe wrongdoing to ignorance rather than to evilness. "It suited his way to distribute blame so that nobody suffered....Folly, stupidity, ignorance, moral cowardice, the deceived conscience, did duty as long as possible....(He preferred) to trace the gradual growth of things, so that no one was really responsible." 12

After a continuous argument over this issue for five years, Dollinger finally concluded that he and Acton would simply have to agree to disagree. As Acton himself put it, in 1883 Dollinger "made it very clear that it was time for our conversation to cease, for this world." 13 Acton may well have been indulging in a weakness for over-dramatization here, however. It is more likely - in fact probable - that Dollinger simply meant there was little point in further discussing an issue they had both explored fully. Dollinger and Acton continued to meet every summer in Tegernsee from 1884 to 1889.

It does seem to be true, nonetheless, that Acton took their disagreement very seriously and regarded it at least as a kind of intellectual break. Acton wrote to Lady Blennerhassett in 1886 that "I have lost the key to his (Dollinger's) mind, and find myself in outer and increasing darkness. And I often ask myself the question whether

with your penetration, you have not got beyond the difficulty which is disabling me for all useful and definite work...." 14

It seems clear that Acton was plagued by self-doubt and that he was by no means certain that his quest for certainty was the right course. At other times, however, he could excoriate a friend of many years' standing who had written something Acton held to be deliberately false. He wrote to Dollinger in 1882 calling Cardinal Newman a "brutal liar" and an "artful deceiver" who was doing "the devil's work." 15 At another time, Newman made an obviously joking reference to an article of Richard Simpson's in which he attacked Pius V. "I don't wonder at a saying which I heard reported of a Dominican," he wrote, "that he would like to have the burning of the author." 16 Several years later Acton recorded a number of times in his notes that Newman had told him a Dominican wanted to burn Simpson and he, Newman, approved of the idea. 17

There seems little doubt that Acton had a weakness for hyperbole and was inclined to make dramatic statements that he would not, upon reflection, have stood by. He was reconciled to Newman before the Cardinal's death, for instance, and often spoke movingly of him. He gave his favourite daughter a Christmas present of Newman's Complete Works - which he would not have done if he really believed him to be doing the devil's work. 18

At about the same time he was writing to Lady Blennerhassett describing the papacy as "the fiend skulking behind the Crucifix." 19 He could also write to his daughter (on August 14, 1880) enjoining her against thinking ill of others - "not only wishing them well, but judging them favourably, making out the best case for them one can, understanding that others are wiser and better than ourselves, and have reasons for what they do beyond what strangers discover, who see only the outside." 20

Twenty-two years later Acton was to give the same advice to his son in his last days. Fifteen years earlier he wrote to his fiancée along similar lines: "...you must learn that men who think seriously for themselves, and earnestly study great questions, never entirely agree with each other, and know how to make allowances for such differences." 21

It may well be that at least on the question of how rigorously moral standards should be applied to the holders of ideas (such as Dollinger or Newman, as opposed to men of action, such as Napoleon or Alexander VI) Acton was always of two minds throughout his life and that there were never two Actons (early and late) but rather one Acton who was forever torn within himself.

It was this very agonizing indecision and complexity of personality which made him an insightful historian but

which, on the other hand, disqualified him for a serious role in practical politics. One of his closest friends once wrote to Arthur Russell, a Liberal leader, about Acton's potential role in a Liberal government. Lady Blennerhassett began by saying that no one admired his intellect more than she did and no one had more reason to be grateful to him. "But as for politics," she went on, "I believe in nobody who in regard to them has not assumed an open, direct and personal responsibility. There is no such thing as politics in an armchair and the most wonderful knowledge of books is no help toward the knowledge of men. In that way, and with due sense of his superiority in other ways, I think that Lord Acton is at the beginning of his experiences in life and not in a position favourable to the experiment. There is perhaps nothing more dangerous than being fenced in morally by a hedge of superior specimens of the race, as for example, the Athenaeum Club, and then proceeding to judge or legislate for mankind standing behind the hedge." 22

This estimate of Acton's character (from a most friendly source) doubtless explains why he was always the politician manqué and never the ambassador or cabinet minister. Acton himself once wrote that "The best political thinkers, often very poor politicians." 23 He appended to this line several names, including Turgot, Burke, and Webster. He might have added Tocqueville, John Stuart Mill, and, of course, one other.

Acton's last attempt to secure political office occurred during the forming of the last Gladstone administration in August 1892. It appears that Gladstone was inclined to have Acton in the cabinet but on reflection did not think the possible gain was worth the certain risk. The chancellorship of the Duchy of Lancaster (which carried almost no responsibilities) was mentioned for Acton but opposition within the Liberal leadership immediately arose. Sir William Harcourt, Lord Spencer, and Lord Rosebery were opposed on the grounds that Acton lacked prior experience and would simply be a certain vote for Gladstone. John Morley, who was a good friend of both Gladstone and Acton, was also opposed, probably because he saw himself as the chief intellectual and personal friend of the premier in the cabinet and was not anxious for a rival.

At this point Gladstone may well have come to the conclusion that in view of his position in the Liberal Party he could have insisted upon the appointment of one personal friend to the cabinet (assuming he had some qualifications) but if Gladstone were to use up some of his political "capital" to do so there was no guarantee that the highly moral Acton would support his premier even most of the time. To any reasonable politician the difficulties clearly outweighed any possible

gains,* and Sir Algernon West was delegated to explain to Acton that there was no room for him in the new cabinet. 23

There was, however, to be a consolation prize. Acton was offered the post of Lord-in-Waiting to Queen Victoria. The position was not as trivial as it might sound at first; Acton would spend a month at the court attending to ceremonial duties, but his principal task would be to represent the government in the House of Lords on Irish matters. He was what would be termed today a minister of state for Ireland, directly under the secretary of state for Ireland, who at that time was John Morley. So he was in reality a member of the subcabinet. In addition, Ireland at that time was a major problem in British politics - a situation which has been known to occur before and since. From all accounts, Acton fulfilled his duties, if not with zeal, at least with competence and genuine concern for an island with which

*In a private letter to the author, Professor M.R.D. Foot, who is currently editing the "Gladstone Diaries," was kind enough to share his views on this point. "My own opinion," he writes, "is that Mr.G. was very fond of Acton as a man - far fonder than of any other Catholic, save his own sister Helen - and a great admirer of him as an historian. But, given the current difficulties with Rosebery, it was clearly impossible to force an outsider on the diplomatic service at head-of-legation level; and what reason other than personal friendship had Gladstone for giving high office to a man of no tact, slight political experience, and no administrative ability?" (Letter to author, January 27, 1969). The same arguments, of course, would hold for the cabinet post.

he had many ties. He was, of course, a strong supporter of Home Rule and an opponent of imperialism in general. He quickly let it be known that he was a "Little Englander" and wished that his own nation would withdraw as soon as possible from both Ireland and the Afrikaner republics in South Africa.

Although the Queen-Empress did not agree with Acton on political questions she seems to have liked him well enough personally. She described him in one of her journals as "a charming person with such pleasant manners (rather foreign) very like his mother the late Lady Granville (a widow, daughter of the last Duke of Dalberg) who was so agreeable and clever..." 24

The Queen prided herself on her minute knowledge of the genealogies of the multitude of small German courts where many of her relatives had come from or many of her descendants now were. Since Lord Acton was one of the few persons at Windsor who shared in this interest to any degree, the Queen quickly became rather fond of her learned but undeniably aristocratic courtier. She bestowed upon him her highest praise when she told a friend that she wished "Prince Albert could have known him."

As might be expected, Acton spent most of his time in the library at Windsor Castle where he said there was much "literature" (which he regarded as mere amusement) but on the whole a poor selection: "...this is not," he

wrote to his friend Viscount Bryce, "an intellectual place." 25

After three years of answering questions on Ireland and greeting visitors to Victoria's court, Acton was finally to be relieved of his political duties. In 1895 he was to leave Windsor for another Crown appointment, but this time to "an intellectual place."

The Queen did not forget him, however. In 1897 on the occasion of her Diamond Jubilee, his sovereign, with a more personal interest than usual, created Lord Acton a Knight Commander of the Royal Victorian Order.

NOTES TO CHAPTER SEVEN (POLITICS AND MORALITY)

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3. "Ibid.," p.244
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5. "Letters of Lord Acton to Mary Gladstone," pp.141-42.
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8. "Ibid.," p.97.
9. Butterfield, H., "Journal of Lord Acton: Rome 1857," "The Cambridge Historical Journal," vol. III, p.199.
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12. Add. MSS. 4908.
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15. Acton to Newman, June 16, 1882, Woodruff MSS., cited in MacDougall, Hugh, "The Acton-Newman Relations," New York, 1962, p.149.

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20. Acton to his daughter Mary, August 4, 1880, Add. MSS. 4863 (19).
21. Acton to Marie, June 1865, Woodruff MSS., cited in McElrath, p.66.
22. Lady Blennerhassett, to Arthur Russell, September 3, 1886, Blennerhassett Papers, Cambridge University Library, Add. MSS. 7486, Item 52, Envelope 1.
23. West, Sir Algernon, "Private Diaries," London, pp. 38-43.
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CHAPTER EIGHT

LORD ACTON AT CAMBRIDGE

Lord Acton reached the height of his career as an historian when, in 1895, he was inaugurated as Regius Professor of Modern History in the University of Cambridge, one of the two most distinguished chairs in Acton's principal field of scholarship.

Almost all of his life was spent as an amateur historian; his first academic post did not come to him until the relatively advanced age of fifty-six. In 1890, Acton was appointed one of two Honorary Fellows of All Souls;* the other Honorary Fellow was Acton's sponsor and old friend, William Ewart Gladstone.

When the Regius Professoship, which as a Crown appointment is in the gift of the prime minister, fell vacant in 1892, however, Gladstone did not take the opportunity to nominate Acton; instead he recommended a

*An invitation to dine at All Souls then as now was highly prized. Some of the most brilliant men (and best conversationalists) in the country were among its fellows and cabinet ministers, generals, bishops, ambassadors, dukes, and the editor of "The Times" were frequent guests at its high table. Part of its distinction was due to the fact that it had somehow managed to achieve Platonic perfection as a college...it had no students. Its complement of dons were a bit inbred, however; as late as the 1850s, two-thirds were descendents of the family of the founder, Archbishop Chichile.

"safe" appointment, Sir John Seeley, known as a defender of straightforward "political" (kings and battles) history. The precise reason why Gladstone was reluctant to elevate the respected but unorthodox Acton is not known; we may guess, however, that he was sensitive to the charge of personal favouritism and that he had sincere scruples about appointing a Roman Catholic, however close a friend, to what was meant to be an Anglican chair.

When the professorship was next vacant, however, upon the death of Sir John Seeley in 1895, there was a new prime minister, Lord Rosebery, who was known to be considering Acton. "My first thought," one of the Cambridge dons wrote, "was, if they are good to us they will send us Acton." 1 Although not widely known to the general educated public (Acton had written almost nothing for publication under his own name), he was regarded almost with awe among professional historians.

Among men whose learning would stagger the average scholar, Acton was looked upon as an oracle, a living encyclopedia. More than once, Gladstone would table a particularly abstruse point in theology or history with the remark, "We must ask Lord Acton." Viscount Bryce, himself the author of a dozen works in history, philosophy and jurisprudence, once invited Mandell Creighton (the historian-bishop, author of a history of the popes), Robertson Smith (probably the leading Semitic scholar in Britain) and Lord Acton to a dinner party. "The

conversation," Bryce later wrote, "turned first upon the times of Pope Leo the Tenth, and then upon recent controversies regarding the dates of the books of the Old Testament, and it soon appeared that Lord Acton knew as much about the former as Dr. Creighton, and as much about the latter as Robertson Smith." 2

Another friend, H.A.L. Fisher (who was to sit with Bryce in the cabinet), once wrote that Acton "probably read and annotated more printed matter than anyone who has ever lived." 3 For all his vast erudition, however, it remained true that Acton had no earned degrees, not even a B.A. He had never published a book and only a few essays had appeared under his name. In addition, he was both a Roman Catholic with many continental connections and an outspoken English Liberal. His approach to history, emphasizing ideas rather than politics, was unorthodox and his scholarly style and methods were decidedly Germanic. Besides all of these negative factors, Acton himself was reluctant not only to push himself forward but even to accept the chair if it were to be offered.

The new prime minister had in fact written to Gladstone on October 20th of that year in "secrecy." In that letter, Rosebery explained in a straightforward fashion the problems that would arise if Acton were to be appointed.

"One if not both of the Regius Professorships of History," he confided, "will soon be vacant. The name of Acton smiles upon me for one of them. I have, as you know,

long had his position at heart. His learning is great and unquestionable, but

1. He is a Roman Catholic.
2. I do not feel sure from his writings that he would find it easy to impart his knowledge to others - to be in short a good lecturer.
3. I do not think that he was at Oxford or Cambridge.

No.1 is the crucial objection. Acton is eminently anti-papal, but Great Britain on these points is eminently suspicious...I do not the least know if Acton would entertain the idea. But I like to write and ask your guidance." 4

Gladstone's reply gives us some insight into his earlier hesitancy to appoint his friend when he had the opportunity himself. "You do not underrate the difficulties," he wrote to Rosebery. "As to the point of communicating knowledge, I think his lecturing would be more effective than his writing. But as to attacks I am afraid the case would be full of difficulty. He would be attacked as R.C. for party reasons: and the R.C.s might be found very shy of defending him...the storm would be from without... My general feeling is against my wishes: it is that difficulty preponderates; but the matter is worth a very thorough probing." 5

Rosebery did persist and found that there was strong support among leading historians for the unorthodox

appointment; the Anglican Bishop Creighton, himself one of the most eminent scholars of the time, recommended Acton in the strongest terms, calling him "the most learned Englishman." 6 After being assured by her prime minister that there would be no significant objection to Acton on religious grounds from either the Church or the universities, Queen Victoria approved the appointment in February, 1895.

His good friend, Lord Bryce, was the only person Acton consulted about the professorship and he enjoined his fellow historian and Liberal politician to the strictest confidence in the matter. Bryce enthusiastically urged him to accept, and Acton finally agreed that there would be advantages to an academic post. Bryce also explained the meaning of "full term," which Acton had difficulty in comprehending, and discreetly found out the exact stipend which accompanied the honour.

"What he would do at Cambridge, and how he would do it," H.A.L. Fisher noted, "excited the liveliest interest." 7 As Mandell Creighton remarked, Acton was very much a "dark horse," almost unknown to university men. Modern history in fact, was a relatively new subject at Oxford and Cambridge, and there were few students enrolled in the field and fewer academic historians.

When Acton arrived at Cambridge in the autumn of 1895, Trinity College paid him the singular honour of electing

him an Honorary Fellow* and providing him with the rooms in Neville Court, where in the words of George Macaulay Trevelyan, he sat "amid his strange foreign books...with a brow and beard like Plato, ready all day long to welcome any visitor seeking historical knowledge, whether it was Maitland or the humblest undergraduate." 8

Another student of Acton's who also went on to become an eminent historian in his own right, G.P.Gooch,** described the college which he entered in 1891 quite unabashedly as "the greatest college in the world. Christ's," he wrote, "is proud of Milton, St.John's of Wordsworth, Jesus of Coleridge, Peterhouse and Pembroke of Gray, Sidney of Cromwell; but Trinity College alone could proudly boast of such a galaxy as Bacon and Newton, Byron and Macaulay, Thackeray and Tennyson, to say nothing of the innumerable statesmen who had dreamed dreams and seen visions

*The first Fellow in History of Trinity was not to be elected until 1898, when the college welcomed its future master and great nephew of his illustrious namesake, George Macaulay Trevelyan...who was also, of course, one of Acton's former students.

**The late G.P.Gooch, to whom I am indebted for a personal account of Acton at Cambridge, was born in 1873 and educated at Eton and Trinity. He was an Honorary Fellow of Trinity and the author of innumerable books, including "History and Historians of the Nineteenth Century," "Studies in Diplomacy and Statecraft" and his autobiography, "Under Six Reigns." Like his mentor, Acton, he sat in the House of Commons as a Liberal M.P. For fifty years he was Editor of "The Contemporary Review."

within its ancient walls." 9 Trinity, in fact, had educated six prime ministers, more than any other college: Perceval, Grey, Melbourne, Balfour, Campbell-Bannerman and Baldwin as well as several kings and princes.

No less than five students who were at Cambridge during the years Acton held his chair were later to receive the Order of Merit. Four of these were from Trinity alone; the historians G.P.Gooch and George Macaulay Trevelyan, the philosopher, George Moore and the earl's son who had perhaps the greatest mind of our century, Bertrand Russell. The fifth, Jan Christian Smuts, later field marshal and prime minister of South Africa, was at neighbouring Christ's College. Acton's fellow dons were no less distinguished than the students - which, alas, is not always and everywhere the case. His colleagues included the master of Trinity, Montagu Butler (father of the present master and former deputy prime minister, Lord Butler), who was reputed to be the most polished after-dinner speaker in England next to Lord Rosebery. Sir Frederick Pollock and Sir Frederick Maitland, following in the tradition of an earlier Trinity man, Lord Chief Justice Coke, were engaged in creating a new science and philosophy of English law. At the same time, Sir James Frazer, author of "The Golden Bough," was laying the groundwork of the new discipline of anthropology. In the realm of philosophy, Acton doubtless had the frequent pleasure of hearing the respective merits of utilitarianism and Hegelianism argued by their two arch-proponents in England,

Henry Sidgwick and Ellis McTaggart respectively. Outside the walls of Trinity, Alfred Marshall, whom Keynes once described as the greatest economist since Adam Smith, lectured to crowded halls on the principles of political economy.

This was the atmosphere that Acton entered when he first took his place at the Trinity high table in 1895; it is very probable that the happiest days of his life were to be spent along the banks of the Cam. "He loved Cambridge from his soul," one of his friends remarked, "loved the grounds and the trees, the buildings and the romance of the old colleges, the treasures of the libraries, the intercourse with scholars. Above all he loved the younger generation, the future as it were, entrusted to his care." 10

With an entirely understandable trace of irony, Acton expressed well his feelings for Cambridge in the opening lines of his inaugural lecture: "I look back today," he began, "to a time before the middle of the century, when I was reading at Edinburgh, and fervently wishing to come to this university. At three colleges I applied for admission, and as things then were, I was refused by all. Here, from the first, I vainly fixed my hopes, and here, in a happier hour, after five-and-forty years, they are at last fulfilled." 11

A large and expectant audience was gathered in the Cambridge hall to hear the first strictly academic work of "the stranger who had brought learning from afar." 12 Acton did not disappoint them - he offered two controversial pronouncements for their consideration. His first principal assertion was that ideas, not politics, were the proper stuff of history, that intellectual movements were of more enduring significance than political struggles. As one of his listeners later noted, history was to Acton "not literature, but political philosophy; not an interesting narrative but a scientific study of cause and effect." 13

Secondly, Acton stressed the role of the historian as judge rather than as objective observer. He exhorted his students and colleagues "never to debase the moral currency but to try others by the final maxim that governs your own lives, and to suffer no man and no cause to escape the undying penalty which history has the power to inflict on wrong." 14

Acton's emphasis on the history of ideas rather than the history of politics which had so preoccupied his distinguished predecessor as Regius Professor, Sir John Seeley, was in essence a plea for the supremacy of the spiritual over material. "If we are to account mind, not matter," he declared, "ideas, not force, the spiritual property that gives dignity and grace and intellectual value to history...then we shall not be prone to explain

the universal by the national, and civilization by custom. A speech of Antigone, a single sentence of Socrates... the footsteps of a silent yet prophetic people who dwelt by the Dead Sea, and perished in the fall of Jerusalem, come nearer to our lives than the ancestral wisdom of barbarians who fed their swine on the Hercynian acorns." 15

Modern history, according to Acton, began at the end of the fifteenth century when half a dozen great ideas so revolutionized the world that a new civilization emerged. "Columbus," he said, "subverted the notions of the world...Machiavelli released government from the restraint of law...Erasmus diverted the current of ancient learning from profane into Christian channels....Luther broke the chain of authority and tradition at the strongest link... Copernicus erected an invincible power that set forever the mark of progress upon the time that was to come... The law of stability," he continued, "was overcome by the power of ideas...ideas...that take wing and traverse seas and frontiers...they compel us to share the existence of societies wider than our own...to live in the company of heroes, and saints, and men of genius, that no single country could produce." 16

If Acton's description of the study of history as the study of the causes and effects of ideas was a mild rebuke to the philosophy of history of his predecessor, his conception of the historian as a "hanging judge" placed him in sharp conflict with a much greater master of

the craft, Leopold von Ranke. In his youth, Acton had studied with the great professor who could fairly claim to be the founder of modern historical science. Again and again Ranke impressed upon his students the importance of strict and unyielding impartiality; their task was only to tell what had happened, not to comment, evaluate or make judgments of any kind.

For Acton, however, the ideal of an objective historical science was an abdication of the scholar's responsibility. With his pessimistic view of human nature, he wrote that "Great men are almost always bad men" and described history as the "disclosure of guilt and shame." It was natural for him to hold that the fear of historical condemnation (as well as of eternal damnation) must be one of the checks which served to deter men giving free rein to their vices. Not only was it morally incumbent upon the historian to disassociate himself from corruption, it was also of great utilitarian importance.

The upholders of Ranke's point of view often argued that it was unfair to judge the past by the standards of the present. What is immoral in one time or place may be condoned in another. Acton severely opposed this variety of moral relativism. "History...", he wrote, "does teach that right and wrong are real distinctions.

Opinions alter, manners change, creeds rise and fall, but the moral law is written on the tablets of eternity." 17

He held that anyone who failed to protest against a political murder done for "reasons of state" was morally as guilty as the statesman who ordered the murder himself.

He looked to his old master, Burke, for support in asserting that there not only need not, there must not be a difference between the moral standards of private and public life. "The doctrine that...morality is not ambulatory," he declared, "is expressed as follows by Burke, who, when true to himself, is the most intelligent of our instructors: 'My principles enable me to form my judgement upon men and actions in history, just as they do in common life; and are not formed out of events and characters, either their present or past. History is a preceptor of prudence, not of principles. The principles of true politics are those of morality enlarged; and I neither now do, nor ever will admit of any other.' " 18

It might be thought that Acton was rigid in his opinions, even arrogant and that he was swift to condemn to the outer darkness men with whom he disagreed. Those who knew him were quick to deny this. One of his Cambridge colleagues, the professor of Greek, Dr. Henry Jackson, later wrote that "on the one hand he was observant of everything, and he made up his mind about everything. On the other hand, except where supreme principles - Truth, Right, Toleration, Freedom - were in question, he was cautious and reserved in the expression of opinion, and he always preferred to leave action to others." 19

In his inaugural lecture, Acton himself had stressed that historians "should not rest until we have made out for our opponents a stronger and more impressive case than they present themselves." The spirit in which Acton approached moral problems is revealed in a letter he wrote to Mary Gladstone: "So complex are (moral problems)," he wrote, "that almost every act can honestly be seen in different lights, and I can imagine so strong a case against our policy in Africa as to drive from his moorings any man not anchored in justice... Be true to your own beliefs and gracious toward those who dispute them." 20

One of the most enduring contributions of Lord Acton to political thought was his careful avoidance of the pitfalls of both the absolutist and the relativist position in ethics. While he was certain that there was a right standard of conduct and that morality was not merely a matter of custom or taste, he was not sure that he or anyone else could always know what the right course of action in any given case was. However, while it was doubtless true that only God could know some things with certainty, it was also true that this did not free men from their obligation to search their consciences and use their intelligence to determine as best they could what was right. If certainty in morals must be left to God alone, the conscience and mind of man, while not infallible, were nevertheless powerful sources of light.

Acton concluded his lecture by urging his audience

to use to the utmost the wisdom accumulated from their ancestors and their own intelligence in order to build a new science of history which would both illuminate and evaluate the past and so be a guide to the present and future. "The historians of former ages, unapproachable for us in knowledge and talent," he warned, "cannot be our limit. We have the power to be more rigidly impersonal, disinterested and just than they; and to learn from undisguised and genuine records to look with remorse upon the past, and to the future with assured hope of better things; bearing this in mind, that if we lower our standard in History, we cannot uphold it in Church or State." 21

The reaction to Acton's first address as a professor was, of course, varied. Among his colleagues at Cambridge and among historians generally, the almost universal view was that the lecture was one of the great contributions to scholarship of the century. "The new professor," wrote H.A.L.Fisher, "proved to be a brilliant success." 22 The future master of Trinity, G.M.Trevelyan, later recalled that "under Acton's leadership we did not care how proud we were, for he had excited the imagination of the whole university and indeed of the country at large." 23

Sir George Trevelyan, relying upon the firsthand information of his undergraduate source, George Macaulay Trevelyan, wrote to inform the prime minister in November that "you may care to know, what perhaps you may have

heard from other quarters, what an immense success Acton is at Cambridge. At least 200 people came to his first lecture, and quite as many attend every one of them since; whereas I am told that even a famous Regius Professor thinks himself happy if he can draw one freshman, and three or four young women. It is not only undergraduates of both sexes: but the cleverest and most fastidious of the young historical specialists, who themselves are lecturing and writing, are always there. He is regarded distinctly as a great man, and the young people pay him the unusual compliment of thinking him a great deal younger than he is. The feeling is that the lectures which he is delivering are literature of a very high order. Altogether, it has been a tremendous hit." 24

Most of the adverse criticism came from laymen, if the "journals of opinion" may be said to reflect the thinking of the generally educated man. The "Saturday Review," a favourite journal among the more literate Tory squires, attacked Acton for his "overpowering deluge of verbiage." 25 The lecture, they complained, was weighed down with unnecessary erudition (there was some truth in this) and was hopelessly confused and obscure (there was no truth in this). This "review" ended on what might be taken as a partisan note; it urged the Liberal junior minister to resign his new Crown

appointment for which he was obviously unqualified.*

The "Spectator" took a similar line. "It is possible for a historian to know too much," it asserted, "and, if we wished to be bitter, we might say that Lord Acton was himself a living example of the new trouble." 26 Most critics, both lay and professional, confined their comments to Acton's style; very few came to grips with the substance of his ideas. Those who did generally focused their attention on Acton's belief that the historian should be a moral judge. J.L.Hammond, writing in the more scholarly "Independent Review," defended Acton's principal thesis.

*"Lord Acton's idea of a lecture on modern history appears to be that it should be sufficiently difficult to supply mental gymnastics to the most nimble mind; but we fear that the most persistent mental gymnast will often be unrewarded by reaching the meaning which this inarticulate teacher has cunningly concealed. Whatever his reputation for erudition, it is certain that Lord Acton has never learned to write English; and surely one of the indispensable qualifications for the Chair of Modern History at Cambridge is that the occupant should be intelligible. That the well digested knowledge and unfailing lucidity of Seeley, or even the brilliant historic imagination and splendid prose of his predecessor Kingsley, should be succeeded by these pretensions and confused fancies!...The Batavian splutterings of Lord Acton's awkward pen are not to be endured, and unless in his succeeding lectures the new Professor can find some means to give lucid expression to his reputed learning and thus justify his appointment, we sincerely hope he will resign his post, which, were we to judge merely from his inaugural lecture, he would seem in no way qualified to fill." (The "Saturday Review," June 22, 1895).

"Few men," Hammond wrote, "give justice the first place in politics, though almost everyone gives it the second. Most men think vaguely or certainly that the maintenance of established interests in some category is the sovereign end, and as far as morality is friendly or neutral they are glad enough to patronize it; or they think that morality is not meant for slippery times, though it does well enough for tranquil and comfortable days. Lord Acton gave morality itself the pre-eminence; and he allowed no boisterous storm of temptation or disorder to excuse men for reclining on some other standard."

27

The American medievalist, Henry C. Lea, held to the opposite view. "The historian," he wrote, "who becomes an advocate or a prosecutor instead of a judge forfeits his title to confidence, and, if he aspires to be a judge, he should not try a case by a code unknown to the defendant." 28 Acton's premise, of course, was that the moral code was universal and not dependent upon time or place.

Having accomplished his first duty as Regius Professor, Acton settled down to the daily tasks of his chair, which, while undefined, were by no means light. The professor in any discipline was expected to lecture, to organize his department and to do research. As John Stuart Mill said of the House of Commons, his function is not so much to do things as to get things done. Acton

had come to Cambridge with some misgivings; before he had arrived he wrote in confidence to a friend that "there is, I think, no great school of history there and not much studious curiosity about it. And as my predecessor did not awaken it, there is no chance of my doing much." 29

Nevertheless his lectures, from the first, were always well attended, and students and great scholars came from the corners of the civilized world to hear him. Not all of his auditors were serious, of course: many were fashionable middle-aged ladies attracted by Acton's social position and what they considered his good looks. But it is likely that even the most casual visitor derived something from an hour with Acton. As one of his younger colleagues noted, "No one could fail to see how the speaker's mind was possessed with the greatness of human affairs, with the moral (or immoral) aspects of political and ecclesiastical dexterity; above all, with the final supremacy of the soul over circumstance, as the real ground for asserting the sacredness of truth and the inalienable glory of Liberty. It was this sense of the fundamentally spiritual nature of his work which formed the distinction, the difficulty and the triumph of Acton... No hearer... could fail to find in Acton's austere judgments, in the dignity of his language, in the tones of his voice, a warning against any treatment of history that was mean or utilitarian, and any view of human nature that demands of it less than may become a man." 30

It was generally expected that, while Acton would doubtless advance historical scholarship with his lecturing and writing, he would probably prefer to lead the life of a solitary scholar and would pay little attention to the affairs of the university. The opposite proved to be the case, which should not have been so surprising. After all, although Acton could not properly be called both a man of letters and a man of action, as his friends, Gladstone, Bryce, and Morley could, he was still, as one don put it, "the ally of statesmen and a trusted leader in one of the greatest fights in the cause of liberty seen by the last century."* 31

Few if any professors were more accessible than Acton was, whether to undergraduates, candidates for fellowships, or eminent scholars. Students who went to him for information often found upon arriving home that Acton's servant had already left a half-dozen books in as many languages with a message apologizing for the poor selection but adding that more would follow tomorrow.

While he was invariably kind to undergraduates, he could not resist an occasional touch of irony. One of his brighter students, who was given to monopolizing most

*The struggle for Home Rule for Ireland.

discussions, once delivered, in a rather self-satisfied tone, a paper which rivalled Acton in erudition. After reading his work, which upset a widely held historical thesis, the student sat back to await his due. Acton, as everyone expected, praised the elegant style of the paper and then added in an undertone, "You are aware, of course, that the manuscript upon which your essay is based is a forgery?"

On the other hand, Acton could and did go to some lengths to avoid giving pain. One of his friends at Cambridge at one time presented Acton with a copy of his latest book - which unfortunately was totally inept and unreadable. Rather than hurt his friend's feelings, Acton carefully cut all of the pages and then inserted slips of paper at intervals. When the author next called on Acton, he was naturally gratified to see his book prominently displayed and apparently thoroughly studied. 32

The combination room of Trinity College, centuries old and decorated with the paintings of noblemen and magnates of another era, was reserved for the Fellows of the College. Here Acton would often hold forth on some misunderstood subject to the delight and edification of his peers. Acton was often deferential and reluctant to speak out, but as another Cambridge historian was to later recall, "if he could be caught at the right time, and in the right mood, he would expand like the universe, and

let loose a copious flood of illuminating facts, generally of a kind to refute some popular theory, or upset established tradition. He seemed to take a special interest in what has been termed the "backstairs" aspect of history and would trace to some obscure and generally discreditable incident what historians have very differently explained." 33

The Trinity Historical Society where dons and undergraduates meet regularly to read and discuss their research owes its founding to Lord Acton, who became its first president in the Michaelmas term of 1896. By this means, the professor came into contact with many students and younger dons he otherwise might never have met. The example of Trinity was imitated in other colleges in the university and interest in history, which at that time was considered a rather new subject in the curriculum, was much increased.

Those who met with Acton to discuss one aspect or another of the past could not fail to note his passion for making precise judgments. Someone once suggested that so-and-so's book was very good. "Yes," was Acton's ready answer, "perhaps five per cent less good than the public thinks it is." Someone else asked vaguely "When was London in the greatest danger?" "In 1803," came the immediate answer, "when Fulton proposed to put the French army across the Channel in steamboats, and Napoleon rejected the scheme." 34 He could also at times be severe

as well as swift in his appraisals. "Are you aware," he was once asked, "that Borromeo was a party to a scheme of assassinations?" Another don intervened by asking, "Must we not make allowances for the morality of the time?" Acton's emphatic response, according to a participant, was instantaneous: "I make no allowance for that sort of thing." "The contrast," an observer noted, "with the measured and sedate tones of Acton's ordinary utterance made the explosion all the more impressive." 35

To the somewhat isolated English scholars of fin de siècle Cambridge, smug in the knowledge that their widow at Windsor owned "half of creation," Acton seemed a "traveller from antique lands of European statecraft, religion and learning," 36 "To be with Acton," a friend who knew him then recalled, "was like being with the cultivated mind of Europe incarnate in its finest characteristics.* In the deep tones of his voice there seemed to sound the accents of history. In those unflinching phrases we heard the impersonal estimate of posterity weighing in unerring balance the thoughts and deeds of the actors of the present or past, with a knowledge that knew no gap. We do not of course mean that Acton knew everything, but that he thoroughly understood

*Apart from Guizot, Acton was personally acquainted with every historian of renown in Europe and frequently corresponded with them.

the operation of forces - religious, political, social, economic - which create from what without them would be the sandheap of individual caprice and personal interest, the enduring bonds of secular and religious society." 37

Acton was welcome in the Trinity combination room for all these reasons and more; almost everyone he met learned something important from him that he did not know before. As the distinguished philosopher and political economist, Henry Sidgwick, remarked a trifle ruefully, Acton was certain to know more about your subject than you did yourself. 38 While he was inclined not to speak until spoken to, he was generous with his ideas and knowledge; many a don received the substance of an important book, freely given in an hour's conversation. He would often pour out in answer to one modest question a whole new theme of historical interpretation, or on other occasions, a small store of the spiciest gossip - about European courts, the House of Commons, or of hypocritical prelates - depending on what happened to be the commodity in demand. As one of his Cambridge friends later wrote, he was far from being a "mere Dryasdust; he was a watchful observer of men and affairs. If he studied the detail of history, it was in order that he might the better elicit its significance and its teaching. He was slow to express an opinion; but in his judgments there was never any indecision. In the advocacy of intellectual freedom he was eager: in the denunciation

of freedom and persecution he was at a white heat." 39

In addition to directly assisting fellows and students in their historical work, Acton delivered two series of lectures, which were collected after his death and published by two of his younger colleagues.* Although his lectures were attended by many undergraduates, the university thought it advisable to ask Oscar Browning to deliver another series of lectures on the same topics but more specifically designed to help undergraduates in passing the final examinations.

Acton promised to publish his lectures after two or three years, but somehow never did; nor did he ever finish a collection of his essays which Macmillan was anxious to publish. Besides his great unfinished "History of Liberty," Acton never completed a history of the Reformation popes; his projected biography of Cardinal Newman was finally reduced to an essay in the "Dictionary of National Biography" and his planned multivolume biography of his old professor, Dollinger, shrank to a long article in the "English Historical Review." Acton's extreme conscientiousness, which prevented him from writing until

*See Acton, "Lectures on the French Revolution," (ed.) Figgis & Laurence, London, 1910; and Acton, "Lectures on Modern History," (ed.) Figgis and Laurence, London, 1906.

he had exhausted every possible source of information, is well known. This would not account for Acton's failure to publish his lectures and essays, however, except insofar as he regarded them as imperfect. There can be no doubt that, for whatever reason, Acton had an aversion to publishing. The essays published under his own name in his lifetime, mostly in the "English Historical Review," may be counted on the fingers of one hand. It was common knowledge, of course, that Acton wrote most of the reviews in "The Rambler" and "The Home and Foreign Review;" however, they were unsigned, and this apparently made a difference to Acton.

As a result, the only volumes which bear his name are collections of lectures, essays or letters, all published posthumously. The work for which he is most widely known is the massive twelve volume "Cambridge Modern History;" and here he appears not as a writer but as editor and even then but for the first two volumes. The title page of the series bears the proud but somewhat sad legend "Planned by the Late Lord Acton."

When he was asked by the syndics of the university to co-ordinate this ambitious enterprise, he readily accepted because he believed his office made it a duty not to be declined and because (as he wrote in a letter to one of his first contributors, G.P.Gooch) "such an opportunity of promoting his own ideas for the treatment of history has seldom been given to any man. We shall

avoid the needless utterance of opinion or service of a cause. Contributors will understand that our Waterloo must satisfy French and English, Germans and Dutch alike." 40

Acton set to work with his usual thoroughness and enthusiasm. He first wrote to all of his friends asking them for suggestions; the authors that Acton sought were to be the best available in each field. For this purpose he combed bibliographies and libraries, hoping to find in some out-of-the-way place just the right man for a minor but important chapter. Some historians had to make their excuses because of previous commitments, some could not be asked (such as the free-thinking Morley) because their presence would offend other contributors (the bishop of Oxford, for example). His old friend, the former ambassador to the United States, James Bryce, suggested numerous writers from across the Atlantic and his chief assistants, Bishop Creighton and R.L. Poole, shared the burden of the heavy correspondence between editors, writers and publishers.

The object and guiding principles of the series is set out in the letter which Acton sent to all prospective authors. "Our purpose," he began, "is to obtain the best history of modern times that the published or unpublished sources of information admit...By dividing our matter among more than one hundred writers we hope to make the enlarged opportunities for research avail for the main range of modern history....Our scheme requires that nothing shall reveal the country, the religion, or the party to which

the writers belong. It is essential not only on the ground that impartiality is the character of legitimate history, but because the work is carried on by men acting together for no other object than the increase of accurate knowledge. The disclosure of personal views would lead to such confusion that all unity of design would disappear."

"By the judicious division of labour," he continued, "we should be able to do it, and to bring home to every man the last document, and the ripest conclusion of international research....All this does not apply to our own time and the last volumes will be concerned with secrets that cannot be learned from books, but from men....The recent past contains the key to the present time. All forms of thought that influence it come before us in their turn, and we have to describe the ruling currents, to interpret the sovereign forces, that still govern and divide the world..."

"By Universal History," he concluded, "I understand that which is distinct from the combined history of all countries, which is not a rope of sand, but a continuous development, and is not a burden on the memory, but an illumination of the soul. It moves in a succession to which the nations are subsidiary. Their story will be told, not for their own sake, but in reference and subordination to a higher series, according to the time and the degree in which they contribute to the common fortunes of mankind." 41

The plan of this great effort, which Acton once described as "the nineteenth-century historian's bequest to the twentieth century," 42 clearly reflects three of Acton's chief goals: a universal history, a history of ideas, and an impartial and objective history. It might be thought at first glance that the goal of an impartial, nonpartisan history contradicted Acton's well-known belief in the duty of the historian to make moral judgments. In fact, however, Acton held that his moral judgments were objective since they were derived from an objective, universal moral law common to all men, nations and times. Secondly, Acton believed in the primacy of conscience above all; this required him to respect other men's moral beliefs, which might differ from his own. Since both his professional and moral ethics taught him to tolerate the sincere and well-founded convictions of other historians, it was only natural that he did not attempt to dictate a particular policy to his writers. In addition, as he noted in his circular letter, he could not have imposed his personal views on the project even if he had wished to because it would have reduced the overall unity of the project to chaos.

This does not mean that Acton did not leave his personal stamp upon the "Cambridge History." It is safe to say that the final product would have been substantially different had he not guided its birth; it would almost certainly have been much more conventional, both in contributors and design. The syndics, in fact, had

complained that Acton had invited too many "eminent outsiders" (their polite phrase for foreigners and nonacademic historians); without Acton to argue the case for cosmopolitanism it is a good bet that the publishers would never have looked outside the walls of Oxford and Cambridge. After much effort, Acton managed to secure the services of some of the most original and interesting historians of the time, including Lady Blennerhasset, James Bryce, J.B. Bury (Acton's successor as Regius Professor), Bishop Creighton, G.P. Gooch, F.W. Maitland, C.W. Oman, W.A. Phillips, A.F. Pollard, G.W. Prothero, J.H. Rose, and H.W.V. Temperley.

The general design of the series was unmistakably Acton's. Instead of the usual division by countries, or centuries, the volumes consisted of general topics, usually based on some overriding idea which united the histories of several countries. Some of his divisions, for instance, were: the Renaissance, the Reformation, the religious wars, absolute monarchy and revolution. Acton was convinced that there were "some twenty or thirty predominant currents of thought or attitudes of mind" which provided the structure of modern history and held the key to explaining it. The majority of these ideas, he thought, were "either religions or substitutes for religion." 43 Acton saw to it that his contributors did not neglect to deal (in their own way, of course) with such influential ideas as Puritanism, Ultramontaniam, Lutheranism, Anglicanism, rationalism, utilitarianism,

positivism, materialism, whiggism, communism, and so on. This approach to history seems second nature to us now, but in Acton's own time it represented a new departure and many were fearful of where it would end.

In the words of a recent Regius Professor of Modern History, G.N. Clark, Acton's last great self-imposed task "weighed him down." 44 Acton wrote hundreds of letters regarding the "History" in his own hand; in trying to direct such a large enterprise personally he attempted the impossible. Acton unfortunately had almost no capacity for organization, for employing limited resources in the most effective manner. In particular, he could not or would not delegate the many duties he took for himself; in addition to his basic role of editor, Acton planned to write several of the articles himself (the introduction to the series, the opening chapter and the final chapter on contemporary England), he also acted as fundraiser (he persuaded his old friend Baron Rothschild to send a substantial cheque) and public relations officer. In the end, however, none of his scheduled articles were completed and in April, 1901, when the first volume was in type, Acton suffered the paralytic stroke which brought his effective work at Cambridge to a sudden conclusion.

It is ironical, for this reason, that the chief criticism directed at the "Cambridge Modern History" has been that it was a product of "the new industrial age" with all the "depersonalizing" effects of the "division

of labour." Arnold Toynbee, a long-standing critic of industrialization, took Acton to task in his own monumental work of universal history for allowing himself to be sacrificed to the modern idols of efficiency and progress. If only Acton (whom he terms "one of the greatest minds among modern Western historians")⁴⁵ had lived in an age before the division of labour was heard of, the eighteenth century say, then, Toynbee thinks, he would have written the great work to rank himself with Gibbon.

One can imagine Acton's reaction to the charge that he was a victim of superorganization and modern efficiency. Had he made use of only a few of the modern techniques that Toynbee deplures, he would have given to the world a "History of Liberty" and much more besides. Acton, of course, had much the same opinion of the "division of labour" as Toynbee does; he also regarded it as a second-best device. Acton's ideal historian was a man who not only was a master of detail, of languages, monographs, bibliographies and manuscripts in huge quantities but also possessed a high imagination, a sympathy for everything human, a philosophy of history and an instinct for elegance. All these qualities, as all who knew him attested, Acton did possess; what he lacked was the crucial ability to organize and marshall them for a given goal. His great contemporary, Professor Frederick W. Maitland, was convinced that "if the worst came to the worst, or perhaps the best to the best, Lord Acton could write the twelve volumes (given sufficient time, of course) and never turn a hair." ⁴⁶

As it is, the "Cambridge Modern History," completed by other hands, stands as a monument to Acton's vision and power of imagination alongside of his library in which rest thousands of pages of notes for books which, most unfortunately, were never given to the world.

NOTES TO CHAPTER EIGHT (LORD ACTON AT CAMBRIDGE)

1. The don was Dr. Henry Jackson, Professor of Greek, quoted in Acton, "Letters of Lord Acton to Mary Gladstone," (edited with an introductory memoir by Herbert Paul) London, 1913, p.lxii.
2. James Bryce, "Studies in Contemporary Biography," London, 1903, p.387.
3. H.A.L.Fisher, "Lord Acton's Lectures," "Independent Review," XI, 1906, p.224.
4. Alan Bell, "Lord Acton Gets His Chair," "Times Literary Supplement," Feb.8, 1974, p.137.
5. "Ibid."
6. "Ibid."
7. Fisher, op.cit., p.225.
8. G.M.Trevelyan, "Trinity College," (Cambridge, 1946), p.112.
9. G.P.Gooch, "Under Six Reigns," (London, 1958), p.15.
10. Lady Charlotte Blennerhassett, "The Late Lord Acton," "Edinburgh Review," 1903, p.532.
11. Acton, "Inaugural Lecture on the Study of History," "Lectures on Modern History," (London, 1906), p.1.
12. G.M.Trevelyan, "Present Position of History," (Cambridge, 1927), p.11. (I have paraphrased the remark.)
13. Dr.Henry Jackson, quoted in "Letters to Mary Gladstone," p.lxv.
14. "Lectures on Modern History," p.25.
15. "Ibid.," p.5.
16. "Ibid.," pp. 3-6.

17. "Ibid.," p.27.
18. "Ibid.," p.28.
19. "Letters to Mary Gladstone," p.lxiii.
20. Mary Gladstone Drew, "Acton, Gladstone and Others," (London, 1924), p.11.
21. "Lectures on Modern History," p.28.
22. Fisher, op.cit., p.225.
23. Trevelyan, "Present Position of History," p.12.
24. Bell, op.cit.,
25. "Saturday Review," June 22, 1895, p.822.
26. "Spectator," 1895, p.807.
27. J.L.Hammond, "Lord Acton," "Independent Review," (May, 1904), p.653.
28. Henry C.Lea, "Ethical Values in History," "Minor Historical Writing," (Philadelphia, 1942) p.60.
29. Quoted in Herbert Butterfield, "Lord Acton" (Pamphlets of the English Historical Association, No.G 9: London, 1948), p.17.
30. "Lectures on Modern History," p.xii.
31. John Pollock, "Lord Acton at Cambridge," "Independent Review," II, 1904, p.364.
32. Pollock, op. cit., p.374.
33. Thomas Thornley, "Cambridge Memories," (London, 1936) pp. 117-18.
34. "Letters to Mary Gladstone," p.lxii.
35. "Ibid.," p.lxiv.
36. Trevelyan, "Present Position of History," p.11.
37. "Lectures on Modern History," p.xvi.

38. Mary Gladstone, *op. cit.*, p.20.
39. "Letters to Mary Gladstone," p.lxvi.
40. Gooch, *op. cit.*, p.47.
41. "Lectures on Modern History," pp.315-18.
42. Add. MSS. 5699.
43. G.E.Fasnacht, "Acton's Political Philosophy,"
(London, 1952), p.141.
44. G.N.Clark, "Origin of the Cambridge Modern History,"
"Cambridge Historical Journal," VIII (1945), p.63.
45. A.J.Toynbee, "A Study of History," (London, 1934)
vol.I, p.46.
46. Quoted in Blennerhasset, *op. cit.*, p.533.

CHAPTER NINE

LORD ACTON IN RETROSPECT

Whether or not the monumental "Cambridge Modern History" weighed him down physically as well as mentally, Acton did suffer a paralytic stroke in April, 1901. His friend and fellow historian,* Frederick W. Maitland, wrote to a mutual friend and contributor to the "History" at Oxford that "the Regius of Physic gave me on Friday a better account than I dreaded of the Regius of History. It is paralysis: one arm and one leg useless but mind unaffected...(but)... of course the Universal History cannot be talked of at present." 1

Knowing that his work was almost certainly at an end even if he should live a few years longer, Acton at the age of sixty-seven retired to his beloved country home at Tegernsee in Bavaria. There on June 19, 1902, he died and was buried by the side of a daughter who had preceded him and whose last days he had comforted with the words, "Be glad my child, you will soon be with Jesus Christ," 2

* With the publication of part of the Maitland-Poole correspondence it has recently come to light that Arthur Balfour, Prime Minister at the time of Acton's death, offered the Regius Professorship first to F.W. Maitland who apparently declined for a still unknown reason. Acton's successor was to be J.B. Bury, author of "The Idea of Progress" and "The History of Freedom of Thought." 2

His religion had always been the most important thing in the world to Acton. "The first of human concerns is religion," he had declared in his inaugural lecture, "and it is the salient feature of the modern centuries...³ The action of Christ who is risen on mankind whom he redeemed fails not, but increases....History is the true demonstration of religion." ⁴

Acton had once written to his friend of forty years' standing (whom he always referred to as "Mr. Gladstone") that "All I write and all I think, and all I hope, is based on the Divinity of Our Lord - the one central hope of our poor wayward race." ⁵

His friends were especially unhappy, therefore, to watch his distress during his last years brought about by his continuing struggle with the hierarchy of his Church. Although, as he often remarked, communion with Rome was dearer to him than life itself, he could not help opposing arbitrary authority and concentration of power wherever he found it. This brought him into constant conflict, first with Cardinal Wiseman and then in later years with Cardinal Manning, who wrote of Acton that he was "learned in literature, of a German industry, cold, self-confident, supercilious toward opponents, a disciple of Dollinger and predisposed against me." ⁶ Manning also blamed Acton for turning Gladstone against the cardinal; Manning believed the basis for Acton's enmity was rooted in his essays defending the Ultramontane position and he agreed with Pius

IX that Acton was not a Catholic at heart.

With the death of Pius IX and Cardinal Manning and the installation of their successors Leo XIII in the Vatican and Herbert Cardinal Vaughan at Westminster, it appeared that a new reign of conciliation was at hand. It appeared that liberals within the Church were to be at least tolerated if not encouraged. The new attitude was made clear to Acton when Cardinal Vaughan congratulated him upon his Cambridge chair and added, perhaps pointedly, that the Catholic Primate of England had complete confidence in Acton's loyalty to the Church of Rome.

The English hierarchy after all, had every reason to be friendly toward Acton. First of all his piety and deep sense of religion were acknowledged by all, even those who maintained he was secretly a schismatic. Secondly, Acton was one of the few Catholic members of either House of Parliament, he was the only Catholic on intimate terms with the cabinet, he was the only Catholic holding a chair at Oxford or Cambridge, he was in any event one of the leading scholars of Europe, Catholic, Protestant, Jew or atheist. And, when all was said and done, he was the nephew of one cardinal and the great-grandnephew of another.*

*The uncle of Acton's grandfather was Karl Theodor von Dalberg, cardinal-prince-archbishop-electoral of Mainz, arch-chancellor of the Holy Roman Empire, etc., etc.

When the foundation stone of the Cathedral of Westminster was laid, the cardinal invited Acton as one of his guests of honour. Still, relations between Acton and the Church establishment could never be very close. Acton insisted on granting the popes every honour due them, but he reserved the right to criticize them when he believed they were guilty of corruption or abuse of power. As Miss Himmelfarb has noted, "Acton had good reason for saying there was nothing heretical in this attitude. Catholic theologians of whose orthodoxy there is no suspicion have applied to the Pope the teaching of Aquinas on kingship, arguing that it is legitimate to disobey a Pope who orders the commission of a sin or passes a decree subversive of the Church. Generally, to be sure, they hasten to add that this eventuality has never come to pass and that no Pope has ever forfeited his right to obedience. But the implication remains: if the authority of a Pope must be justified by some more ultimate principle, it can be controverted by that principle." 7

For Acton, of course, this principle was conscience. Even though he believed that his own salvation was dependent upon the Roman sacraments, he urged that Dollinger's wish to have the last rites from an Old Catholic instead of a Roman Catholic priest be respected. In Acton's eyes, if Dollinger went against the promptings of his own conscience, he would imperil, not save, his soul. This view, now generally accepted by Roman Catholic theologians was at the time anathema to the Ultramontanes who never ceased to look for an opportunity to trap Acton into schism.

Despite the announced liberalism of the new pope, Acton remained wary. While he applauded the opening of the Vatican archives to Protestant scholars, he disagreed vehemently with the papal decree which added Hugo's "Les Misérables" to the Index. Although an era of good feeling kept relations between Acton and the hierarchy from reaching the breaking point during his tenure at Cambridge, the Ultramontanes went over to the attack after Acton's death.

In fairness to the Ultramontanes it should be said that from their point of view they were merely responding to an attempt on the part of Abbot Francis Gasquet to rewrite history. Gasquet, a prominent English historian and future cardinal, was a good friend of Acton's and had collaborated with him on the "Cambridge History;" in 1906 he published a selection of the Acton-Simpson correspondence.* From motives of friendship and regard for the Church, Gasquet carefully edited these letters (which dealt mostly with the controversial "Rambler" and "Home and Foreign Review" period) and omitted all but the mildest criticisms of the hierarchy. The overall effect was to portray Acton as a man who had been misunderstood to be a rebel but who was in fact a loyal and unquestioning son of the Church.

The Catholic journal, "The Tablet," was happy to use Gasquet's selection as an excuse to celebrate Acton's orthodoxy. "All Catholics now alive," it declared, "have the benefit of Lord Acton's having lived and learned before them. He goes to the general credit of Catholicism; he is a great asset." 8

*The complete text of these letters is now being edited by Joseph Altholz, Damian McElrath and James Holland. To date, two of three volumes of "The Correspondence of Lord Acton and Richard Simpson," have appeared.

A reply to this friendly article was not long in coming. A Jesuit priest, Father Herbert Thurston, wrote a blistering essay for "Catholic World," entitled "The Late Lord Acton." 9 One priest at least was not disposed to forget Acton's many attacks on the Church establishment and his close brushes with what Father Thurston considered heresy. Acton's letters to Mary Gladstone published in 1904 with Acton's prior consent, added fuel, so to speak, to the Ultramontane auto da fé. On the subject of Jesuits, for instance, Acton had calmly written to Mary Gladstone, in 1882, that "It is this combination of an eager sense of duty, zeal for sacrifice, and love of virtue, with the deadly taint of conscience perverted by authority, that makes them so odious to touch and so curious to study." 10 If we assume that Father Thurston read this passage (among others), his irritation at Lord Acton becomes understandable.

Acton's son, the second Baron Acton, felt obliged to write a letter to the "Times." Obviously motivated by filial loyalty, the second Baron noted that the "Letters to Mary Gladstone" had been published without the final approval of the Acton family. He carefully omitted the fact, however, that Lord Acton himself had approved the posthumous publication some years before his death. Acton obviously wished the world to know his opinions on certain matters, but he did not want to have his peace and quiet disturbed while he was still of the world. The son added that "In the last years of his life, when he was stricken by illness, and during what was almost our last

conversation, he solemnly adjured me not to rash-judge others as he had done but to take care to make allowance for human weakness. And I was present at his farewell meeting with Cardinal Newman, the most moving scene I have ever witnessed." 11

There is little doubt that Acton was always ambiguous on the subject of judgment as he was on many other subjects; he often urged a stern, unbending morality, but almost as often he advocated sympathy, tolerance, and respect for differing views. There is also little doubt that Acton was always a devout and loyal Catholic no matter how much he might disagree with the ideas and actions of many of the leaders of the institution. The editor of the "Letters to Mary Gladstone" implied that Acton did not accept the infallibility dogma. "Whether Lord Acton ought to have left the Church of Rome when Dollinger was excommunicated, or when the Vatican decrees were pronounced, is a question it would not become a Protestant to ask, much less to answer. He did not shrink from the risk of speaking out, and it was not his fault that he escaped....The truths which all Christians hold in common, and the moral principles to which Sophocles ascribes as unknown antiquity, guided him in history as in life. His emphatic statement that he had never felt any doubt about any Roman doctrine was made some years before 1870, and the secession of the Old Catholics." 12

Acton's editor is almost certainly recalling here

the statement by Montstuart Grant Duff in his autobiography, "Out of the Past," that Acton had told him before 1870 that he had never questioned any Catholic dogma. The editor did not know, however, that Acton said much the same thing to another friend at Cambridge - forty years later and long after the infallibility decree had been adopted. 13 This is a subject on which certainty is impossible, but the weight of the evidence seems clearly to indicate that Acton did accept the doctrine of papal infallibility when speaking ex cathedra on faith and morals. There had always been a tradition in the Church of extensive consultation with theologians, bishops, abbots and lay scholars before any major papal pronouncement was made. In view of Acton's great emphasis on the idea of development, it seems likely he was convinced that in time what appeared to be a new doctrine in 1870 would turn out to be no more than what the Church had always taught and believed.

Shortly after Acton's death, his friend F.W.Maitland wrote to R.L.Poole urging him to write a memoir, noting that Poole's disinterest in Catholic theology was an asset, since "Anyone, if such there be (emphasis supplied) who really knows the inside of the infallibility episode would be likely to make a deal too much of it." 14 A week earlier Maitland had written that "I shall never forget the talks I had with Acton. He seemed to know all the letters that ever were written, especially the most private. In a short time he did an enormous deal to improve the position of history here and I think the loss

irreparable." 15

Those who knew him were proud to tell of his personal qualities as well as paying tribute to his scholarship. One of his editors, Herbert Paul, spoke of "the profundity of his knowledge, the generosity of his temper, and the humility of his soul." 16

Of course Acton has had his critics as well. Dr. Herman Finer of the University of Chicago has summed up what some scholars, at least, have regarded as the faults or shortcomings of Acton's career and character. "He was in his public aspect incomplete in every way," Dr. Finer notes. "He was a member of the House of Commons and never spoke. He was a member of the House of Lords and hardly spoke. He opposed the Papacy, but was not, like his mentor, Dollinger, cut off. He encouraged Gladstone's liberal policy but stopped short. He coached Gladstone on the road to his polemic with the Vatican and then admonished him. He came to detest the Holy See and in an historic view, Catholicism, but did not leave the Church. He ascribed to systems of ideas an all dominating force but for Catholicism and Ultramontaniam repudiated their full logical consequences. He demonstrated that Protestantism could be as persecuting as Catholicism, yet managed to find an excuse for the latter. Having claimed that life was for the discovery of truth and being editor of a journal, he abandoned the journal rather than fight the Catholic Church on the high

ground of truth. His friends paid him the tribute of admiration, reverence; they expressed delight in his erudition, his wit and zesty wisdom; but one notes a curious absence of affection in their correspondence.... (There was nothing to kindle his passion.) He lacked the lash of everyday discipline. He was never compelled to make up his mind. He lacked selectiveness, he had no reason for either beginning or ending a work; no spur pricked him to vow a hierarchy of decisions." 17

His most recent biographer, however, Miss Gertrude Himmelfarb, maintains that "it is idle to bemoan the fact that Acton was not a Voltaire, a Gibbon, or a Turgot. He had hoped to be much more than any of them, to inaugurate a new era in history, where the techniques of a Ranke would be wedded to the vision of an Augustine, and Augustine with a new eschatology in which the plan of divine salvation would be identical with the history of human freedom. It was no spirit of the times that defeated Acton. It was his own restless, dissatisfied, ambitious mind, content with no small part of the whole, and for which no whole was quite good enough. To deplore the fact that he was not an eighteenth-century historian was to make of him not a tragic figure but a pathetic one." 18

Dr. G. P. Gooch, the most distinguished of Acton's younger colleagues at Trinity College, has well defined his place in history: "Ordered liberty, he taught, was the highest prize of mankind, and the only method of winning it and

keeping it was to cut up power into little bits... No man, no class, no party, no country, no church, not even his own, was wise enough or unselfish enough to be entrusted with unlimited authority....¹⁹ It was Acton's life-long opposition to totalitarianism in every form which accounts for the spectacular revival of interest in the man and his writings in the middle decades of the twentieth century. Fifty years after his death the lonely scholar has come into his own. 'He is of this age more than of his.' declares Gertrude Himmelfarb.... 'He is indeed one of our great contemporaries.' It is above all as an apostle of liberty that his name and influence survive...²⁰ He ranks with Locke and Jefferson, Humboldt, Mill and Croce among the oracles of the Liberal faith." ²¹

The very ambivalence for which Acton has been sometimes criticized is perhaps the most important reason why he repays careful study. Like his great teacher Burke, he knew that the mysteries at the root of the civil social order are infinitely complex and that there are no simple answers to the problems which have troubled men for centuries. Such great ideals and forces as democracy and nationalism, he knew, must be tempered by prudence and by the demand of a higher law. Though liberty itself must be the highest political end, it could not be the final end for man. While he was not afraid to admit that liberalism and democracy were not perfect and in practice often had grave faults, he still clung to the belief that

no better system was likely to be invented. As Dr. Gooch has put it, "if he returned to the world of today and was told, as we have been assured from the Fascist and Marxist camps...that classical liberalism is dead, he would surely rejoin: So much the worse for the twentieth century." 22

The remaining years of the twentieth century will be more bearable if more people put into practice some of the truths Acton tried to teach: that there is more to man than his material nature, that every man is important, that every man's conscience must be respected, that the state was made for man, not man for the state, that the test of a free society is the treatment of its minorities, that duties are as important as rights and that liberty is necessary for men so that they may fulfil their duties, that ordered liberty is the most delicate fruit of a high civilization, that all men need an area they can call their own so they can make the fullest use of their talents, that since all power tends to corrupt the best way to prevent its misuse is to "cut it up into little bits."

NOTES TO CHAPTER NINE (LORD ACTON IN RETROSPECT)

1. F.W.Maitland to R.L.Poole, May 6, 1901. See A.Lane Poole, "The Maitland-Poole Correspondence," "Cambridge Historical Journal," X, no.3, 1952, p.332.
2. "Letters to Mary Gladstone," p.lxvii.
3. "Lectures on Modern History," p.8.
4. "Ibid.," p.12.
5. Mary Gladstone Drew, "Acton, Gladstone and Others," p.5.
6. E.S.Purcell, "Life of Cardinal Manning," (London, 1896), pp. 490-91.
7. Himmelfarb, "Lord Acton," p.232.
8. "Tablet," London, September 22, 1906.
9. Herbert Thurston, "The Late Lord Acton," "Catholic World," (1906), pp. 357-72.
10. "Letters to Mary Gladstone," p.114.
11. Richard M.D.Acton, Second Baron Acton, Letter to the Editor, "Times," October 28, 1906.
12. "Letters to Mary Gladstone," p. lxviii.
13. Oscar Browning, "Memories," (London, 1910), p.16.
14. F.W.Maitland to R.L.Poole, June 27, 1902, "Cambridge Historical Journal," p.337.
15. "Ibid.," (Maitland to Poole, June 22, 1902).
16. "Letters to Mary Gladstone," p.91.
17. Herman Finer, "Acton as Historian and Political Scientist," "Journal of Politics," X (1948), pp.607-08.
18. Himmelfarb, "Lord Acton," p.228.

19. G.P.Gooch, "Historical Surveys and Portraits,"
(London, 1966), p.156.
20. G.P.Gooch, "Under Six Reigns," (London, 1958), p.46.
21. Gooch, "Historical Surveys," p.156.
22. G.P.Gooch, "Lord Acton: Apostle of Liberty,"
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BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE WORKS OF LORD ACTON

PREFATORY NOTE

There are three published bibliographies of the works of Lord Acton. The first of these (upon which the succeeding studies are largely based) is by William A. Shaw and was published under the title: "A Bibliography of the Historical Works of Dr. Creighton, Dr. Stubbs, Dr. R. S. Gardiner and the Late Lord Acton." (Royal Historical Society, London, 1903, Reprint, New York: Burt Franklin, 1969).

The preface to this bibliography states that Dr. Shaw was assisted in identifying Acton's works (which are rarely signed by his name or even an initial) by the Second Baron Acton; a colleague of Acton's at Cambridge, Mr. R. V. Laurence; and Mr. T. F. Wetherwell (Acton's coeditor at the "Rambler" and "Home and Foreign Review" and editor of the "Chronicle" and "North British Review").

The second bibliography was compiled by F. E. Lally and published in his study of Acton, "As Lord Acton Says," (Newport, Rhode Island: Remington Ward, 1942). Mr. Lally was aided by new information published in "Lord Acton and His Circle" (an incomplete version of the Acton-Simpson correspondence) edited by Abbot Gasquet (London, 1906) and also by information in "The History of Freedom and Other Essays" (London, 1907).

The third bibliography was compiled by Bert F. Hoselitz and published in "Essays on Freedom and Power," edited by Gertrude Himmelfarb, (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1948).

The present bibliographical study is, of course, much indebted to the previous work of the above-mentioned scholars. In addition, the recently published "Acton-Simpson Correspondence" (edited by Josef L. Altholz and Damian McElrath) has made a major contribution to Acton scholarship. By going far beyond Abbot Gasquet's incomplete work they have made it possible definitely to identify several other articles as being the work of Acton or being the work of others.

The essay-review entitled "Mr. Buckle's Thesis and Method," for instance, was only recently attributable to Acton in William H. McNeill's edition of Acton's historical writings, "Essays in the Liberal Interpretation of History" (Chicago, 1967). With the publication of Altholz and McElrath's work in 1971, however, there can no longer be any doubt that this essay was almost entirely the work of Richard Simpson.

In addition to establishing the authorship of several disputed or mistakenly attributed articles, I have taken the opportunity of correcting, in this new bibliography, a few minor typographical errors of spelling and dating in the previous bibliographies.

I also thought it would be useful to subdivide the large number of Acton's writings into some kind of subject classification. Because a good many (probably most) of Acton's writings were concerned with more than one field of history or philosophy, this has not been easy. To cite just one example, Acton's review of Edward Vaughan Kenealy's poetical work "A New Pantomime" ("The Home and Foreign Review," Vol. II, no. 4 (April 1863):669-74) might have been listed under "Irish History and Culture" because the author is Irish or under "British History and Culture" because he published in Britain or under "German History and Culture" because the poem under discussion is about Goethe's "Faust." I have listed it under "Ecclesiastical History" because Acton chose to treat the poem as a theological statement and discussed its implications in relation to the Catholic Church. I have placed articles, in general, under the widest or broadest classification wherever possible. Thus, I have listed works about Bavaria or Austria under the heading "German History and Culture."

It will be apparent from a glance at this bibliography that Acton did in fact write a great deal even though he published little under his own name and authored no books in his lifetime. The subject classification will also reveal the range of Acton's interests. About a fifth of his work was directly concerned with Church or generally religious matters. Approximately a tenth of his articles and reviews were concerned with German history and slightly smaller percentages were concerned with French and British

history respectively. He also was substantially interested in Italian and American history. On the other hand, he had very little interest in philosophy (except philosophy of history), economics and ancient history. He was, of course, primarily a historian of modern Western Europe.

I should stress that the subclassifications are not meant to be hard-and-fast because many of Acton's articles dealt with several of my listed categories at the same time. I hope, however, that this admittedly rough classification will give some idea of where Acton's interests and special abilities lay. It may also be of some help to scholars concerned with Acton's work in a particular area, such as modern French history.

The reader will also note that almost all of Acton's major articles have now been published in book form, in some cases in several different anthologies. The abbreviations used for these anthologies in citing republications are as follows: "Essays in the Liberal Interpretation of History" (LIH), "Essays on Church and State" (C&S), "Essays on Freedom and Power" (F & P), "Historical Essays and Studies" (HES), "The History of Freedom and Other Essays" (HOF).

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London. British Museum. Additional Manuscripts (Lord Acton and W.E.Gladstone).
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1. Under the Authorship of Lord Acton and Edited by Others

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- on "Harfsfield's "Narrative of the Divorce" in "The Academy." Vol.IX, no.216; in "New Series" (24 June, 1876): pp.609-10.
- "Briefe Lord Acton's über George Eliot." Contributed by Rudolf Imelmann, published in "Probleme der englischen Sprache und Kultur" (edited by Wolfgang Keller, Heidelberg, 1925): pp.195-207. Letters were written between 19 October, 1885 and 11 March, 1886.

ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY

Address delivered 28 May 1877, "The History of Freedom in Christianity." (Bridgnorth, 1877). Reprinted in HOF. pp.30-60; F&P. pp.58-87; LIH. pp.271-99.

Articles in "The Rambler, New Series:" *

*Miss Himmelfarb, in her biography of Acton, makes one addition to the bibliography of Acton's works compiled by Hoselitz in her previous anthology, "Essays on Freedom and Power." On page 244 of "Lord Acton" she states that "Only one addition need be made to that bibliography. The first item listed under 'The following articles appeared in The Rambler, New Series' should be:

'Bossuet,' X, part 54 (June 1858)."

Neither Shaw nor Lally cited this essay on the French theologian, Jacques Benigne Bossuet, as being the work of Acton. However, Josef Altholz in his "The Liberal Catholic Movement in England" (London, 1962) asserts that Acton was in trouble with the Church for identifying St. Augustine with Jansenism in an essay on Bossuet (p.77). Douglas Woodruff, in his Acton anthology, "Essays on Church and State" (London, 1952) republishes the essay as Acton's without comment on pages 230-45.

According to the latest and most complete work of scholarship on the "Rambler" period, however, the author was most likely J.M.Capes, a convert who was editor of the "Rambler" from 1848-58. According to Altholz and MacElrath ("Acton-Simpson Correspondence," Vol.I, p.74) "There is better evidence, however, that the author was J.M.Capes. He is listed as the author in Simpson's notebook, the best source for attributions in the early Rambler."

- "The Count de Montalembert." Vol.X, part 60 (December 1858)
pp.421-28.
- "Political Thoughts on the Church." Vo.XI, part 61
(January 1859): pp.30-49. Reprinted in HOF. pp.188-211.
- "The Catholic Press." Vol. XI, part 62 (February 1859):
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Abbe de Lamennais." by the Baron d'Eskstein.)
Vol.I, part 1 (May 1859) pp.70-77.
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pp.136-54.
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(January 1860): pp.154-65; Vol.III, part 7 (May 1860):
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Reprinted in C&S. pp.123-58.
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pp.291-323. Reprinted in C&S. pp.86-122.
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Dollinger on the Temporal Power." Vol. VI, part 16
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(March 1862): pp.318-51. Reprinted in HOF. pp.150-87;
F&P. pp. 88-127.
- in "The Home and Foreign Review:"*

*Shaw lists "The Waldensian Forgeries," the "Home and Foreign Review," no.4 (April 1863): pp.504-30, as being the work of Acton. Both Lally and Hoselitz cite the article but explain that it was actually the work of Dollinger with Acton probably acting as translator and editor. In a letter to Simpson on 20 January, 1863 Acton refers to a prospective article on the Waldensian Forgeries written by Dollinger. ("Lord Acton and His Circle," p.298).

- "Cardinal Wiseman and the Home and Foreign Review." Vol. I, no.2 (October 1862): pp.501-20. Reprinted in HOF. pp.436-60.
- "Ultramontaniam." Vol.III, no.5 (July 1863): pp.162-206. Reprinted in C&S. pp.37-85; LIH pp.165-214.
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*Previous Acton bibliographies have attributed the Quirinus Letters to Acton. Bert F.Hoselitz records the following citation:

"Römische Briefe vom Concil," by Quirinus, four parts (Munich, 1870). p.710. English translation, "Letters from Rome on the Council," three series (London,1870). p.856. These Letters appeared originally in the "Augsburger Allegemeine Zeitung" during December 1869 and the first part of 1870.

F.E.Lally adds the warning, "In reality, Lord Acton only collaborated in these Letters." W.A.Shaw, however, adds no such qualification.

They were actually written by Dollinger, based on letters sent to him from several friends at the Council. Acton was certainly one of these reporters, as was Dr.J.Friedrich (theologian to Cardinal Hohenlohe and later Dollinger's biographer). Other reporters may have been Bishop Dupanloup and Graf Louis Arco-Valley. David Mathew sees evidence of Acton's style in some of the letters, but concludes that although Acton supplied some information he can not be called the author of these letters. ("Lord Acton and His Times" pp.184-85.

In a recently published letter, Acton explicitly denied authorship. He wrote to Thomas Wetherell, one of his journalistic colleagues, from Tegernsee on 25 July, 1870 that, "If Renouf, or anybody, reviews Quirinus, he ought to know that I am not Quirinus, as Blenner (Hassett) seems to have reported. I inspired much of what he wrote, and much was prepared from my notes. But there is much in the letters over which I had no influence, and do not at all approve of; and not one of the letters ever passed through my hands before going to Augsburg; so that I had no real control, and have no general responsibility. If you read them you would often be able to tell the difference." (Wood Mss., published in McElrath, "Lord Acton: The Decisive Decade." p.95).

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6 April, p.27, from "The Roman papers of the 23rd March" to p.28, "not easily overcome."
11 May, p.148, Rome and Italy.
18 May, p.171, Rome and Italy,
15 June, pp. 266-67, Italy and Rome.
29 June, pp.314-15, Rome.
6 July, pp.339-40, Rome.
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20 July, pp.386-87, Italy.
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*Shaw, Lally, and Hoselitz all erroneously attribute the review of F.Guizot, "The Christian Church and Society in 1861," Vol.VI, part 17 (January 1862):pp265-68, to Acton. Simpson wrote to Acton on 10 December 1861: "By all means let (Henry Nutcombe) Oxenham (a convert who studied under Dollinger) do the short notices of Guizot." ("Acton-Simpson Correspondence," Vol.II, p.223.)

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Reprinted in C&S. pp.246-50.

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J.F.A. Peyré. "Histoire de la Première Croisade."
Vol. V, part 15 (September 1861): pp.403-06.

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F. Gregorovius. "Geschichte der Stadt Rom in Mittelalter."
"Ibid.," pp.694-95.

MODERN EUROPEAN HISTORY AND CULTURE

Articles in "The Rambler, New Series" (i.e. Third Series):*

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pp.289-300.

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- in "The Quarterly Review:"

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no.289 (January 1878): pp.112-42. Reprinted in
F&P. pp.128-65; HOF. pp.61-100.

*Shaw and Lally do not mention the article "Note on Events in Italy, Mexico, and Prussia" at all and Hoselitz is apparently the victim of a typographical error for he substitutes "Russia" for "Prussia." Besides "The Rambler" itself, we have Acton's letter to Simpson (18 April 1862) in which he refers to his "25 pages of foreign events... on Italy, Mexico and Prussia." ("Acton-Simpson Correspondence," Vol. II, p.277).

Other Articles:

- "The Causes of the Franco-German War." A paper read before the Trinity Historical Society at Cambridge, the 'Eranus' society at Cambridge, and the S. Catharine's College Historical Society at Cambridge in 1899. Reprinted as "The Causes of the Franco-Prussian War," in HES. pp.204-25.
- Introduction to "Annals of Politics and Culture," by G.P.Gooch (Cambridge, 1901).
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- Alex. Teulet. "Relations politiques de la France et de l'Espagne avec l'Écosse au XVII^e siècle." "Ibid.," p.241.
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- G.A.Bergengroth. "Calendar of State Papers, Spanish." Vol. II, no.3 (January 1863): pp.227-30.
- A.Gindely. "Meine Forschungen in fremden un einheimischen Archiven." "Ibid.," pp.235-36.
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- W. Raymond. "Corneille, Shakespeare et Goethe."
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- "Kleine historische Schriften von H. von Sybel."
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- E. Quinet. "Histoire de la Campagne de 1815" Vol. I
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- J. R. Browne. "The Land of Thor." Vol. I (26 October 1867):
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1867): p.811.
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*Not cited in Shaw, Lally or Hoselitz, but referred to in a letter from Simpson to Acton (10 December 1861). ("Acton-Simpson Correspondence," p.224).

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*Hoselitz erroneously cites pages 573-574.

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E. Pffleiderer. "Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz." Vol. LII, no. 103 (April 1870): pp.255-58. Reprinted in C&S. pp.415-18.

A. Desjardins. "Les moralistes français du seizième siècle." Vol. LII, no.104 (July 1870): pp.540-41.

A. Pichler. "Die Theologie des Leibniz." "Ibid.," pp.551-52.

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"Mr. Buckle's Philosophy of History." Vol. X, part 56
(August 1858): pp. 88-104. Reprinted in HES. pp. 324-43;
in LIH. pp. 22-40.

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"German Schools of History." Vol. I, no. 1 (June 1886):
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"Dollinger's Historical Work." Vol. V, no. 20 (October
1890): pp. 700-44. Reprinted in HOF. pp. 375-435.

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R. Flint. "Historical Philosophy in France and French
Belgium and Switzerland." Vol. X (1895): pp. 108-13.
Reprinted in HOF. pp. 588-96.

*Bert Hoselitz includes the following citation:

"Mr. Buckle's Thesis and Method," Vol. X, part 55 (July 1858):
pp. 27 - 42. Acton's coeditor, Richard Simpson, probably
wrote the major part of this article. Republished in
HES. pp. 305 - 23.

Both Shaw and Lally do not cite this article as part of
Acton's work at all. However, Figgis and Laurence included
the article in their collection, "Historical Essays and
Studies," and William H. McNeill has included it in his
recent anthology, "Essays in the Liberal Interpretation
of History," without any mention of the controversy over
the authorship. It is clear Richard Simpson was the
author of this article; Acton and Simpson usually
discussed each other's articles in advance and so most
of their work at this time included ideas suggested by the
other. In that sense, Acton may be said to have
contributed a few paragraphs to this essay.

On 31 May, 1858, Simpson wrote to Acton outlining the
contents for the next issue of "The Rambler," the July
issue. He refers to "3 RS - with your (Acton's)
introduction & end as aforesaid - on Buckle." He goes on
to say "...could you not write a long introduction about
Buckle, containing your ideas of what the philosophy of
history should be; then you could make the transition to
my contribution, which shows what Buckle's idea of it is;
& end with promising an article to show what his erudition
amounts to." (This future article was Acton's essay
entitled "Mr. Buckle's Philosophy of History" which
appeared in the August 1858 "Rambler".) The Simpson
letter is published in "The Correspondence of Lord Acton
and Richard Simpson," Vol. I, p. 28.

Correspondence:

Letters to the Syndicate of the Cambridge University Press on the plan of its proposed Universal History. Published as a pamphlet "The Cambridge Modern History, etc.," (Cambridge, 1907). These letters were written in the late 1890s.

Printed circular to the contributors "From the Editor of the Cambridge Modern History," dated, Cambridge, March 12, 1898. Published in "Lectures on Modern History" (London, 1907): pp.315-18. Reprinted in LIH. pp.396-99.

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Vol. I (1 June 1867): p.233.

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E.A.Freeman. "History of Federal Government."
Vol.II, no. 4 (April 1863): pp.587-89. Reprinted
in C&S. pp.400-03.

Sir G.C.Lewis. "A Dialogue on the best Form of
Government." "Ibid.," pp.651-52.

*Both Shaw and Lally bibliographies attribute to Acton an essay on John Stuart Mill's "On Liberty." Lally gives the following citation.

In the "Rambler" (New Series) "Mill on Liberty."
Vol. ii pp.62-75, 376-385, Nov. 1859 and March 1860.
In fact, as Hoselitz points out, this essay was written by Thomas Arnold, Jr., (son of the Headmaster of Rugby and the brother of Matthew Arnold) who taught English literature at the Catholic University of Dublin and later at University College, Dublin. Shaw and Lally were doubtless confused because the article was signed with an A. Herbert Paul makes the same mistake in his introduction to "Letters of Lord Acton to Mary Gladstone."
Acton refers to the forthcoming article on Mill by Arnold in letters to Simpson on 23 and 28 August 1859 and on 30 September 1859. ("I have asked Arnold for Mill's Liberty....," "Acton-Simpson Correspondence," Vol.I, p.217). Hoselitz erroneously cites letters written by Acton referring to the Arnold essay on 24, 28 and 30 August 1859. The actual dates are 23, 28 August (as Hoselitz correctly notes) and 30 September 1859.

- in "The North British Review:"

C. Frantz. "Die Naturlehre des Staats." Vol. LIII,
no. 105 (October 1870): pp.295-96.

- in "The Nineteenth Century:"

"L.A. Burd's Edition of Machiavelli's 'Il Principe.' "
Vol. XXXI (April 1892): pp.696-700.

Introduction:

Introduction to "Il Principe" by Niccolo Machiavelli,
edited by L.A. Burd (Oxford, 1891). Reprinted in
HOF. pp.212-31. New edition: (Oxford, 1968).

RUSSIAN HISTORY AND CULTURE

Book Reviews in "The Home and Foreign Review:"

P. Gagarin. "Oeuvres choisies de Pierre Tchadaïef."
Vol. I, no.2 (October 1862): pp.551-52.

F. Bodenstedt. "Russische Fragmente." Vol. II, no.3
(January 1863): pp.284-86.

Count Macdonnel. "Diary of an Austrian Secretary of
Legation at the Court of Czar Peter the Great."
Vol. III, no. 5 (July 1863): p.300.

- "The Chronicle:"

"Die vorgebliche Tochter der Kaiserin Elisabeth
Petrowna." Vol. I (2 November 1867): p.765.

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Vol. LI, no. 102 (January 1870): pp.570-71.

C. Schirren. "Livlandische Antwort an Herrn Juri
Samarin." "Ibid.," pp.584-85.

A.R. von Vivenot. "Korsakoff." Vol. LII, no. 104
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W.H. Dixon. "Free Russia." "Ibid.," pp.584-89.

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- in "The Chronicle:"

G. de Leva. "Storia documentata di Carlo V."
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M. Gachard. "Don Carlos et Philippe II." Vol. I,
(4 May 1867): pp.139-40.

J.G. Magnabal's translation of le Marquis de Pidal's
"Philippe II, Antonio Perez, et le royaume
d'Aragon." Vol. I (20 July 1867): pp.402-03.

E. Chasles. "Michel de Cervantes." Vol. I (3 August
1867): pp.450-51.

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W. Wattenbach. "Eine Ferienreise nach Spanien und
Portugal." Vol. LI, no.101 (October 1869): pp.275-76.

"Cinco Cartas de D. Diego Sarmiento de Acuna, primer
Conde de Gondomar." Vol. LII, no.103 (April 1870):
pp.253-54.

SWEDISH HISTORY AND CULTURE

Book Review in "The Home and Foreign Review:"

H. Woodhead. "Memoirs of Christina, Queen of Sweden."
Vol. III, no.5 (July 1863): p.300.

- in "The North British Review:"

G. Droysen. "Gustaf Adolf." Vol. LI, no.102 (January
1870): pp.550-51

SWISS HISTORY AND CULTURE

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J.C. Kopp. "Geschichte der eidgenössischen Bünde."
Vol. II, no. 4 (April 1863): pp.615-16.

TRAVEL

Book Review in "The Home and Foreign Review:"

J.W. Jones. "The Travels of Ludovico di Varthema."
Vol. IV, no.8 (April 1864): pp.707-08.

- in "The Chronicle:"

G. Pertot. "L'Île de Crète, souvenirs de voyage."
Vol. I (6 April 1867): p.44.

G. Peacock. "Handbook of Abyssinia." Vol. I (9 November
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