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**Birkbeck, University of London**

**The Influence of Congregationalism on the New Journalism  
of W. T. Stead, 1870–1901**

**Philip March**

**Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**April 2019**

**Declaration**

I, Philip March, declare that this thesis is all my own work.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Abstract

This thesis examines the influence of Congregationalism on the New Journalism of W. T. Stead (1849–1912) between 1870 and 1901. It explores how Nonconformity helped to shape the development of Stead’s journalism as it evolved into the press practices of the New Journalism decried by defenders of an elitist cultural heritage that included the leading social critic, Matthew Arnold. Chapter 1 examines the emergence of New Journalism as concept and term. It recalibrates the date of the expression’s first usage and explores the way in which its practices evolved from a range of earlier press influences. Chapter 2 positions Stead as a public intellectual and explores the ways in which he represented the role of the editor and the press. The chapter further examines the influence of evangelicalism and the Nonconformist Conscience on Stead’s developing New Journalism and discusses the place of his manifesto papers in his theorising on the powers of the press. Chapter 3 focuses on Stead’s time as editor at the *Northern Echo* (1871–1880) during which he developed the paper into a prominent, campaigning, Liberal-party supporting, regional newspaper. Chapter 4 examines the period during which Stead was assistant editor (1880–1883) and then editor (1883–1889) of the London *Pall Mall Gazette* when he was a leading activist for social reform. The chapter examines Stead’s use of sensationalism and homiletic novel writing by which he sought to engage his readers in the moral questions raised by pressing issues for democratic and social change. Chapter 5 concentrates on Stead’s establishment of the *Review of Reviews* as a leading journal for the dissemination of culturally improving and spiritually enlightening materials. In particular, the chapter explores Stead’s use of supplementary publications to promote Christian reunification at home and abroad, British imperial interests, and the federation of the English-speaking peoples.

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## The Influence of Congregationalism on the New Journalism of W. T. Stead, 1870–1901.

### Introduction

This thesis is the first in-depth study of the influence of evangelical Congregationalism on the New Journalism of William Thomas Stead (1849–1912). A leading promoter of the Nonconformist Conscience and of Gladstonian Liberalism, he was, for almost twenty years, a strong advocate for Protestant Dissent, firstly in the north-east of England, while at the Darlington *Northern Echo* (1871–1880), and, secondly, in London, at the *Pall Mall Gazette* (1880–1889). As the founding owner and editor of the monthly *Review of Reviews*, (1890–1912), Stead later became a resolute campaigner for Christian reunion, an advocate for the federation of the English-speaking peoples, a forceful supporter of British imperial interests, and a determined activist for Spiritualism.<sup>1</sup>

Since the abolition of the taxes on knowledge (1853, 1855, and 1861), the power of print, and particularly the power of the printed newspaper, had increased substantially. New Journalism introduced commercial, technological, and typographical innovations designed to respond to the emergence of new readerships created by improved educational provision (W. E. Forster’s Education Act of 1870) and electoral extension (Reform Acts of 1867 and 1884).<sup>2</sup> Journalism sought to educate, to entertain, and to represent.

The model of the press, platform, and pulpit, associated print and speech, and suggested a style of writing capable of attracting mass readerships through a more personal journalism. Stead’s life and work represented this paradigm through the pulpit of Dissent, the platform of Liberal-party politics, and a press at liberty to employ, for the betterment of society, the sensationalism of national newspaper campaigns and the rhetoric of religious revivalism.<sup>3</sup> He was as ambitious for the reach of his own ‘voice’ as he was for his capacity to act as a conduit for modern social and political debate which he sought to establish through the re-publication, dissemination, and archiving of a mass of news, opinion, and information.

In exploring Stead’s contribution to evolving press practices, this thesis puts forward new narratives for the emergence of the phrase ‘New Journalism’ and the ideas that it connoted, and, by suggesting a much earlier date than has until now been considered appropriate, rectifies

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<sup>1</sup> Although this thesis does not examine Stead’s work at the *Review of Reviews* beyond 1901, he continued editing the journal until his loss aboard the *Titanic* in 1912. The *Review of Reviews* ceased publication in 1936.

<sup>2</sup> Duties on advertising, newspapers, and paper were repealed, respectively, in 1853, 1855, and 1861. Aled Jones, *Powers of the Press: Newspapers, Power and the Public in Nineteenth-Century England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1996), p. 10.

<sup>3</sup> Aled Jones discusses the creation and influence of the ‘platform, press, pulpit’ paradigm, pp. 88–89.

the historical record for the appearance of the phrase Nonconformist Conscience. Further, I argue for an 'evangelical aesthetic' that links the impact of sensationalism, the plain-spokenness of Nonconformist rhetoric, and the physicality of evangelical conversion experience. This exploration has involved bringing together, and bringing to bear, a combination of materials drawn from periodical, historical, religious, and literary perspectives.

I position Stead not so much as a leader of newspaper cultural innovation than as an inspired and able exponent of ideas that others wished to bring to the attention of both elite groups and the wider public. This was evident in Stead's promotion of Andrew Mearns's Nonconformist campaign for better housing, as set out in the pamphlet *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London* (1883), in the 'Maiden Tribute' crusade, originated by Josephine Butler and the Salvation Army (1885), in plans for national social regeneration, as seen in the Salvation Army's scheme *In Darkest England and the Way Out* (1890), in Christian regeneration and reunion, and in proposals for the federation of the English-speaking peoples, as suggested, for example, by the ambitions of the South-African politician and diamond-industrialist, Cecil John Rhodes.<sup>4</sup>

Stead yearned to head a successful campaigning newspaper, a desire which resounds in his sometimes soulfully expressed ambition to conduct the Salvation Army's *War Cry* (1879–).<sup>5</sup> Moreover, he would have been fully aware of the success of the *Methodist Times* (1885–1937), founded and edited by the Wesleyan minister Hugh Price Hughes, who aimed, through his newspaper, to engage Christian principles in the practical resolution of social problems.<sup>6</sup>

Stead was a complex individual. He was a committed Nonconformist, an advocate for ecumenical Christianity, a Spiritualist, and, I suggest, an exponent of Christian Socialism. He was a supporter, albeit critical, of Gladstonian Liberalism, an anti-Jingoist imperialist, and a world peace campaigner. He followed the curve in major aspects of his campaigning newspaper career, but he did so in a way that brought the Christian values of Nonconformity to bear upon, and to act from within, a secular press. Following the curve and being an ineffectual bystander are not, of course, identical: Stead followed in order to utilise, improve, and amplify. His success lay in the promotion of the press as a place for national debate and decision-making: his originality

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<sup>4</sup> Andrew Mearns, *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London* (London: James Clarke, 1883); the 'Maiden Tribute' campaign ran in the *Pall Mall Gazette* from 6 July to 10 July 1885; William Booth, *In Darkest England and the Way Out* (London: Salvation Army, 1890); Shula Marks and Stanley Trapido, 'Rhodes, Cecil John (1853–1902)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/35731>. The *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* is hereafter abbreviated to *ODNB*.

<sup>5</sup> During his imprisonment in Holloway prison, Stead expressed the wish to edit a newspaper like the *War Cry*, while, on his return from a European tour in 1888, his difficulties at the *Pall Mall Gazette* led him to declare that he would like to edit the *War Cry* itself. This latter position was neither vacant nor offered to him. J. W. Robertson Scott, *The Life and Death of a Newspaper: An Account of the Temperaments, Perturbations and Achievements of John Morley, W. T. Stead, E. T. Cook, Harry Cust, J. L. Garvin and three other Editors of the Pall Mall Gazette* (London: Methuen, 1952), pp. 137, 148. For the *War Cry*, see Josef L. Altholz, *The Religious Press in Britain, 1760–1900* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1989), pp. 41, 87.

<sup>6</sup> Altholz, pp. 13, 65, 82–83, 143.

consisted in his ability to ally in his campaigning publications the aesthetics of Nonconformist preaching and the innovative press practice of his New Journalism.

### **Stead Constructed and Deconstructed**

In a collection of essays published in 2012 to mark the centenary of his death aboard the *Titanic*, Stead was described as a ‘Newspaper Revolutionary’, ‘the most famous Englishman’ aboard that ill-starred ship, a ‘mass of contradictions’, ‘a crucial figure in the history of the British press’, and ‘an extraordinary figure in late Victorian and Edwardian culture’.<sup>7</sup> During his life-time, Stead was admired and loathed, praised as a major social reformer, and vilified as a gutter-press destroyer of public morals and cultural values. He had amongst his acquaintance major Church leaders, government ministers, leading members of the parliamentary opposition, and figures from the worlds of the arts and of the sciences. He highlighted the inadequacies of government social reform at home and contested British policy abroad and campaigned for world peace and the reunification of Christianity. Nonetheless, soon after his death aboard the *Titanic* in 1912, Stead’s reputation and achievements entered a period of protracted public obscurity.

Yet, just as his journalism spoke to the national and international concerns of its specific historical period, it also speaks to our own contemporary anxieties and challenges, where, in the twenty-first century, the existence of printed newspapers is increasingly contested by ubiquitous means of more spontaneous, interactive, electronic, and wi-fi news provision. This explains, in part, why, since the centenary of the sinking of the White Star Line’s world-famous passenger ship, Stead’s life and work have become the objects of renewed academic research and critical study.<sup>8</sup> His actions and words have represented productive terrain for the contemporary study of feminism, imperialism, and religious difference, just as they served as material for the nineteenth-century examination of the ‘New Woman’ question, jingoistic imperialism, and religious plurality.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> See the dustcover, inside flap, and title page of *W. T. Stead: Newspaper Revolutionary*, ed. by Laurel Brake and others (London: British Library, 2012).

<sup>8</sup> Stead was the subject of a major conference in London, 16–17 April 2012, at the British Library. The proceedings formed the basis of a major collection of essays and of a special issue of the online journal *19*, issued in April 2013, to celebrate Stead’s life and legacy. See *W. T. Stead: Newspaper Revolutionary*, ed. by Brake and others; ‘W. T. Stead: Newspaper Revolutionary’, *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 2013 (16), <<https://19.bbk.ac.uk/83/volume/0/issue/16/>> [accessed 21 March 2019].

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, the chapters by Alexis Easley, ‘W. T. Stead, Late Victorian Feminism, and the *Review of Reviews*’, pp. 37–58, Simon J. Potter, ‘W. T. Stead, Imperial Federation, and the South African War’, pp. 115–132, Deborah Mutch, ‘“Are We Christians?”: W. T. Stead, Keir Hardie and the Boer War’, pp. 133–148, in *W. T. Stead*, ed. by Brake and others.

In the final decades of the Victorian period, and, again, in the early years of the twenty-first century, Stead has been characterised as the epitome of the provincial journalist challenging metropolitan press influence through newspaper innovation. His work has been highlighted as subverting the staid press processes that so prized extensive parliamentary reporting, long verbatim accounts of formal speeches, the publication of official law reports, and the dissemination of opinion rather than of news. Further, his Liberal-party credentials and Nonconformist Christian beliefs have represented defining and guiding characteristics that contested both the religious authority of the national church and the civil power of elite groupings. He has represented the opposition of provincial interests to metropolitan dominance, the struggle of Protestant Dissent against the entrenched positions of the Church of England, and the advocacy of the ‘advanced’ Liberalism of W. E. Gladstone against Adullamite high-Liberal reactionary attitudes.<sup>10</sup> Further, in establishing the quarterly spiritualist review *Borderland* (1893–1897), and, in 1909, ‘Julia’s Bureau’ for the reception of messages from beyond the terrestrial world, he confirmed his belief in the power of the word to emerge in new and unexpected forms, and, in such innovative modalities, to shape and influence people’s beliefs.<sup>11</sup> Such considerations have made of Stead a stellar stand-out figure-head in the history of late-Victorian journalism.

Stead was brought up in a Dissenting, Congregational, household, attended Silcoates School, established primarily for the sons of Congregational ministers, maintained a life-long allegiance to the Congregational churches, was acquainted with influential Congregationalists, and was a publicist for Congregational views, actions, and personalities in the pages of the newspapers and review that he edited over a combined period of forty years. Through a reading of this press and review material, which represents a considerable public archive, it is possible to identify the religious and political themes taken up by Stead and to compare his view of them with those held by prominent Nonconformists in mid- to late-Victorian England. Further, the Congregational Union Yearbooks for the nineteenth century provide documentary evidence of the thoughts of leading Congregational church ministers through the addresses delivered at the spring and autumn Union assemblies. Prominent nineteenth-century Congregationalists also often wrote their autobiographies, or assembled for publication a collection of sermons or lectures, or became the subject of a biography, not infrequently the work of a son or of another close relative.<sup>12</sup> In addition, the views of leading Baptists, Methodists, and Unitarians shed light

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<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Tony Nicholson, ‘The Provincial Stead’, in *W. T. Stead*, ed. by Brake and others, pp. 7–21. J. P. Parry, ‘Lowe, Robert (1811–1892)’, *ODNB* <[doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/17088](https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/17088)>. Led by Lowe, amongst others, the Adullamites formed in 1866 an anti-reform grouping within the Liberal Party.

<sup>11</sup> Gowan Dawson, ‘*Borderland* (1893–1897)’, *DNCL*, p. 65.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, A. W. W. Dale’s biography of his father, *The Life of R. W. Dale of Birmingham* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1898); John Campbell, *John Angell James: a review of his history, character,*

on the existence of agreed opinion as well as significant differences amongst Nonconformists regarding, for example, urgent social reform and the Second Boer War (1899–1902).

I argue in my thesis that the opinions and spiritual investment of leading Congregational political and religious figures helped Stead to form his sense of mission and crusade. He found a thorough set of Liberal political values and morally demanding religious beliefs through his Congregational Church membership and acquaintance with the wider Dissenting community. I also argue that Stead was not so very different from many other journalists, members of parliament, municipal councillors, business owners, and influential religious figures with whom he shared a strong sense of political activism, religious engagement, and social mission. I claim rather that the originality of Stead's achievement lay much more in his ability to maintain religious investment in a non-religious newspaper capable of influencing public opinion and the actions of power elites. I examine in this respect how Stead accepted the Nonconformist socio-political agenda both through his involvement in many of the major issues of the second half of Victoria's long reign and through his advocacy of personal effort and individual conscience as the engines of moral betterment and social improvement.<sup>13</sup> Examples of Stead's campaigns which I explore include agitation for the disestablishment of the Church of England, opposition to the Contagious Diseases Acts, promotion of temperance and social purity, and the highlighting of the want of morally active Conservative-government intervention in the Bulgarian Atrocities.<sup>14</sup>

Born in 1849, in Embleton, near Alnwick, Stead had grown up in the nearby small mining town of Howdon, in Northumberland, where his father gave long service as the Congregational minister of the Independent Chapel.<sup>15</sup> Stead was to remain a lifelong Congregationalist, deeply conscious of the duties that spiritually bound members of this independent church community.<sup>16</sup> Amongst such obligations lay the readiness to base a religiously informed life on a personal reading of the Bible, unmediated by any imposed external source of interpretation, and unfettered by any reliance upon creeds, dogmas, and rituals. This individual religious freedom was nonetheless girded by a strong sense of personal morality and of collective responsibility

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*eloquence, literary labours; with dissertations on the pulpit and the press, academic preaching, college reform, etc.* (London: John Snow, 1860); John Angell James, *Discourses and Memoirs, Addressed to Young Women*, edited by his son (London: Hamilton Adams, 1860).

<sup>13</sup> Richard J. Helmstadter, 'The Nonconformist Conscience', in *Religion in Victorian Britain*, ed. by Gerald Parsons, James R. Moore, and John Wolffe, 5 vols (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988–1997), IV: *Interpretations*, ed. by Gerald Parsons, pp. 61–95 (pp. 81–82).

<sup>14</sup> 'W. T. Stead: Chronology, 1849–1912', in *W. T. Stead*, ed. by Brake and others, pp. xii–xvii.

<sup>15</sup> Grace Eckley, *Maiden Tribute: A Life of W. T. Stead* (Philadelphia: Xlibris, 2007), p. 8. W. Sydney Robinson, *Muckraker: The Scandalous Life and Times of W. T. Stead Britain's First Investigative Journalist* (London: Robson Press, 2012), p. 4. Robertson Scott, *The Life and Death of a Newspaper*, p. 90. 'Howdon' is also written 'Howden'.

<sup>16</sup> Robertson Scott, *The Life and Death of a Newspaper*, pp. 87, 91.

while good acts per se did not guarantee the soul's salvation in the realm of the eternal. These Congregational principles shaped Stead's journalistic career, the influence of which can be traced in the materiality of his evolving practice and, not least, in his interpretation of a non-conforming New Journalism.

While Stead's religious influences are partly matters of conjecture, his professional trajectory is more readily established. He began writing for newspapers while still working as an accounts clerk for an import company in Newcastle. In 1865 and 1868, he saw the publication of two press articles, the first on the assassination of President Lincoln in 'a little Jarrow weekly paper', and the second, for the *Sheffield Independent*, on the disestablishment of the Irish Church.<sup>17</sup> Stead wrote nothing more until 1870 when he began to send articles, occasional notes, and leaders to the newly established *Northern Echo* based in Darlington.<sup>18</sup> His first such contribution, 'Indiscriminate Charity', was published on 7 February 1870, and, like his other freelance pieces, did not earn its writer any remuneration.<sup>19</sup> Although the founding editor of the *Northern Echo*, John Copleston, was unable to meet Stead's request for at least some token payment, Stead nonetheless decided to continue providing material on an unpaid basis.<sup>20</sup> It was in this largely informal way that Nonconformists were able to train up and to try out individuals motivated to enter journalism and thought capable of agitating for the political and religious aims of Dissent.

### **A Congregationalist and a Journalist Among Many**

In the 1870s, Stead represented not so much a precocious press pioneer as one amongst other journalists of similar background who came to prominence during an important period of change for newspapers. Many of these journalists would have had some knowledge of the work of the former Methodist become Congregational minister John Campbell, 'one of the most successful nonconformist editors of his age'.<sup>21</sup> He founded and edited the weekly Congregational *British*

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<sup>17</sup> Eckley, p. 13; Graham McClelland, 'W. T. Stead: The Formative Years', *NewsStead*, 11 (Fall 1997), 6–10 (p. 7). Chris Lloyd, *Attacking the Devil: 130 Years of the Northern Echo* (Priestgate, Darlington: *The Northern Echo*, 1999), p. 37: The Jarrow paper would have been either the *Jarrow Guardian* or the *Jarrow Express*. I suggest that the *Jarrow Guardian* is the better choice as it is the paper that printed Stead's affectionate obituary account of his father, entitled 'My Father', on 29 February 1884. The description, 'a little Jarrow weekly paper', was Stead's, quoted in Robertson Scott, *The Life and Death of a Newspaper*, p. 92. Alan J. Lee, *The Origins of the Popular Press: 1855–1914* (London: Croom Helm, 1976), pp. 88, 138, 171–173, discusses the perceived moderate Liberalism of the *Sheffield Independent* and the opposition it provoked for the owners, the Leader family, from the Sheffield radical MP, H. J. Wilson.

<sup>18</sup> Robertson Scott, *The Life and Death of a Newspaper*, p. 94.

<sup>19</sup> W. T. Stead, 'Indiscriminate Charity', *Northern Echo*, 7 February 1870, p. 1, reprinted in *NewsStead*, 12 (Spring 1998), 1–2.

<sup>20</sup> Robertson Scott, *The Life and Death of a Newspaper*, pp. 94–95.

<sup>21</sup> R. Tudur Jones, 'Campbell, John (1795–1867)', *ODNB* <doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/4524>.

*Banner* from 1848, and, after he lost the confidence of the Congregational Union, the weekly *British Standard* (1857–1867) which he launched under his own auspices and to which many readers previously loyal to the *British Banner* transferred.<sup>22</sup> In reality, therefore, the view that Stead was a particularly gifted journalistic talent tends to ignore the presence of other individuals of similar age, background, and religious denomination, who had either already begun a purposeful press career or who were on the point of doing so. These journalists often shared Stead's formative experiences which included a relatively foreshortened formal education, initial employment as a clerk in a commercial concern, a parallel interest in writing articles for the press, and the subsequent entry into the journalistic profession itself.

Such a path towards a press career was taken, for example, by the Congregationalist H. W. Lucy who was initially employed as a junior clerk (1856–1864) to a hide merchant in Liverpool during which time he also wrote newspaper articles. He became a local reporter for the *Liverpool Mercury* (1858–1904) before gaining further experience of the press in the provinces.<sup>23</sup> Between January and June 1870 he was appointed to act as sub-editor of the newly launched morning edition of the evening daily *Pall Mall Gazette* (1870), but the experiment proved to be unsuccessful and was therefore abandoned.<sup>24</sup> Another journalist, this time, like Stead, from the North-East of England, Thomas Wemyss Reid (1842–1905), was the second son of the Newcastle Congregational minister Alexander Reid and of Jessy Elizabeth, the daughter of Thomas Wemyss of Darlington, a Hebrew scholar and noted Biblical critic.<sup>25</sup> Like Lucy and Stead, Wemyss Reid began his working life as a clerk, this time in the Wentworth Beaumont Lead office at Newcastle. Again, like Lucy and Stead, Wemyss Reid showed an early interest in journalism sending reports on local topics to the *Northern Daily Express*.<sup>26</sup> In January 1866, he became the chief reporter of the *Leeds Mercury*, and, on 15 May 1870, was appointed its editor in which capacity he succeeded in transforming the publication into the first provincial newspaper capable of competing with the metropolitan press.<sup>27</sup> Other significant newspaper figures included the

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<sup>22</sup> Altholz, pp. 183, 69–70; pp. 184, 70. The possible influence of Campbell on Stead's journalism is discussed in Chapter 1.

<sup>23</sup> Lee, pp. 140, 275: the *Liverpool Mercury* (1858–1904) was a moderate, one-penny, Liberal paper.

<sup>24</sup> The *Pall Mall Gazette* (1865–1923) was a leading example of clubland journalism which, in the 1880s, espoused, firstly, Gladstonian Liberalism, and, secondly, under Stead's editorship, the campaigning mission of New Journalism. Christopher Andrew Kent, '*Pall Mall Gazette* (1865–1923)', *DNCE*, pp. 477–478.

<sup>25</sup> To bolster his limited experience of the press, Stead visited Wemyss Reid, the editor of the *Leeds Mercury*. In a demonstration of Stead's early confidence in his own ideas, far from Wemyss Reid offering advice to Stead, the supposed pupil used the occasion to inform the teacher of the ways and means he would use to run a newspaper. Eckley, p. 14.

<sup>26</sup> Lee, p. 274: the *Northern Daily Express* was a one-penny, Liberal, paper, founded 21 April 1855 in Darlington before moving to Newcastle in October of the same year. It ceased publication in 1886. The date of cessation of publication is incorrectly given as 1866 in Lee, p. 175.

<sup>27</sup> H. B. Grimdsitch, 'Lucy, Sir Henry William (1843–1924)', rev. by H. C. G. Matthew, *ODNB* <doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/34626>; G. Le G. Norgate, 'Reid, Sir Thomas Wemyss (1842–1905)', rev. by

Liberal Congregationalist, journalist, politician, and educationist, Edward Baines. His father, also Edward, owned and edited the *Leeds Mercury* (1718–1939), which campaigned for political reform and extended civil liberties, until surrendering the editorship to his son, who was later to offer the post to Wemyss Reid.<sup>28</sup> Aged fourteen, Baines had begun to teach in Congregational Sunday schools just as Stead had done for his Congregational minister father at Howdon in Northumberland. Baines's public actions were shaped by his Nonconformist faith and his opposition to London's dominance of politics and to the power of Anglican landowners.

Like Edward Baines, the Congregational businessman, politician, and philanthropist, Samuel Morley, was born into a manufacturing family. Aged sixteen, he joined the accounts department of the London branch of the family's hosiery firm, and, by the 1860s, he had risen to become the head of the company. He entered into newspaper ownership by acquiring a major holding in the *Daily News*, founded by Charles Dickens in 1846, which, under Morley's influence, became a major promoter of Liberal ideas.<sup>29</sup> Morley was involved in the struggle for religious equality and the disestablishment of the Church of England. He occupied the chair of the electoral committee of the Liberation Society, founded in 1844 as the British Anti-State Church Association by the Congregational minister, Edward Miall, and renamed the Society for the Liberation of Religion from State Patronage and Control in 1853. Miall had launched the *Nonconformist* (1841–1880) on 14 March 1841 from Stoke Newington in London with the principal aim of campaigning for the abolition of compulsory church rates and for Church disestablishment in England and Wales.<sup>30</sup>

The Congregational minister, Robert Vaughan, began the high-quality *British Quarterly Review* (1845–1886) in January 1845. In part, this was because of his dissatisfaction with the Nonconformist monthly *Eclectic Review* (1805–1868) and its support for the militancy of Miall, and, partly, in order to furnish Nonconformists with a publication that displayed the same cultural values as other reviews. These included the high-Tory, wide-ranging, *Quarterly* (1809–1967), the Whig-supporting *Edinburgh* (1802–1929), and the liberal, increasingly eclectic, *Westminster* (1824–1914).<sup>31</sup> Vaughan's son, Robert Alfred Vaughan, also a Congregational

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H. C. G. Matthew, *ODNB* <doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/35720>; Fionnuala Dillane, 'Lucy, Henry William (1843-1924)', *DNCJ*, pp. 383–383.

<sup>28</sup> Anne Humpherys, '*Leeds Mercury* (1718–1939)', *DNCJ*, p. 354.

<sup>29</sup> John Kofron, '*Daily News* (1846–1912)', *DNCJ*, p. 158. This pro-reform paper was also noted for its war reporting.

<sup>30</sup> Megan D. Burke, '*Nonconformist* (1841–1900)', *DNCJ*, pp. 456–457. This middle-class, pro-Liberal party, paper dealt with politics, religion, trade, and commerce.

<sup>31</sup> D. W. Bebbington, 'Gospel and Culture in Victorian Nonconformity', in *Culture and the Nonconformist Tradition*, ed. by Jane Shaw and Alan Kreider (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999), pp. 43–62 (p. 45). For the *British Quarterly* and the *Eclectic*, see Altholz, pp. 58–59. For other publications, see, in *DNCJ*, Mark Knight, '*British Quarterly Review* (1845-1886)', p. 79; David Ian Morphet, '*Quarterly Review* (1809–1967)', pp. 522–523; Joanne Shattock, '*Edinburgh Review* (1802–1929)', pp. 190–191; Don Ulin, '*Westminster Review* (1824–1914)', pp. 672–673.

minister and writer, contributed to both *Fraser's Magazine* and the *British Quarterly Review* while yet another son of a Congregational minister, George Newnes, the newspaper owner and politician, was a contemporary of Stead's at Silcoates.<sup>32</sup>

On 22 October 1881, Newnes launched *Tit-Bits* which brought to a working-class readership short newspaper items written in good English and of a purposefully agreeable nature.<sup>33</sup> Newnes and Stead eventually formed a partnership to launch in January 1890 the democratic, Christianising, compendium *Review of Reviews*, but the working relationship only lasted six months leaving Stead as sole proprietor of what was to prove to be a very successful publication.<sup>34</sup> Overall, these journalists represent an array of Congregational influence and talent that contributed both to the radical campaigning mission of journalism and to the more respectable and less agitating dissemination of news and opinion.

Stead's evident potential for journalism saw him, a Congregationalist, engaged for the *Northern Echo*, founded at the suggestion of a Quaker family, the Peases, by John Hyslop Bell, a former Methodist minister turned newspaper owner.<sup>35</sup> This association of Old and New Dissent and of Liberal political engagement on the one hand, and of the Nonconformist pulpit and the northern press on the other, was part, then, of a wider pattern of unplanned alliance that included newspaper proprietors and employees of Nonconformist religious denominations. Stead remained for nearly a decade (1871–1880) at the *Northern Echo* until he accepted an offer from Henry Yates Thompson to join the London *Pall Mall Gazette* to work, firstly, as assistant editor to John Morley, the future Liberal MP for Newcastle and, later, Chief Secretary to Ireland, and, secondly, as the senior editor.<sup>36</sup> Before then, during his years at the *Northern Echo*, he was to become a nationally recognised journalist whose political influence and ability to work up a successful newspaper campaign made him someone of whom to take note and even of whom to be wary.

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<sup>32</sup> Mark W. Turner, '*Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country (1830–1882)*', *DNCJ*, pp. 229–230. *Fraser's* was a leading nineteenth-century monthly miscellany that propounded progressive views on politics and social questions.

<sup>33</sup> Zsuzsanna Varga, '*Tit-Bits (1881–1984)*', *DNCJ*, p. 630. *Tit-Bits* included short news items and content suggested by readers' questions and letters.

<sup>34</sup> James Mussell, '*Review of Reviews (1890–1936)*', *DNCJ*, pp. 537–538). J. R. Lowerson, 'Sir Edward Baines (1800–1890)', *ODNB* <[doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/1090](https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/1090)>; J. P. Parry, 'Morley, Samuel (1809–1886)', *ODNB* <[doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/19291](https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/19291)>; D. W. Bebbington, 'Miall, Edward (1809–1881)', *ODNB* <[doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/18647](https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/18647)>; Alexander Gordon, 'Vaughan, Robert (1795–1868)', rev. by R. Tudur Jones, *ODNB* <[doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/28142](https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/28142)>; Alexander Gordon, 'Vaughan, Robert Alfred (1823–1857)', rev. by Anne Stott, *ODNB* <[doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/28143](https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/28143)>; A. J. A. Morris, 'Newnes, Sir George (1851–1910)', *ODNB* <[doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/35218](https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/35218)>.

<sup>35</sup> Robertson Scott, *The Death of a Newspaper*, p. 95.

<sup>36</sup> Alan Bell, 'Thompson, Henry Yates (1838–1928)', *ODNB* <[doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/36492](https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/36492)>; David Hamer, 'Morley, John (1838–1923)', *ODNB* <[doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/35110](https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/35110)>. Stead was assistant editor from 1880 to 1883, and senior editor from 1883 to 1889.

### Why No Standard Biographical Work?

It is surprising that no major scholarly biography of W. T. Stead yet exists. J. W. Robertson Scott, writing in the early 1950s, forty years after Stead's death upon the *Titanic*, describes the difficulties that surrounded the early efforts. Stead's youngest son, John, considered that Frederic Whyte's two-volume *The Life of W. T. Stead* (1925) was unsatisfactory: 'I was profoundly disappointed with the book; adequate justice has not yet been done to my father'.<sup>37</sup> Robertson Scott himself believed that Whyte 'might have done more for him' and regretted the delay in the book's publication which had prevented a generation from having a real understanding of what Stead had achieved.<sup>38</sup> Stead's second son, Henry, shortly after the death of his father, had invited Robertson Scott to undertake a 'Popular Life': Robertson Scott replied that E. T. Cook, Stead's successor as editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, should be asked to take on the task instead. Was it a lack of confidence that prompted a step back on Robertson Scott's part or the knowledge that there was a huge amount of primary material to be examined? In the event, Cook declined the invitation while others considered for the task included: Lord Esher, who was deterred by the complexity of Stead's life and character; J. L. Garvin, who began the task but gave it up in favour of writing a biography of Joseph Chamberlain; and J. A. Spender, whose offer to undertake the work was turned down. Before Whyte's biography appeared, all that existed to commemorate Stead was his daughter, Estelle's memoir *My Father* (Heinemann, 1913) and his secretary, Edith K. Harper's *Stead, the Man* (Rider, 1918), both of which dealt for the greater part with Stead's interest in Spiritualism.<sup>39</sup> The enormity of the task certainly appears to have been one impediment whilst another was created by the perceived lack of empathy between possible (J. A. Spender) or actual (Whyte) biographer and subject.<sup>40</sup> Robertson Scott has written of 'Stead's plentiful MSS. and typescripts and other papers, all that exist — in weight not much less than a hundredweight! — placed at my disposal by the goodness of Professor [John] Stead and the continuous kindness of Miss [Estelle] Stead' and of Henry Stead having shown him 'into a room full of Tate sugar-boxes, packed with carefully arranged papers'.<sup>41</sup> 'Such unparalleled stores' seem rather to have repelled than attracted (p. 8). Even when Whyte did step in, his 'dilatatory' approach did not endear him to all, and, when the biography was published, the Stead family were left unhappy with the result (p. 7). Despite the fact that many thought

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<sup>37</sup> Frederic Whyte, *The Life of W. T. Stead*, 2 vols (London: Jonathan Cape, 1925). Quoted in Robertson Scott, *The Life and Death of a Newspaper*, p. 7.

<sup>38</sup> Robertson Scott, *The Life and Death of a Newspaper*, p. 9.

<sup>39</sup> Robertson Scott, *The Life and Death of a Newspaper*, pp. 8–9.

<sup>40</sup> Robertson Scott, *The Life and Death of a Newspaper*, pp. 7–8.

<sup>41</sup> Robertson Scott, *The Life and Death of a Newspaper*, pp. 7–8. Stead's oldest son, Willie, had died in an accident in 1908.

that Whyte's *The Life of W. T. Stead* could be improved upon, and despite the existence of such a huge amount of archival material, the arrival of a biography suitable for such a significant nineteenth-century figure has defied realisation. In 1988, Joel H. Wiener judged that 'Until the publication of Joseph O. Baylen's definitive study of Stead, the interested reader must make do with lesser goodies'.<sup>42</sup>

The late Professor Joseph Baylen's study, however, did not become reality. In an endnote to 'The British Press, 1861–1918', an article which he contributed to *The Encyclopedia of the British Press 1422–1992*, it was announced that Baylen had 'recently completed a biography of W. T. Stead'. This eagerly awaited news, however, proved either to be erroneous, or, if such a biography exists, confusing as no such book has been published to date.<sup>43</sup> Baylen did, however, produce at least twenty-two articles on Stead including 'The "New Journalism" in Late Victorian Britain' (1972) which still represents a standard foundational piece in the field of Stead research.<sup>44</sup> Over a century after Stead's demise, a 'worthy' biography has still to appear, even after the appointment, in 1987, by Stead's grandchildren, of John Stephenson as the official biographer of the Stead family.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, since Stephenson's death in 2011, no successor as official biographer has been announced.

The new century has seen some movement. In 2007, Grace Eckley published *Maiden Tribute: A Life of W.T. Stead*, the result of 24 years of research, and a work which Eckley self-published, which perhaps suggests that mainstream academic publishers were reluctant to proceed.<sup>46</sup> The 2012 centenary of the sinking of the *Titanic* prompted renewed interest in Stead and saw the appearance of W. Sydney Robinson's popularly titled *Muckraker: The Scandalous Life and Times of W. T. Stead Britain's First Investigative Journalist*.<sup>47</sup> A short 'Foreword' by Tristram Hunt testifies to the perceived potential for commercial success of such a volume as well as to Hunt's surprise that 'one hundred years after his death aboard the *Titanic*, this is the first biography of the truly extraordinary W. T. Stead'.<sup>48</sup> My own contact with members of the

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<sup>42</sup> Joel H. Wiener, 'Biographical Essay', in *Papers For The Millions: The New Journalism in Britain, 1850s to 1914*, ed. by Joel H. Wiener (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1988), pp. 299–315 (p. 304).

<sup>43</sup> J. O. Baylen, 'The British Press, 1861–1918', in *The Encyclopedia of the British Press, 1422–1992*, ed. by Dennis Griffiths (London: Macmillan, 1992), pp. 33–46 (p. 46). Baylen: 1920–2009.

<sup>44</sup> J. O. Baylen, 'The "New Journalism" in Late Victorian Britain', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 18 (1972), 367–385.

<sup>45</sup> John S. Stephenson, *The Reverend William Stead and his Family: An Eulogy* (sic) (Newcastle: Northumberland Record Office Association of Northumberland Local History Societies, 1987).

<sup>46</sup> Grace Eckley, *Maiden Tribute: A Life of W.T. Stead* (Philadelphia: Xlibris, 2007).

<sup>47</sup> W. Sydney Robinson, *Muckraker: The Scandalous Life and Times of W.T. Stead Britain's First Investigative Journalist* (London: Robson Press, 2012). Dr Tristram Hunt has taught at Queen Mary, London University, served as a Labour MP for Stoke-on-Trent Central (2010–2017), and, in 2017, was appointed Director of the V&A Museum in London.

<sup>48</sup> In fact, Sydney Robinson's book is not the first biography. Further, the earlier works by Whyte and Eckley are mentioned in the book's own bibliography. When the paperback edition of *Muckraker* appeared in 2013, the 'Foreword' introduced the epithet 'major' as a qualifier of 'biography', although

Stead and Stephenson families did not prove to be productive.<sup>49</sup> However, Grace Eckley generously provided access to a complete run of *NewsStead*, the journal devoted to all matters Steadian that she launched and edited for twelve years between 1992 and 2004.<sup>50</sup>

The official Stead archive, deposited in four tranches by family members between 1986 and 1996 and in 2012, is held by Churchill College, Cambridge University, and is free of charge to access.<sup>51</sup> The archive consists of fifteen boxes and sixty-one volumes, dealing mainly with the years 1871–1912, and with the greater part of the material consisting of correspondence received by Stead and of papers relating to his time in prison and to his publications.<sup>52</sup> Churchill College was chosen on the recommendation of the descendants of Admiral John Fisher (1841–1920). Stead had received the help of the then Captain John Fisher at several secret meetings during which information was provided for a newspaper campaign drawing attention to the poor funding being given to an obsolescent Navy.<sup>53</sup> Based on this, the *Pall Mall Gazette* ran a successful agitation entitled ‘The Truth about the Navy’ (September 15–23 1884).

That more archival material exists in private hands has contributed to a sense of incompleteness and even mystery. One item in particular has created debate, Stead’s journal or diary, which references in academic literature place in the Churchill archives.<sup>54</sup> However, no such journal has ever existed in that location. Fortunately, both Whyte’s biography of Stead, and Robertson Scott’s history of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, include extracts from Stead’s personal notes and correspondence sufficient to suggest the principal lines of his personal attitudes and motivations.

## Stead Studies

Notwithstanding these archival issues, Stead studies have prospered in recent decades, building on an important conference on New Journalism held in New York 7–8 November 1986. The

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this did not address the essential inaccuracy of the claim. Tristram Hunt, ‘Foreword’, in Sydney Robinson, p. ix; Sydney Robinson, p. 270, p. 271.

<sup>49</sup> This consisted of initial e-mail contact and a follow-up exchange with John Stephenson’s daughter and a member of the extended Stead family in Australia.

<sup>50</sup> *NewsStead*, 25 issues, two issues per year (spring and autumn). The series ran from 1992 to 2004.

<sup>51</sup> <<https://www.chu.cam.ac.uk/archives/collections/guide-holdings/#STEAD>> [accessed 3 March 2019].

<sup>52</sup> <<https://janus.lib.cam.ac.uk/db/node.xsp?id=EAD%2FGBR%2F0014%2FSTED>> [accessed 15 March 2019].

<sup>53</sup> J. O. Baylen, ‘Politics and the New Journalism: Lord Esher’s Use of the *Pall Mall Gazette*’, in *Papers for the Millions*, ed. by Wiener, pp. 107–141 (p. 119).

<sup>54</sup> References to Stead’s diary made before papers were deposited at Churchill College in 1982 include: J. O. Baylen, ‘The “New Journalism” in Late Victorian Britain’, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 18 (1972), 367–385 (footnotes 7 and 9, p. 369). References to the diary made after the deposit of papers include: Ray Boston, ‘W. T. Stead and Democracy by Journalism’, in *Papers For The Millions*, ed. by Wiener, pp. 91–106 (footnote 17, p. 105); Sydney Robinson, *Muckraker*, footnotes 110 (p. 260), 258 (p. 264), 276 (p. 264).

'CUNY (City University of New York) Conference on History and Politics' brought together around seventy-five delegates whose deliberations were published in *Papers for the Millions: The New Journalism in Britain, 1850s to 1914*, edited by Joel H. Wiener. The British Library hosted a conference entitled 'Newspaper Revolutionary: W. T. Stead Centenary Conference', 16–17 April 2012, which led to the publication of *W. T. Stead: Newspaper Revolutionary* at the end of the same year, edited by nineteenth-century newspaper specialists including Laurel Brake and James Mussell. The nineteenth-century press was also the subject of the conference 'Communities of Communications II: Newspapers and Periodicals in Britain and Ireland from 1800 to 1900' held in Edinburgh, 10–11 September 2015. Attendees at this gathering are amongst those contributing to the *History of the British and Irish Press* due to be published by Edinburgh University Press in 2019.<sup>55</sup>

However, religion has not featured large amongst the subjects treated in relation to the nineteenth-century newspaper press. Josef L. Altholz's *The Religious Press in Britain, 1760–1900* (1989) represents the best overall survey of the religious newspapers available during the long nineteenth century.<sup>56</sup> More recently, the influence of Nonconformist religion in Stead's work has received some more substantial examination. In 2004, Laurel Brake identified the influence of evangelical rhetoric and pulpit sermonising in Stead's personalising and sensationalist New Journalism.<sup>57</sup> In 2006, Simon Goldsworthy explored Nonconformist influence upon New Journalism in his article, 'English Nonconformity and the Pioneering of the Modern Newspaper Campaign'. Within the last decade, Stewart J. Brown has made two important contributions on religion and Stead's journalism: 'W. T. Stead and the Civic Church, 1886–1895: The Vision Behind "If Christ Came to Chicago!"' (2013) and 'W. T. Stead, the "New Journalism" and the "New Church" in Late Victorian and Edwardian Britain' (2015).<sup>58</sup>

While Goldsworthy's article placed Stead's campaigning journalism within an evangelical Nonconformist context, I have extended this to include a more specifically Congregational focus while giving indications of points of agreement or divergence with other Nonconformist denominations. I have also examined the specific influence which

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<sup>55</sup> I gave a paper at this conference and have contributed a case-study on New Journalism for this volume. An earlier version of material from Chapter 1 of this thesis forms a short part of this contribution.

<sup>56</sup> Josef L. Altholz, *The Religious Press in Britain, 1760–1900* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1989).

<sup>57</sup> Laurel Brake, 'Who is "We"?' The 'Daily Paper' Projects and the Journalism Manifestos of W. T. Stead', in *Marketing the Author: Authorial Personae, Narrative Selves and Self-Fashioning, 1880–1930* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), ed. by Marysa Demoor, pp. 54–72 (p. 58).

<sup>58</sup> Simon J. Goldsworthy, 'English Nonconformity and the Pioneering of the Modern Newspaper Campaign', *Journalism Studies*, 7:3 (2006), 387–402; Stewart J. Brown, 'W. T. Stead, the "New Journalism" and the "New Church" in Late Victorian and Edwardian Britain', in *Religion, Identity and Conflict In Britain: From the Restoration to the Twentieth Century: Essays in Honour of Keith Robbins*, ed. by Stewart J. Brown, Frances Knight, John Morgan-Guy (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 213–232 and 'W. T. Stead and the Civic Church 1886–1895: The Vision Behind "If Christ Came to Chicago!"', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 66:2 (2015), 320–339 <doi:10.1017/S0022046913000638>.

Nonconformity had on the development of New Journalism. Brown's two articles emphasise Stead's later journalism at the *Review of Reviews*, and have included areas of study that, in order to set manageable limits, I have placed outside the period remit of my thesis, in particular where they concern Stead's work in America and during the Edwardian period.

### **Approaches, Methodologies, and Definitions**

My interdisciplinary research methodology has focused on the shifting cultural priorities, socio-political tensions, and changing religious attitudes of the late-nineteenth century. For my thesis, I have had the opportunity to study a wide range of materials to identify and clarify the socio-political parameters within which Stead undertook his religious mission. These materials have included nineteenth-century pamphlets, articles, and lectures, and nineteenth-century denominational Yearbooks, with particular reference to those published by the Congregational Union of England and Wales. The religious newspapers that I have examined have included John Campbell's *British Banner* and *British Standard*, Hugh Price Hughes's *Methodist Times*, the theologically moderate, weekly Unitarian *Inquirer* (1842–), Edward Miall's *Nonconformist*, the Salvation Army's *War Cry*, and the non-denominational Nonconformist weekly, *Christian World* (1857–1961).<sup>59</sup> The latter title represents an invaluable non-sectarian record of views and actions across the range of Nonconformist beliefs.<sup>60</sup>

This thesis investigates Stead's development of a democratising, re-Christianising press that sought to exploit the needs of evolving readerships and which proposed a New Journalism capable of effecting both social change and social cohesion. In exploring Stead's press practice at the *Northern Echo* and the *Pall Mall Gazette*, I have paid particular attention to the leader articles of both publications as best bearing the stamp of Stead's views on a great range of socio-political and religious matters. In examining the *Review of Reviews*, I have focused on Stead's deployment of supplementary publications and on articles in the *Review of Reviews* suggested by the indexes that he introduced to this journal.

The subject of religion in Britain involves studying both the established Church and Nonconformist Protestantism. As Elisabeth Jay has remarked, 'Many works on nineteenth-century religious thought shy away from the Dissenting world as being both peripheral to the intellectual life of the period and too diverse for brief justice to be done'.<sup>61</sup> Since then, research has made advances in rectifying this lack. The five-volume *Religion in Victorian Britain* (1988–1997), published by Manchester University Press, produced a valuable collection of essays and

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<sup>59</sup> For the *Inquirer* and the *Christian World*, see Altholz, pp. 76–77, 191, and pp. 62–63, 186, respectively.

<sup>60</sup> Julia Jones, 'Christian World (1857–1961)', *DNCEJ*, p. 117.

<sup>61</sup> Elisabeth Jay, *Faith and Doubt in Victorian Britain* (Basingstoke: MacMillan Educational, 1986), p. 76.

primary source materials.<sup>62</sup> More recently, Goldsworthy has asserted that ‘Media studies probably do not pay enough attention to theology, although the mass media have only recently succeeded organised religion as the main means of disseminating ideas and information within most societies’.<sup>63</sup> Lyn Pykett has also described the challenges facing the student of the Victorian periodical press, which include its inevitable interdisciplinarity and consequent complexity of assessment.<sup>64</sup> Recent publications have added new perspectives that have greatly added to the study and understanding of nineteenth-century religion. Michael R. Watts’s third volume on the history of Dissent, *The Dissenters: The Crisis and Conscience of Nonconformity* (2015) brought to a conclusion a project that had begun publication in the mid-1980s; Timothy Larsen and Michael Ledger-Lomas have been responsible for the editing of the third volume of *The Oxford History of the Protestant Dissenting Traditions: The Nineteenth Century* (2017); and Rowan Strong has edited the collection of essays that comprise *The Oxford History of Anglicanism: Partisan Anglicanism and its Global Expansion* (2017).<sup>65</sup>

These volumes provide important perspectives on the evolving Nonconformist and Anglican traditions of the period in which Stead sought to develop a revivalist secular press. Of course, access to such scholarship has been greatly increased by the dematerialisation possibilities offered by digitisation. The study of the Victorian press, for example, has been greatly facilitated by the emergence and development of specialist websites, particularly those managed by the British Library (BL), Cengage, News Vault, and the British Newspaper Archive (BNA). The BL website can be consulted by readers to the Library itself but there is no remote usage available. Cengage and News Vault, like the BL facility, can be accessed through institutional memberships. The BNA works in partnership with the BL, but uses a different layout which shows the selected articles in their original position within a whole-page view. The reader can then focus in on the article required. This eliminates some of the potential difficulties caused by consulting an article without having an idea of its context within the specific issue. Further, the Internet Archive represents a significant resource for the study of nineteenth-century

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<sup>62</sup> *Religion in Victorian Britain*, ed. by Gerald Parsons, James Richard Moore, and John Wolffe, 5 vols (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988–1997).

<sup>63</sup> Goldsworthy, p. 392.

<sup>64</sup> Lyn Pykett, ‘Reading the Periodical Press’, in *Investigating Victorian Journalism*, ed. by Laurel Brake, Aled Jones and Lionel Madden (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1990), pp. 3–18 (p. 4).

<sup>65</sup> Michael R. Watts, *The Dissenters*, 3 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985–2015), III: *The Crisis and Conscience of Nonconformity*; *The Oxford History of the Protestant Dissenting Traditions*, ed. by Timothy Larsen and Mark A. Noll, 5 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, (2017–), III: *The Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Timothy Larsen and Michael Ledger-Lomas; *The Oxford History of Anglicanism*, ed. by Rowan Strong, 5 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), III: *Partisan Anglicanism and its Global Expansion*.

materials, is free to access, and, as a library on the internet, combines the lending-institution ethos and the flexibility of the digital world.<sup>66</sup>

In a discussion for the tenth-anniversary edition of the online journal, *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century* (2015), Laurel Brake and James Mussell explored digitisation and research work in the newspaper archive, making points that resonate with my own experiences while researching material for this thesis.<sup>67</sup> Although the success of digitisation has made materials available with an ease that scholars have longed to see realised, Brake and Mussell highlight the challenges of material selection posed to digitisation projects by having to choose from a vast, incomplete print archive, the finite extent of which is unknown, and which is located in various geographically disparate holdings. This difficulty of not knowing what is out there, and the difficulty of tracking down what is, resonates strongly with the challenges of dealing with the Stead Archive. This archive has been described as voluminous, but its true extent is unknown, and, apart from institutional holdings, where it might be located can be given as vaguely as ‘the United States’ or ‘Australia’.<sup>68</sup>

The digitisation of so many nineteenth-century newspapers has been of immense help in my own research while microfilmed and also hard-copy newspaper titles have complemented the exercise. The greatest problem for access to materials has concerned the religious newspapers which have formed such an important part of my research. The presence in London of the Dr Williams’s Library, a leading research centre for the study of Protestant Dissent, which also accommodates the Congregational Library, has proved invaluable.<sup>69</sup> My work has therefore benefited from the best aspects of these two issues. I have been able to use hard-copy and digitised versions of the same press materials, and, where such digitised materials do not exist, I have had access to micro-fiche and paper runs of the titles which I have wished to consult.

One of the problems raised by Brake and Mussell relates to referencing. Mussell speaks of the problem of researcher confidence in citing digital resources because of a perception that such citation lacks scholarly rigour. Mussell also criticises the invisibility of digital resource citation ‘given the work that goes into making those resources by scholars [and] by publishers’ while Brake invokes her experience of editing a book on the now defunct *News of the World*

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<sup>66</sup> The Internet Archive describes itself as ‘a non-profit library of millions of free books, movies, software, music, websites, and more.’ <<https://www.archive.org>>.

<sup>67</sup> Laurel Brake and James Mussell, ‘Digital Nineteenth-Century Serials for the Twenty-First Century: A Conversation’, *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 2015 (21), <[doi.org/10.16995/ntn.761](https://doi.org/10.16995/ntn.761)>.

<sup>68</sup> I understand that the late Professor Baylen has left materials in the USA while members of the extended Stead family in Australia also have items.

<sup>69</sup> <<http://www.dwl.ac.uk>> [accessed 15 March 2019].

(1843–2011) and of referring citations back to authors for URL and access details.<sup>70</sup> The lack of page numbers in the various contributions had, in part, suggested to Brake the use of a digitised rather than a hard-copy newspaper. However, the page numbers can often be established from digitised resources where researchers have looked not just at the article in isolation but also at the context of its positioning on the whole page. Moreover, the doi reference will show neither page number nor date of access and the MHRA guidelines privilege hard-copy referencing over URL/doi citation where possible. While the use of particular digitised resources should be cited, the question remains open as to whether or not it should also be necessary to make a distinction between a hard-copy newspaper page and its digital representation. The two versions of the same page are fundamentally the same in terms of presentation, typography, content, and layout: the difference lies in *how* a reader looks at the page in its two manifestations and not in *what* is being examined.

My belief is that digital platform details for each item are unnecessary and would be akin to insisting that researchers give the name of the specific library or institution from which a book had been borrowed, to include, where consulted on-site, the date and time of consultation. I believe that it should be generally sufficient to acknowledge the use of specific digital platforms and to set out how they have been used. During my research, I have made use of the Internet Archive and newspaper sites mentioned above, of the Wellesley Index of nineteenth-century articles, JStor, the *MLA International Bibliography*, and of the digitised version of the *Oxford Dictionary of Biography*.<sup>71</sup> These digital platforms have been invaluable for providing access to materials that I have sought to consult by title or by author, and for possessing the capacity for searches to be carried out by, for example, newspaper article type (editorials, followers, news reports), key words, dates, and religious affiliations.

Some definitions of the main terms I use are needed. When I refer to Nonconformity, I am writing about Nonconformity in England, and, to a much lesser extent, in Wales. To have included Irish and Scottish Nonconformity to a just, or, indeed, any degree, would not have contributed much to the overall argument of the thesis while at the same time making the work unmanageable. Apart from the general term ‘Nonconformity’, I explore primarily the influence of Congregationalists, and, then, that of Wesleyan Methodists, Baptists, Unitarians, and Quakers. I have confined my research to the daily (morning and evening) and weekly press with consideration given to both religious (those usually with a defined allegiance in their titles) and

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<sup>70</sup> *The News of the World and the British Press, 1843–2011: Journalism for the Rich, Journalism for the Poor*, ed. by Laurel Brake, Chandrika Kaul, and Mark W. Turner (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

<sup>71</sup> JSTOR describes itself as ‘a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary sources’, <<https://www.jstor.org>> [accessed 27 March 2019].

secular newspapers. It is important to emphasise that religious newspapers dealt with secular matters and that secular newspapers dealt with religious issues. Finally, in writing of the Victorian period, I consider the years covered by the official dates of Queen Victoria's reign (1837–1901).

In between the sometimes frustrating lack of a full Stead archive, the new facility of digital keyword searches, and the opportunities offered by a body of scholarship housed in a central research institution for the study of religious dissent, I hope to have been able to break new ground in understanding the influence of Nonconformity on Stead's New Journalistic press practices.

### **Chapter Overviews**

Central to my thesis is the influence of Nonconformity, and, in particular, of Congregationalism, on Stead's New Journalism during the last three decades of the nineteenth century. Protestant Christianity underpinned and encompassed Stead's evolving New Journalism in its moral imperatives, socio-political agitation, and rhetorical tone. He developed the place of Nonconformist plain-speaking in his expression of uncompromising views and was determined, when necessary, to bring before the public subject matter of the gravest and most disconcerting kind.

In Chapter 1, I examine the emergence and development of what became known as 'New Journalism'. I discuss the typographical, stylistic, commercial, and content changes that influenced an increasingly news-led and reader-centred journalism. I revisit the commonly scripted originary narrative that attributes to the cultural critic, poet, and schools' inspector, Matthew Arnold, the coining of the term 'New Journalism'. This account has productively focused critical attention upon a series of binary pairings that have bound and divided the high-journalism of reviews and the daily newspaper press, metropolitan and provincial interests, and established Anglicanism and the Dissenting Churches.<sup>72</sup> My revised reading places the appearance of the phrase and concept within the historical context of cultural anxieties and opportunities concerning newspaper developments from at least the 1850s, and, more particularly, within the context of the dispute between Stead and Edmund Yates, the editor of the *World*, that flared up in June 1884. I further examine more generally the contributions of individual editors and newspaper titles to the development of New Journalism that permit a break away from an overemphasis on the role played by Stead.

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<sup>72</sup> Nicholson, p. 8.

By exploring the religious antagonisms that characterised their respective allegiances to Anglicanism and Nonconformity, I emphasise the occluded role of religious difference between Stead and Arnold in the construction of their cultural and political views. Finally, in the figure of the Reverend John Campbell, probably the most able Congregational newspaper editor of the nineteenth century, I propose a person of sufficient reputation and achievement as a possible and likely influence on Stead's press practice.

Matthew Arnold occupies a prominent place in Chapter 1 and receives mention elsewhere in this thesis. While I argue that the attribution to Arnold of the coining of the term 'New Journalism' needs re-gauging, the persistence of such an attribution testifies to its productive capacity in opening up for exploration the terrain that separated elitist cultural values and Anglican establishment privilege from the development of mass readerships and print materials designed to cater for their perceived interests and needs. 'Arnold' helps to name and represent such values for my analysis, and, as I demonstrate, often for Stead's as well.

In Chapter 2, I examine how the roles of the editor and of the press have been explored through a range of metaphors that include pulpit, platform, press, and phonograph. In examining the development of the phonograph, I show how Stead conscripted the capacity of this invention to record and reproduce the spoken word as a metaphor for an increasingly personalised and speech-imitative modern journalism. The chapter discusses how Stead was influenced by evangelical and Nonconformist thought, and, by recalibrating the date of the appearance of the term Nonconformist Conscience, shows how the concept can be used more productively. I consider the impact of nineteenth-century sensationalism and show that Stead deployed sensationalist content and rhetoric to bring readers' attention to serious socio-political issues that needed resolution. The chapter finally examines Stead's press manifesto articles of 1886 in which he set out plans for the realisation of a new ideal for newspapers.

Chapter 3 moves back chronologically to examine the nine years that Stead spent at the *Northern Echo* in the north-east of England. I discuss the religious and political context of Stead's work in which Gladstonian Liberalism and Protestant Dissent forged a political alliance increasingly energised by the enfranchisement of Nonconformist urban voters. During this period, Stead became an effective exponent of the crusading press through his emphasis on questions that concerned the Nonconformist Conscience (a term the coinage of which I revise in Chapter 2). I place Stead's contribution in its religious and political context of the campaigning for the disestablishment of the Church of England, the moral underpinning of nationwide material social reform, and the interrogation of governmental foreign policy. His campaigning involved appeals to the Nonconformist Conscience on a local level (temperance), region-wide support for a national agitation (repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts), and a regional campaign promoting country-wide demands for change in government foreign policy (the

'Bulgarian Atrocities' of 1876). The specificity of Stead's press achievement lay in his capacity to champion and maintain Christian moral values and evangelical mission in a secular, Liberal, newspaper that developed the capability of influencing the views of the public and the actions of power elites.<sup>73</sup> Stead not only promoted the Nonconformist re-moralising agenda of the second half of the Victorian period but also emphasised, while at the *NE*, the general Nonconformist belief that moral uplift and social improvement were best brought about by individual conscience and personal endeavour.<sup>74</sup> This combination of Nonconformist evangelical Protestantism and Liberal-party allegiance was shared by a wide range of individuals — journalists, members of parliament, municipal councillors, business owners, and influential religious figures — who all derived from it a strong sense of political activism, religious engagement, and social mission.

Chapter 4 continues the examination of the development of Stead's New Journalism, discussing Stead's commitment to the material improvement of the less well-off members of the general population, and showing the importance of his Christian values to his campaigning. I also place Stead's crusading for social justice in the context of other political and ideological claims made by schemes for the improvement of the wider population. I explore how Stead used a powerful combination of religiously informed engagement and New Journalistic practice in three major campaigns at the *Pall Mall Gazette*: the 1883 agitation for improved housing for the poor associated with the publication of Andrew Mearns's sensational pamphlet, *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London*; the celebrated 1885 crusade for the raising of the age of sexual consent from thirteen to sixteen entitled the 'Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon'; and, lastly, the 1887 campaign in support of Mrs Mildred Langworthy's action against her husband for breach of promise to marry and failure to pay alimony. I focus on how Stead trialled and adapted various combinations of religious rhetoric, sensationalism, and reasoned discussion to shape his campaigns to best effect including through his first attempts at homiletic/social-gospel novelistic writing.

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<sup>73</sup> J. O. Baylen has long since identified the two main trends that this innovatory press practice would adopt by the end of the 1880s: the religiously moralising and politically committed New Journalisms of Stead (editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, 1883–1889; assistant editor, 1880–1883) and of T. P. O'Connor (founding editor of the *Star*, 1888) on the one hand, and the commercially oriented publications founded by Alfred Harmsworth (*Daily Mail*, 1896–) and Arthur Pearson (*Daily Express*, 1900–) on the other. See Baylen, 'The 'New Journalism' in Late Victorian Britain', p. 385.

<sup>74</sup> Helmstadter, pp. 81–82. Helmstadter's overall thesis that Nonconformity experienced fifty years of confident belief in individualism before experiencing doubts about the potential of such personal endeavour has been challenged or nuanced by, amongst others, Gerald Parsons and David W. Bebbington. See Gerald Parsons, 'From Dissenters to Free Churchmen: The Transitions of Victorian Nonconformity', in *Religion in Victorian Britain*, ed. by Parsons, Moore, and Wolffe, I: *Traditions*, ed. by Gerald Parsons, pp. 67–116 (pp. 86–109); and D. W. Bebbington, *Victorian Nonconformity*, rev. edn (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011), pp. 43–51. Nevertheless, Helmstadter's article still has much to contribute to an overall understanding of Nonconformity in the nineteenth century.

Chapter 5 explores how Stead left the strenuous demands of daily journalism to launch his new, relatively low-cost, publication, the *Review of Reviews* for which he acted as owner, publisher, editor, and contributor. In this last significant stage of his press career, the democratising practices of New Journalism continued to underpin the provision of elevating material in a review which aimed to bring the best work from a wide range of journals to the attention of the general public. As I demonstrate, Stead sought to promote voluntary associative action, the reunion of Christianity through non-denominational concertation, and the development of a divinely inspired, federating, British imperialism. I show how, in material terms, Stead exploited the possibilities of supplementary publications to promote his concept of a Civic Church (1890–1895), to advance his pro-Boer, pro-peace campaign (1899–1902), and to further the better understanding of the spiritual world (1893–1897).

Social gossellers, Christian Socialists, and illuminated British imperialists had all placed their faith in the non-separation of politics and religion in a mission to build the Kingdom of God on Earth. Stead's interest in and promotion of Spiritualism, which I examine in the concluding part of this chapter, underlined the belief that it was possible to bridge the divide between the corporeal and the immaterial, and, in so doing, bring proof that the essential message of Christianity, the existence of eternal life, was a reality.

Over the five chapters, I show how Stead's Nonconformist beliefs influenced the development of his New Journalism in the furtherance of democratisation, Christian evangelical activism, and belief in the continuity of the temporal and spiritual worlds.

### **A Titanic Loss**

At noon on Wednesday 10 April 1912, the White Star liner, the *RMS Titanic*, set sail from Southampton on its much-heralded maiden voyage to New York. Travelling at the invitation of the American Men and Religion Forward Movement was W. T. Stead. Nine days later, the movement's Christian Conservation Congress met in New York to hear addresses on world problems and their possible remedies: central to the discussions held at the Carnegie Hall was the application to everyday life of New Testament teaching.<sup>75</sup> As I demonstrate, at the heart of Stead's own campaigning, crusading, and cause-promoting press engagement lay a Christian faith shaped by his Nonconformist, Congregational, upbringing, formal education, and lasting church membership.<sup>76</sup> In Stead, commercial, political, and social concerns combined with strong

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<sup>75</sup> Victor Pierce Jones, *Saint or Sensationalist? The Story of W. T. Stead* (East Wittering: Gooday, 1988), p. 78. The American Men and Religion Forward Movement had been established for one year in order to promote 'social and religious betterment'. Eckley, p. 375.

<sup>76</sup> W. T. Stead's father served as the Congregational minister at Howdon in Northumberland. Stead was educated for two years at Silcoates, a school for the sons of Congregational ministers near Wakefield, and

religious commitment in a productive admixture of action, ideas, and passion invested by the Congregationalism of Protestant Old Dissent and the growing power of a modern and innovative press.<sup>77</sup> Five days after having embarked upon a journey that had captured the imagination of the world's press, Stead was to be confronted by events that surely called strongly upon the spiritual resources of his Christian faith.

In the early morning of 15 April 1912, in a shocking reversal of all claims and expectations, the *Titanic* struck an iceberg and sank near Cape Race off the North American coast. Although *The Times* initially published the heartening news from Reuter's that 'No lives were lost', subsequent agency cables became increasingly sombre. It was finally reported that more than 1600 crew and passengers had died in an 'ocean disaster' reminiscent of many sensationalist news stories of late Victorian New Journalism.<sup>78</sup> The name heading the lists in Britain of those who had perished was that of the peace campaigner and promoter of lasting friendship between English-speaking peoples, the much-lamented W. T. Stead. Amongst the stories recounting the events of the final hours, one claimed that as the ship was being abandoned, Stead had asked the ship's orchestra to play the Nonconformist hymns 'Autumn' and the ever poignant 'Nearer My God To Thee' with the express intention of stiffening resolve and offering spiritual comfort to those in peril and distress.<sup>79</sup>

At the well-attended memorial service held for Stead on the evening of 25 April 1912 in Westminster Chapel, Buckingham Gate, *The Times* reported the presence of 'People of all classes [...] representatives of foreign states, distinguished Pro-Consuls, Cabinet Ministers, workers in many fields of social reform, political organizers, representative journalists, and sympathizers of almost every shade of religious and political opinion'.<sup>80</sup> Such a range of social status, nationality, reforming principle, political allegiance, and religious affiliation had brought together a full congregation united in affection and respect for the man and his achievements. Dr John Clifford, a leading London Baptist minister and long-time friend, spoke of Stead's 'enthusiasm, his optimism, his restless and untiring zeal in all causes which appealed to his sympathies, and of his unflinching faith in God', all characteristics that his family, friends, and colleagues would have

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formally confirmed into the church at Wakefield. He became a member of the Congregational Chapel in Wimbledon Village when he moved to London in 1880 to become assistant editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*. Eckley, pp. 8, 10, 31.

<sup>77</sup> In Britain, 'Old Dissent' includes the Presbyterians, the Baptists, and the Congregationalists (also known as the Independents).

<sup>78</sup> 'Titanic Sunk', *The Times*, 16 April 1912, p. 9.

<sup>79</sup> Pierce Jones, p. 81. In Pierce Jones, p. 80, an American cartoon shows 'Uncle Sam' holding in his left hand a list of the famous people who had perished in the *Titanic* disaster: heading the list is Stead.

<sup>80</sup> 'Memorial Service For Mr. Stead', *The Times*, 26 April 1912, p. 10. *The London Encyclopaedia*, ed. by Ben Weinreb and Christopher Hibbert, rev. edn (London: Macmillan, 1995), p. 103.

recognised as shaping the man who had so influenced the press development contentiously qualified as 'new'.<sup>81</sup>

New Journalism ushered in transformative developmental changes that turned the reading of a newspaper into a brighter activity than had previously been the case.<sup>82</sup> The commuter on bus or train wanted reading material which was lighter than that to be found gracing a gentleman's club or his breakfast table. The greater immediacy in emotional impact and rational comprehension aimed to provide a more satisfying and aesthetically pleasing experience. To this end, headlines and crossheads were introduced to signpost and highlight the printed material and to break up the often densely packed columns that filled the pages. A perusal of some newspaper titles from 21 June 1887, for example, shows that a paper might run seven columns over eight pages (*Birmingham Daily Post* (1857–); *Morning Post* (1772–1937)); eight columns over eight pages (the London *Daily News*); and even ten columns over four pages (*Western Daily Mail* (1869–)).<sup>83</sup> The *Pall Mall Gazette* ran two columns over sixteen pages for the greater part of its existence and therefore offered the reader a more spacious page layout. Other innovations included 'display advertising' spread across more than the usual single column, line-drawing illustrations, and a 'bright' style of writing. Leader articles were reduced in length and more news items were carried at the expense of political opinion pieces and long verbatim reports of parliamentary proceedings. Further, the press ownership model of single editor or individual family proprietorship was being replaced by the emergence of large companies capable of generating and maintaining substantial sales of their titles.<sup>84</sup> New Journalism catered for readerships that wanted more than just an orthodox diet of political, legal, and financial news, and which found satisfaction, at least in part, in the sensational news accounts of public and private scandal.<sup>85</sup>

Such scandalous stories had already become familiar to readers of sensationalist fiction from the 1850s and 1860s onwards through the novels of Wilkie Collins, including *Basil* (1852) and *Hide and Seek* (1854).<sup>86</sup> New Journalism also took on the task of investigating major social

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<sup>81</sup> 'Memorial Service For Mr. Stead', p. 10.

<sup>82</sup> Wiener, 'How New Was the New Journalism?', in *Papers For The Millions*, ed. by Wiener, pp. 47–71 (p. 52).

<sup>83</sup> The *Birmingham Daily Post* was a major contributor to the municipal reform movement and a supporter of Joseph Chamberlain. The *Morning Post* maintained a conservative and imperialist tone; the *Western Daily Mail* was established in Cardiff as an English-language newspaper and a strong supporter of Wales, the United Kingdom, and the empire. See Michelle Buchanan, '*Birmingham Daily Post* (1857–)', pp. 55–56, John Richard Wood, '*Morning Post* (1772–1937)', p. 427, and Michael Taunton, '*Western Daily Mail* (1869–)', pp. 670–671, all in the *DNCJ*.

<sup>84</sup> Wiener, 'How New Was the New Journalism?', p. 57.

<sup>85</sup> Wiener, 'How New Was the New Journalism?', p. 54.

<sup>86</sup> The beginning of the development of the sensationalist novel is usually located in the early 1860s. However, Tamara Wagner suggests the 1850s with reference to the publication of Wilkie Collins's novels *Basil* (London: Richard Bentley, 1852) and *Hide and Seek* (London: Richard Bentley, 1854). Tamara

questions such as the lack of decent housing for the poor and criminal municipal mismanagement.<sup>87</sup> The influence of sensationalism upon the press can be traced in part to the development of the Sunday papers of the 1840s. Designed primarily to offer distraction, vicarious entertainment, and a relief from the drudgery of routine existence, the Sabbatarian sensationalist press nonetheless did not neglect to provide political analysis.<sup>88</sup> The New Journalism of the 1880s went on to recruit the sensationalism of news stories in order to amplify the impact of its investigations. This was sensationalism with a serious social purpose, justified by the important issues being addressed by modernising journalists and newspaper owners conscious of the need to continue the positive values of what was then the more orthodox, respectable press. For Stead, the motors of social renewal lay with the twin democratising engines of New Journalism and evangelical activism.

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Wagner, 'Stretching "The Sensational Sixties": Genre and Sensationalism in Domestic Fiction by Victorian Women Writers', *Victorian Review*, 35:1 (2009), 211–228 (p. 215). Further, one of the most sensational works of the period had appeared in 1859 in the shape of Darwin's discussion of evolutionary theory, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* (London: John Murray, 1859).

<sup>87</sup> Wiener, 'How New Was the New Journalism?', pp. 55–56.

<sup>88</sup> Kevin Williams, *Read All About It! A history of the British newspaper* (London: Routledge, 2010), p. 119.

## Chapter 1

### Framing the New Journalism

In May 1887, *Nineteenth Century*, the respected liberal monthly review, published a signed contribution by Matthew Arnold, the retired schools' inspector, poet, cultural critic, and son of Thomas Arnold, the reforming headmaster of Rugby School.<sup>1</sup> Entitled 'Up to Easter', the essay examined the interrelationship between culture, politics, and society in the context of an emerging new press phenomenon, an expanding electorate, and Gladstonian Liberal government plans for Irish Home Rule.<sup>2</sup> The piece included implicit condemnation of the London *Pall Mall Gazette* and of its editor, W. T. Stead, the prominent late-Victorian social campaigner and former conductor of the Darlington *Northern Echo*.<sup>3</sup> In an extract that has become a seminal evaluation of the campaigning populist direction taken by Stead in the 1880s, Arnold wrote:

We have had opportunities of observing a new journalism which a clever and energetic man has lately invented. It has much to recommend it; it is full of ability, novelty, variety, sensation, sympathy, generous instincts; its one great fault is that it is *feather-brained*. It throws out assertions at a venture because it wishes them true; does not correct either them or itself, if they are false; and to get at the state of things as they truly are seems to feel no concern whatever.<sup>4</sup>

While Arnold praised the vitality of this 'new journalism', he censured what he perceived to be the complacent supplanting of truthful exposition by speculative assertion. In this last rebuke, the experienced reader would have recognised one of Arnold's central beliefs, namely, that a dispassionate seeking after the truth was inextricably linked to the divinely-willed cultivation of

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<sup>1</sup> Mark W. Turner, '*Nineteenth Century: A Monthly Review (1877–)*', *DNCJ*, p. 456. Stefan Collini, 'Arnold, Matthew (1822–1888)', *ODNB* <doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/679>.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew Arnold, 'Up to Easter', *Nineteenth Century*, 73 (1887), 629–643 (pp. 636, 639). The Third Reform Bill of 1884 enfranchised qualifying rural workers just as the Second Reform Bill of 1867 had given the vote to eligible urban householders.

<sup>3</sup> Although neither the *PMG* nor Stead were named, the context made both readily identifiable. Christopher Andrew Kent, '*Pall Mall Gazette (1865–1923)*', *DNCJ*, pp. 477–478. *Pall Mall Gazette*, hereafter, *PMG*. The *Northern Echo* was established, with the encouragement of the Quaker Pease family, by John Hyslop Bell in 1870, and supported the Liberal party under William Gladstone. See Anne Humpherys, '*Northern Echo (1870–)*', *DNCJ*, pp. 457–458. *Northern Echo*, hereafter, *NE*.

<sup>4</sup> 'Up to Easter', p. 638.

humanity at its best.<sup>5</sup> As Arnold wrote in *Culture and Anarchy* (1869), the achievement of human perfection could ‘never be reached without seeing things as they really are’, a sentiment which invalidated the often emotive and polemical expression of opinion to be found, for example, in Arnold’s conception of Stead’s ‘new journalism’.<sup>6</sup>

It is also in this extract that the first appearance of the term ‘New Journalism’ has been conventionally located. As Tony Nicholson has written regarding Arnold’s assessment, ‘Over time, this piece has come to stand for a defining moment in the history of journalism – the point when ‘New Journalism’ was both named and denounced’.<sup>7</sup> This period of press transformation of which Nicholson writes marked a decline in the dominance of opinion-shaping daily journalism as it gave way to the new demands of growing and changing readerships. These readers preferred a greater focus on news events and human-interest stories to rigorously argued editorials and the verbatim reporting of parliamentary speeches.<sup>8</sup>

In making these oblique, yet pointed, references to Stead and the *PMG*, Arnold helped launch the debate over the ‘New Journalism’. Arnold’s national status as a literary and social critic, and Stead’s reputation as an influential socio-political reformer, have contributed to making the editor of the *PMG* and his journalism synonymous with the development of what some considered to be a destabilising new trend in newspapers.<sup>9</sup> In support of this, over one hundred and thirty years of commentary have attributed to Arnold the coining of the expression ‘New Journalism’ and to Stead and his clubland evening newspaper the nascent point of the concept’s emergence. However, as I show, in interrogating these observations, evidence suggests that neither claim is accurate even if the debates provoked by their repeated assertions have nonetheless been productively enjoined.<sup>10</sup>

I argue rather that Arnold’s use of the expression ‘new journalism’ was far from unusual, taking its place in a long line of instances where, from the late 1850s, the phrase was routinely

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<sup>5</sup> Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, ed. by Jane Garnett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006 (1869)), p. 35. All further references to *Culture and Anarchy* indicate this edition. *Culture and Anarchy* was first published in London by Smith, Elder and Co., in 1869.

<sup>6</sup> *Culture and Anarchy*, p. 27.

<sup>7</sup> Nicholson, p. 16.

<sup>8</sup> Mark Hampton, *Visions of the Press in Britain, 1850–1950* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), pp. 83–85.

<sup>9</sup> During 1883–1885, Stead undertook a series of campaigns which included the publicising of the horrors of urban housing, revelations of inadequate naval funding, and the condemnation of white slavery and juvenile prostitution. J. O. Baylen, ‘Stead, William Thomas (1849–1912)’, *ODNB* <doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/36258>.

<sup>10</sup> Where possible, I have endeavoured to maintain the difference between ‘new journalism’ and ‘New Journalism’. The former was used by Arnold and is the form employed in examples prior to Arnold’s May 1887 essay, including by Stead himself in his 1886 article, ‘The Future of Journalism’. W. T. Stead, ‘The Future of Journalism’, *Contemporary Review*, 50 (1886), 663–679 (pp. 677, 678). Stead introduced the capitalised form, ‘New Journalism’, in the *PMG*, and has been followed, in turn, by contemporaries and numerous commentators on the press since then. See footnote 89, p. 51.

employed to describe a new press practice or a new publication. The following sections offer a historiographical long-view of the development of the phrase and concept, and, in so doing, create space for greater emphasis on the way that religious differences influenced the debate between Arnold and Stead.<sup>11</sup> This chapter highlights Arnold's views because of the central position that critical accounts of New Journalism have accorded to them. I also give a high priority to Arnold because of the sharp focus that discussion of his writings gives to the religious context of the emergence of the late-Victorian press.

Arnold's scorn for Stead's democratising journalism at a time of late-nineteenth-century political upheaval reignited the flames of the former's cultural antagonisms which had been stirred up over twenty years previously.<sup>12</sup> At the heart of Stead's journalism, and at the core of Arnold's criticism, were powerful polarising religious sensibilities which have become veiled in scholarship by a distorting over-emphasis on the changes in late-Victorian newspapers. In rebalancing this view, I show that Christian denominational allegiances played a significant role in shaping the debate over New Journalism, and, in particular, over Stead's form of such a press innovation.

The importance of religion to Stead's journalistic practices can be traced through the successive religious influences that shaped Nonconformity during the last thirty years of the nineteenth century. These included the spirit of religious revival in the 1870s, the consolidation of the work of religious leaders engaged in social reform in the 1880s, and, during the 1890s, the burgeoning interest in Christian reunion and in the perceived sacred nature of the British Empire. Stead developed a New Journalism for which the engine was the religiously inspired remaking of society that employed print culture for the dissemination of the Christian call for social engagement.

Stead's New Journalism broadcast a religiously principled message which employed new strategies to promote a mission for ethical and spiritual renewal. It is as part of this debate that Arnold's presence in the discussion of New Journalism takes on a highly significant role through his opposition to the cultural, political, and religious influences of Protestant Dissent. This chapter concludes with an examination of the influence of the religious press editor John Campbell whose Congregational denominational publications were a powerful early example of the application of religious ethics to secular issues.

In the next section, I examine New Journalism from the perspective of the main changes that occurred in newspaper appearance, content, and commercial sustainability. I also consider the newspaper titles, editors, and genres, which have been mainly associated with this press

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<sup>11</sup> Collini, 'Matthew Arnold', *ODNB*.

<sup>12</sup> Kevin Williams, p. 120.

transformation showing how emphasis was given to a cleaner typographical appearance and a more engaging journalistic writing style.

### **Towards a Definition of 'New Journalism'**

The expression 'New Journalism' has come to refer in its broadest sense to the accumulation of developments that combined in the late-nineteenth century to produce a recognisably innovative and popularly influential press. Kate Campbell, for example, has written that 'In its inclusive usage, the term 'new journalism' is unexceptionable in referring to the accumulation from the mid-[nineteenth]century of formal, professional, technological, and commercial shifts which established daily newspaper journalism on a recognisably modern basis by the 1890s'.<sup>13</sup> In similar vein, Alan Lee has stated that the term 'new journalism' rapidly became the expression of choice to describe newspaper developments from the 1880s onwards with the caveat that precision in use and identicalness of connotation were not guaranteed.<sup>14</sup> Andrew Hobbs argues that new journalism did not emerge as the result of a linear developmental progression but, rather, as the outcome of a recombination of elements emanating from the radical unstamped press, provincial newspaper practices, and press innovation introduced from the United States.<sup>15</sup> In a discussion of the development of journalism and the public sphere, Graham Law and Matthew Sterenberg have argued that the New Journalistic trends for personalisation, popularisation, and commercialisation emerged around at least the middle of the nineteenth century.<sup>16</sup> Ever since New Journalism became a subject for debate in the late 1880s, commentators have sought to determine its engendering agents and defining characteristics which have principally concerned appearance, content, commercialisation, and readerships.<sup>17</sup>

Newspaper typography and layout underwent significant changes that altered the noticeably dense appearance of the mid-Victorian press and gave increased importance to the values of visual appeal.<sup>18</sup> Blocks of uninterrupted small newsprint became broken up by larger and more informative headlines, crossheads, display advertisements, line-drawings, cartoons,

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<sup>13</sup> Kate Campbell, 'W. E. Gladstone, W. T. Stead, Matthew Arnold and a New Journalism: Cultural Politics in the 1880s', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 36:1 (2003), 20–40 (pp. 20–21).

<sup>14</sup> Lee, p. 117.

<sup>15</sup> Hobbs, pp. 202, 204.

<sup>16</sup> Graham Law and Matthew Sterenberg, 'Old v. New Journalism and the Public Sphere; or, Habermas Encounters Dallas and Stead', *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 16 (2013) <<http://doi.org/10.16995/ntn.657>>.

<sup>17</sup> Wiener, 'How New Was the New Journalism?', p. 50; Kevin Williams, p. 119; Lee, pp. 117, 120.

<sup>18</sup> Wiener, 'How New Was the New Journalism', p. 51. Andrea Korda, *Printing and Painting the News in Victorian London: The Graphic and Social Realism, 1869–1891* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2015), pp. 29, 78.

and half-tone illustrations.<sup>19</sup> These innovations were introduced in the belief that strikingly presented content was more likely to be read and to be read with interest and understanding. In line with this presentational enhancement, a graphic, brighter, and more vivid writing style also invested the content with the aim of attracting and concentrating readerly attention.<sup>20</sup>

A more engaging writing style combined with changes in newspaper content to provide more stimulating reading material than that supplied by the monotonous reporting of political opinion, verbatim parliamentary speeches, and court cases.<sup>21</sup> In their place, newspapers increased the space devoted to shorter news items, human-interest stories, signed articles, interviews, entitled leader articles, sport, gossip, crime, investigative journalism, and the stop press, generally a late news item that promised the freshness of breaking news and created an anticipation of more of interest to come.<sup>22</sup> These elements satisfied, amongst other things, the liking of new readerships for the sensational and the personal and proved highly effective in a range of campaigns for socio-political reform. Such reading preferences reflected the content of the more popular Sunday newspapers and found their place in an expanding press market aimed at a mass reading public created, in part, by the extension in literacy rates consequent upon the passing of the 1870 Education Act.<sup>23</sup>

The press mission to inform also underwent change. As Mark Hampton has suggested, the period 1880–1914 saw a decline in the educational ideal of the press, which, instead, emphasised its role as a representative agency of readers' interests.<sup>24</sup> The drive to instruct became subordinated to the aim to amuse with a corresponding reversal in political influence. The tendency before the 1880s for leading politicians to influence the public through the

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<sup>19</sup> Wiener, 'How New Was the New Journalism?', pp. 51, 52; Kevin Williams, pp. 120, 121; Lee, pp. 120, 129; Harry Schalck, 'Fleet Street in the 1880s: The New Journalism', in *Papers For The Millions*, ed. by Wiener, pp. 73–87 (p. 79); J. W. Robertson Scott, 'The "New Journalism"', *Sell's Dictionary of the World's Press and Advertisers' Reference Book* (London: Henry Sell, 1889), pp. 48–59 (p. 55); Dennis Griffiths, *Fleet Street: Five Hundred Years of the Press* (London: British Library, 2006), p. 117; Glenn R. Wilkinson, *Depictions and Images of War in Edwardian Newspapers, 1899–1914* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 7; Mark O'Brien, 'Journalism in Ireland: the evolution of a discipline', in *Irish journalism before independence: More a disease than a profession*, ed. by Kevin Rafter (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), pp. 9–21 (p. 20). Kimberly Morse Jones, 'Making a name for Whistler: Elizabeth Robins Pennell as a New Art Critic', in *Women in Journalism at the Fin de Siècle: Making a Name for Herself*, ed. by F. Elizabeth Gray (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 129–147 (p. 130).

<sup>20</sup> Wiener, 'How New Was the New Journalism?', pp. 52, 63; Kevin Williams, p. 121; Lee, p. 129.

<sup>21</sup> Wiener, 'How New Was the New Journalism?', p. 51.

<sup>22</sup> Robertson Scott, 'The "New Journalism"', p. 55; Aled Jones, p. 132; Wiener, 'How New Was the New Journalism?', pp. 52–56, 63; Schalck, p. 79; Kevin Williams, pp. 120–121; Lee, pp. 121, 125; Griffiths, *Fleet Street*, p. 117.

<sup>23</sup> See Lee, pp. 29–41, for a discussion of the 1870 Education Act and its effects on literacy rates, and on the distinction to be made between literacy (the numbers that could read) and readership (what people wanted to read, when, and the availability of suitable materials).

<sup>24</sup> Hampton, p. 75.

newspapers became an opportunity for the public to promote their ideas to the politicians.<sup>25</sup> Newspapers did not entirely abandon the educational mission as this continued to be pursued, for example, through readers' letters and leader articles although the shortening of the latter was of concern to some as it encouraged a superficial treatment of important matters.<sup>26</sup>

The provision of eye-catching news was connected to the demand for fast reporting and prompt publication. The emphasis on speed, modern technological advances, and the provisions of the Education Act (1870) helped to shape readers' preferences for paragraph-length reports that concentrated the mind without requiring prolonged in-depth textual analysis.<sup>27</sup> The nationalisation of the private telegraph companies was of particular benefit to the provincial press. Cheap telegraphed news helped newspapers outside London more because they had greater need for a supplementary news source than did the metropolitan press.<sup>28</sup> Reports received by telegraph or telephone were, by their very nature, apt to be shorter than conventional submissions, and lent themselves to being edited for conciseness.<sup>29</sup> However, despite this focus on speed and brevity, it was important to maintain accurate reporting so that the overall reliability of the news, and, also, potentially, the capacity of newspapers to shape public opinion, were not negatively affected. Readers' demands for immediacy and the vibrant presentation of news became significant factors in the growing commercialisation of the press.<sup>30</sup>

Commercial success was predicated on changes in business practices that enabled an innovative press to maintain increasing circulations at the lowest price possible. Lee has argued that New Journalism only became a financial success once it abandoned the pursuit of a predominantly political mission and changed the relationship between newspapers and readerships to one characterised by market pressures.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, commercial success was directly relatable to circulation figures: the *Star* (1888–1960) soon reached 200,000, *Tit-Bits* (1881–1984) and *Answers to Correspondents* (1888–1955) achieved figures in the hundreds of thousands, and the *Daily Mail* (1896–) attained a circulation of nearly one million by 1900.<sup>32</sup> By

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<sup>25</sup> Wilkinson, p. 7.

<sup>26</sup> Schalck, p. 75; Wiener, 'How New Was the New Journalism?', p. 54; Hampton, pp. 82–83; Mussell, *The Nineteenth-Century Press in the Digital Age*, p. 51.

<sup>27</sup> Wiener, 'How New Was the New Journalism?', p. 54; Mussell, *The Nineteenth-Century Press in the Digital Age*, p. 51; Martin Conboy, *The Language of the News* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2007), p. 7.

<sup>28</sup> Andrew Hobbs, *A Fleet Street in Every Town: The Provincial Press in England, 1855–1900* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2018), p. 180.

<sup>29</sup> Lee, p. 121.

<sup>30</sup> Hampton, pp. 76–77, 89, 92.

<sup>31</sup> Lee, pp. 119, 121; Hampton, pp. 75–76.

<sup>32</sup> Wiener, 'How New Was the New Journalism?', p. 56. The title *Answers to Correspondents* was shortened to *Answers* in 1889. Wilkinson, p. 8, gives the circulation of the *Daily Mail* in the Edwardian period as 750,000, reaching one million by 1910.

contrast, under Stead, the *NE* reached a circulation of 13,000 and the *PMG*, excluding the figures for its major campaigns, reached 12,000 at most.<sup>33</sup>

All of these changes owed much to the individual editors and newspaper titles in which they appeared. Some observers seek to identify the precursory editor and newspaper that generated these transformations.<sup>34</sup> New Journalism is said, for example, to have emerged from the popular radical press of the 1830s, the Sunday sensationalist newspapers of the 1840s, from the *Daily Telegraph* (1855–) and its coterie of writers that included George Sala and other ‘young lions’, or from the *PMG* (1865–1923) under its founding editor Frederick Greenwood.<sup>35</sup> Some cite the society journals of the 1870s (Edmund Yates’s *World* (1874–1922) and Henry Labouchère’s *Truth* (1877–1957), and, from the 1880s, George Newnes’s popular one-penny weekly news digest, *Tit-Bits* (1881–1984), and T. P. O’Connor’s politically populist *Star* (1888–1960). Other commentators look beyond the 1880s to the 1890s, where we are directed towards the Harmsworth brothers’ *Daily Mail* (1896–), with its promotion of a jingoistic imperialism during the Second Boer War (1899–1902), and Arthur Pearson’s *Daily Express* (1900–).<sup>36</sup> Yet more lines of enquiry take us across the Atlantic to the rise of the American newspapers with their easily recognisable New Journalistic priorities of speculative reporting, typographical innovations, display advertising, interviews, investigative journalism, and commercialism.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Humpherys, ‘*Northern Echo*’, *DNCl*, pp. 457–458, and Kent, ‘*Pall Mall Gazette*’, *DNCl*, pp. 477–478. Ray Boston, ‘W. T. Stead and Democracy by Journalism’, pp. 91–106, (p. 94) also gives 13,000 for the circulation of the *NE*. Brake, ‘The Old Journalism and the New: Forms of Cultural Production in the 1880s’, in *Papers for the Millions*, ed. by Wiener, pp. 1–24 (p. 13), differs from Kent by suggesting that the ‘normal figure’ for the *PMG* was 20,000–30,000.

<sup>34</sup> For short accounts of the editors and newspapers mentioned in this paragraph, see the relevant entries in the *DNCl*: Nicholas Birns, ‘*Daily Telegraph* (1855–)’, pp. 158–159; John Stokes, ‘*World* (1874–1922)’, p.690; Mark W. Turner, ‘*Truth* (1877–1957)’, p. 641; Zsuzsanna Varga, ‘*Tit-Bits* (1881–1984)’, p.630; John Richard Wood, ‘*Star* (1888–1960)’, p. 597; Kery Chez, ‘*Daily Mail* (1896– )’, pp. 157–158. For the *Daily Express*, see, also in the *DNCl*, (Marie) Alexis Easley, ‘Pearson, Cyril Arthur (1866–1921)’, pp. 484–485, and, E. Foley O’Connor, ‘*Pearson’s Magazine* (1896–1939)’, p. 485.

<sup>35</sup> Wiener, ‘How New Was the New Journalism?’, pp. 59–60, 62–64. For an account of F. Greenwood’s career at the *PMG*, see B. I. Diamond, ‘A Precursor of the New Journalism: Frederick Greenwood of the *Pall Mall Gazette*’, in *Papers For The Millions*, ed. by Wiener, pp. 25–45. The ‘young lions’ were a group of writers that wrote for the *Daily Telegraph* and amongst whom figured George Augustus Sala. Arnold criticised this newspaper as representative of middle-class philistinism. P. D. Edwards, *Dickens’s ‘Young Men’: George Augustus Sala, Edmund Yates and the World of Victorian Journalism* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1997), pp. 130–131; *Culture and Anarchy*, p. 46.

<sup>36</sup> For a short account of the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Express*, see Kevin Williams, pp. 125–132. Wiener, ‘How New Was the New Journalism?’, pp. 48–54, and pp. 59–65, provides many examples of editors and their publications in a very useful discussion of the leading exponents of the New Journalism and its precursors. See, also, Lee, pp. 120–121.

<sup>37</sup> For a leading account of the influence of the American press on British newspapers, see Joel H. Wiener, *The Americanization of the British Press, 1830s–1914: Speed in the Age of Transatlantic Journalism* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). Wiener ‘How New Was the New Journalism?’, pp. 51, 52, 55, 59; Brake, ‘Old and New Journalism’, p. 16; Ray Boston, ‘W. T. Stead and Democracy by Journalism’, p. 103.

However, this search for a nominal New Journalistic precursor, prime editorial progenitor, or exceptional press profile is disrupted by claims that even those who used the expression ‘New Journalism’ did not really understand its connotations or failed to see that the New Journalism was nothing more than the continuation of what had gone on before.<sup>38</sup> While Arnold limited his public response to what he had written in *Nineteenth Century*, in the twentieth century, the novelist, playwright, and travelogue writer, J. A. Cuddon, in his *Dictionary of Literary Terms*, seemed unaware of New Journalism’s existence in the nineteenth century and promoted instead Tom Wolfe’s 1973 anthology of American writing, *The New Journalism*.<sup>39</sup> Joel Wiener has asserted that the New Journalism was, in fact, less innovative than many observers thought, and Kevin Williams has similarly declared that there was little that was new in the New Journalism.<sup>40</sup>

These shifting timescales and frames of reference have made the pursuit of a suitably comprehensive definition problematic. Yet, one editor and one newspaper title have nevertheless stood out for particular attention: W. T. Stead and his editorship of the *Pall Mall Gazette* (1883–1889). The position of Stead and the *PMG* as the originators of New Journalism has been cemented by Arnold’s rebuke to Stead in the late 1880s for having produced a ‘feather-brained’ publication, thereby signalling the decline of review high journalism and its influence on the press, and the rise of populist newspapers, since when scholarship has continued to repeat the claims.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> [J. W. Robertson Scott?], ‘The Antiquity of the “New Journalism.”’, *PMG*, 26 August 1887, p. 12; Kevin Williams, p. 120.

<sup>39</sup> *A Dictionary of Literary Terms*, ed. by J. A. Cuddon (London: Penguin, 1975). This omission remains in the expanded 4<sup>th</sup> edition of this volume, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, ed. by M. R. A. Habib, 4<sup>th</sup> edn (London: Penguin, 2014).

<sup>40</sup> Wiener, ‘How New Was the New Journalism?’, p. 59; Kevin Williams, p. 120.

<sup>41</sup> On this point, see, for example, the following representative references, drawn from across the decades, with a greater frequency of selection with regard to the years 2000– onwards. Full references are given in each case: J. W. Robertson Scott, ‘The “New Journalism”’, in *Sell’s Dictionary of the World’s Press and Advertisers’ Reference Book*, ed. by Henry Sell (London: Sell’s Advertising Agency, 1889), pp. 48–59 (p. 50); Frederic Whyte, *The Life of W. T. Stead*, 2 vols (London: Jonathan Cape, 1925), I, 237; Stanley Morison, *The English Newspapers: Some Account of the Physical Development of Journals Printed in London between 1622 & the Present Day* (Cambridge University Press, 1932), p. 279; *The History of The Times*, 4 vols (London: The Office of *The Times*, 1935–1952), III: *The Twentieth Century Test, 1884–1912*, (1947), p. 90; Harold Herd, *The March of Journalism: The Story of the British Press from 1622 to the Present Day* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1952), p. 224; *Matthew Arnold: Essays, Letters and Reviews*, ed. by Fraser Neiman (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960), p. 347; Raymond L. Schultz, *Crusader in Babylon: W. T. Stead and the Pall Mall Gazette* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1972), pp. 29, 214; Laurel Brake, ‘The Old Journalism and the New: Forms of Cultural Production in the 1880s’, in *Papers For The Millions*, ed. by Joel H. Wiener, pp. 1–24 (p. 1); Gary Scott Smith, ‘When Stead Came to Chicago: The “Social Gospel Novel” and the Chicago Civic Federation’, *American Presbyterians*, 68:3 (1990), pp. 193–205 (p. 193); Kate Campbell, ‘Matthew Arnold and Publicity: A Modern Critic as Journalist’, in *Journalism, Literature and Modernity: From Hazlitt to Modernism*, ed. by Kate Campbell (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), Fn 18, p. 118; Matthew Rubery, ‘Journalism’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian Culture*, ed. by Francis O’Gorman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 177–194 (p. 191); Stephen Cushion, *Television Journalism: Journalism Studies Key Texts* (London: SAGE, 2012), pp.

While Arnold's description has served to highlight the censure of New Journalism by intellectuals and more orthodox journalists,<sup>42</sup> the conflation of Arnold's criticism with the search for an initial point of emergence of the phenomenon has occluded more nuanced accounts of Stead's journalistic practices and of Arnold's assessment of newspapers. I argue that while Stead strongly influenced the evolving New Journalism, his overall vision had more to do with harnessing innovative press practices to a crusading spirit for the re-Christianisation of society. As Kevin Williams has noted, Stead was motivated by strong religious beliefs which found expression in a campaigning journalism that sought to stir up and then direct public opinion. The intention was to use extra-parliamentary agitation to influence legislation for social reform<sup>43</sup> and to create momentum for generalised re-moralisation and spiritual improvement.

In discussing how, towards the end of the nineteenth century, the concept of New Journalism came to be constructed, the prominence of Arnold's highly focused view of May 1887 has served as a productive site for debate. While describing the term 'New Journalism' as 'a relatively baggy catch-all' expression, Lee Anne Bache has nonetheless noted its usefulness as a convenient way in which to refer to the changes introduced.<sup>44</sup> By the end of the 1880s, Stead's *PMG* and O'Connor's *Star* represented the principal exponents of a serious contribution to political and social debate that utilised New Journalistic practices. Further, Newnes's *Tit-Bits* and Harmsworth's *Answers*, also from the 1880s, similarly emphasised a respectable New Journalism and a mission to instruct characterised by a focus on interesting and concise reading material.

In the next section, I propose a recalibrated view of the historiography of the phrase 'New Journalism' looking first at the emergence of the term and concept in the decades preceding the 1880s. Such a re-gauging will allow greater emphasis to be laid on the place of religious difference in Arnold's critique of Stead's New Journalism.

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23–24. The following essays, in *W. T. Stead: Newspaper Revolutionary*, ed. by Laurel Brake and others (London: British Library, 2012): Tony Nicholson, 'The Provincial Stead', pp. 7–21 (p. 8), Laurel Brake, 'Stead Alone: Journalist, Proprietor and Publisher, 1890–1903', pp. 77–97 (p. 80), John Nerone and Kevin Barnhurst, 'Stead in America', pp. 98–114 (p. 98), Simon J. Potter, 'W. T. Stead, Imperial Federation, and the South African War', pp. 115–132 (pp. 115–116); Andrea Korda, *Printing and Painting the News in Victorian London: The Graphic and Social Realism, 1869–1891* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2015), p. 42, Fn 47, p. 78; Will Tattersdill, *Science, Fiction, and the Fin-de-Siècle Periodical Press* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), p. 6; Nelson O'Ceallaigh Ritschel, *Bernard Shaw, W. T. Stead, and the New Journalism: Whitechapel, Parnell, Titanic, and the Great War* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), p. 10.

<sup>42</sup> Kevin Williams, p. 120.

<sup>43</sup> Kevin Williams, p. 120.

<sup>44</sup> Lee Anne Bache, 'Making More than a Name: Eliza Lynn Linton and the Commodification of the Woman Journalist at the *Fin de Siècle*', in *Women in Journalism at the Fin de Siècle: Making a Name for Herself*, ed. by F. Elizabeth Gray (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 21–36 (p. 23).

## Refocusing the Historiography

The accepted narrative of the emergence of the term and concept of 'New Journalism', although resilient and productive, requires refocusing after many decades of reiteration. The Arnold-inspired account that Stead invented New Journalism and its associated practices with the Stead-encouraged story that the term and concept were invented by Arnold are highly compressed versions of a much richer narrative that includes debate over journalistic discourse and contested cultural terrain as well as related accounts of internecine editorial rivalry.

By the time that Arnold wrote 'Up to Easter', 'new journalism' as phrase and concept had been in circulation since the late 1850s and early 1860s and described many of the problematic elements that would be highlighted once again in the debates of the 1880s. As was later to be the case, the term initially meant something to be censured rather than lauded. Writing in 1851, the year of Victorian stock-taking that included the civil, religious, and educational censuses, and the six-month long Great Exhibition in Hyde Park, William Johnston, the barrister and political writer, provided a useful perspective from which to examine the emergence and development of this expression and its connotations.<sup>45</sup> His *England As It Is, Political, Social, and Industrial, in the middle of the Nineteenth Century* (1851) received polarised reviews on publication being well-considered by Tory commentators but excoriated by radical, reforming opinion.<sup>46</sup> Although Johnston did not explicitly use the term 'new journalism', his observations, nonetheless, highlight press characteristics from the 1830s, the 1840s, and the beginning of the 1850s which are recognisable to present-day critics as New Journalistic in their form and intent.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> 'Reviews', *Bell's Weekly Messenger*, 11 January 1851, p. 6. David Cannadine, *Victorious Century: The United Kingdom, 1800–1906* (London: Allen Lane, 2017), pp. 248–250, 277. The religious and educational censuses were new departures and not repeated.

<sup>46</sup> The *Examiner* and *Reynold's Newspaper* considered Johnston's work to be that of a 'discontented man' and 'utterly worthless'. 'The Literary Examiner', *Examiner*, 22 February 1851, pp. 116–117; 'Reviews of Books', *Reynold's Newspaper*, 23 February 1851, p. 2. The *Morning Post* asserted that Johnston's writing abounded 'in evidence of careful research and deep thought'; *Bell's Weekly Messenger* declared that Johnston was 'far above the average of political writers'. 'England As It Is', *Morning Post*, 8 January 1851, p. 5; 'Reviews', *Bell's Weekly Messenger: The Country Gentleman and Landowner's Journal*, 11 January 1851, p.6. See, in *DNCE*, Leora Bersohn, 'Examiner, (1808–1881)', p. 211; Michael Shirley, 'Reynold's Newspaper, (1851–1967)', pp. 540–541; John Richard Wood, 'Morning Post, (1772–1937)', p. 427; Cheryl Law, 'Bell's Weekly Messenger: The Country Gentleman and Landowner's Journal, (1796–1896)', p. 47.

<sup>47</sup> William Johnston, *England As It Is, Political, Social, and Industrial, in the middle of the Nineteenth Century*, 2 vols (London: John Murray, 1851), I, 219–241. Lee, p. 120, has noted the relevance of Johnston's comments, observing that the journalism of the mid-century was not considered capable of conferring social status, and that it conveyed 'a morbidity, a forced humour, a maudlin sentimentality, and a penchant for creating its own news in the press of the day'. I argue that Johnston's observations focus on the characteristics of newspapers that would become termed New Journalistic and that he has noted the rise and fall in the changing nature of the press.

Johnston's survey depicted the journalism of the 1830s as emotive, instinctual, 'trenchant and slashing' in its criticisms, and 'bold' and 'bitter' in its attacks upon literary and political opponents.<sup>48</sup> He found further evidence for his comments in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* where he noted that 'a grave and earnest writer' had highlighted in 1834 the presence of increasingly licentious reading materials in 'newspapers, magazines, reviews, novels' and 'superficial' travelogues.<sup>49</sup> This material included 'strong and vivid pictures, addressed to the passions and the imagination' as well as 'incitements to sensual indulgence' (p. 220). Here, Johnston highlighted a press that was prurient, highly suggestive, and capable of provoking in readers somatic responses and flights of fancy rather than measured reflection. Johnston's baseline period of the 1830s is significant for its having been shaped by the continuing aftershocks of revolution in France, the end of the Napoleonic wars, and the socio-political unrest that surrounded the rise and decline of Chartism.<sup>50</sup> The effects of these socio-political currents helped shape a section of the press that, in its more popular representations, became a manifestation of destabilising cultural influence and, more generally, symptomatic of cultural crises at times of national self-questioning.

Johnston did not believe that the popular reading material of 1850 was compromised by these earlier excesses, but he did find other aspects to criticise in the mid-century state of the press, notably a pandering to public curiosity and a will to provoke emotional responses.<sup>51</sup> Although he considered that public invasiveness could in part be laudable and rational, he also believed that it could be harmful, even absurd, in the way that it encouraged all kinds of matter to be brought into the public arena. Further, Johnston lamented the artificial stirring up of feeling that abandoned authenticity of emotional response for the aim of playing to 'a gallery audience'.<sup>52</sup> In such an assessment, the frenetic, popularising element of the press at the beginning of the 1850s seemed to have emerged from a period of raw emotionalism that it now knew how to tame sufficiently to permit the provocation to order of particular feelings. Johnston hoped that these aspects of mid-nineteenth century journalism would give way to 'sound sense' in order that vigorous, masculine newspapers might be instituted to bring in 'more healthful mental food'. This call for a less emotive, more masculine press and for healthy mental nourishment would be periodically repeated at times of socio-political unrest reflecting the important correlation of such upheavals with changing cultural expression.

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<sup>48</sup> Johnston, I, p. 219.

<sup>49</sup> Johnston, I, p. 220. The article to which Johnston refers, 'The Influence of the Press', was published in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 36 (1834), 373–391. As was then customary, the article was unsigned.

<sup>50</sup> Cannadine, p. 245.

<sup>51</sup> Johnston, p. 221.

<sup>52</sup> Johnston, p. 224.

By the end of the 1850s, the phrase ‘new journalism’ described, naturally enough, both new newspaper titles and press innovations and had begun to be associated with practices that became contested core aspects of late-nineteenth-century New Journalism. These included speculative commentary, sensationalism, emphasis upon the personal, the privileging of emotive writing over analytical discourse, and a style of writing invested in the rhetoric of speech. These early instances of the term’s use carried criticism of insulting attacks upon public figures, scorn for conjecture, and disdain for articles written to persuade through clamour rather than rational argumentation. The *Galway Vindicator and Connaught Advertiser* (1841–1899) for example, criticised in 1859 the advent of badly written, one-cause newspapers, which ‘substitute declamation for logic, and sound and fury for eloquence’.<sup>53</sup> The language of the demagogue and the stump-orator provoked anxiety for its capacity to foment agitation amongst groups seeking reform through extra-parliamentary means. In 1861, the *Athlone Sentinel* (1834–1861), through the syndicated column, ‘Outlines of the Week’, severely rebuked, firstly, *The Times* (1785–), for publishing demeaning personal gossip about Richard Cobden, the respected Liberal radical, and, secondly, the *Morning Star*, which, in an act of revenge, had made John Delane, the editor of *The Times*, the subject of similarly disobliging personal comments. The conclusion to be drawn was that ‘such things are new in journalism, and we regret their introduction’.<sup>54</sup> Elsewhere, with amused disbelief, the *Dublin Daily Express* (1855–1917) reported that the soon to be launched *London Correspondent* was to be ‘conducted on an entirely novel principle’, that of being ‘written in the first person — in a terse, vigorous, and hearty style’.<sup>55</sup> This advertised innovation was a direct response to the debates around anonymous as opposed to signed review articles where the monolithic editorial ‘We’ had customarily been used to create a sense of oracular public authority.<sup>56</sup> This projected use of ‘I’ by the *London Correspondent* represented, therefore, the development of a more intimate, more personalised journalism that went further than signed review articles, which, by continuing to carry the corporate ‘We’, still implied some sense of overall authority even if an individual name was assigned to the piece.

In the 1870s, elements of the future New Journalism continued to emerge outside London. The democratising effect of developments in the provincial press witnessed a rapid growth in the ‘country papers’ with the *Daily Post* (1855–), a strong advocate for radicalism in

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<sup>53</sup> ‘The Literature of a Newspaper’, *Galway Vindicator and Connaught Advertiser*, 21 September 1859, p. 2.

<sup>54</sup> ‘Outlines of the Week’, *Athlone Sentinel*, 20 February 1861, p. 2.

<sup>55</sup> ‘London Correspondence’, (*Dublin Daily Express*, 19 February 1862, p. 2.

<sup>56</sup> For discussion of the merits and demerits of anonymous journalism, see, for example, J. B. Kinnear, ‘Anonymous Journalism’, *Contemporary Review*, 5 (1867), 324–339; ‘Editor’ (*sic*) [John Morley], ‘Anonymous Journalism’, *Fortnightly Review*, 2:9 (1867), 287–292; Tighe Hopkins, ‘Anonymity?’, *New Review*, 1:6 (1889), 513–531 and 2:10 (1890), 265–276.

an otherwise Tory dominated Liverpool, confidently declaring that they now rivalled the leading examples of the London press.<sup>57</sup> By then, the *Daily Post* noted that the provincial newspapers were profitably exploiting the availability of telegraphed news which through its 'compact and easily comprehended forms' of presentation proved particularly suitable for the reader with limited time to spare and little inclination to navigate journalistic wordiness. Significantly, these markers of the positive qualities of the non-metropolitan newspapers became the contested characteristics of the New Journalism in London suggesting, as the *Daily Post* asserted, that the capital's press feared a diminution in their influence and prestige.

Sensationalism and the personal found a central place in New Journalism and it was Stead's belief that when put to work as agents of a reforming press they could be used to confront socio-political wrongs and the oppression of vested interests.<sup>58</sup> He further believed that a more personal journalism would be able to gauge increasingly accurately public opinion which it could then promote or attempt to direct.<sup>59</sup> While Arnold remained hostile to the perils of emotive language, T. P. O'Connor, the editor of the *Star*, and Evelyn March Phillipps, the critic, understood its potential although they also warned against its overuse. O'Connor promoted a personal journalism, but he deplored any excesses, such as the descent of personal reporting into slander, scandal, and personalised attacks. March Phillipps, in a further assessment of press forays into private lives, was strongly opposed to the 'cruel and vile' sensational accounts of divorce cases believing that they should be roundly condemned by all involved in the New Journalism.<sup>60</sup>

Even before Arnold's 1887 criticisms of Stead and the New Journalism were published, independent criticism of the *PMG* as a significant carrier of disturbing innovation had already been made. In May 1880, after the Liberal party's general election victory, the paper changed political allegiance from high-Liberalism, when run by Frederick Greenwood, its founding editor, to the more progressive Liberalism of William Gladstone. By the end of the month, Greenwood had left the *PMG* taking with him other disaffected staff members to launch the *St. James's Gazette* (1880–1905).<sup>61</sup> As the reader learnt in the latter paper's 'Introduction', the known reliability of the old *PMG* was now to be found in the new *St. James's*, but, through sleight of epithetical attribution, news vendors called the *PMG* 'the new paper' with all the distaste that

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<sup>57</sup> 'The Times on the High Horse', *Supplement to the (Liverpool) Daily Post*, 25 April 1870, p. 1. Andrew John Hobbs, 'Daily Post (1855–)', *DNCJ*, pp. 368–369.

<sup>58</sup> W. T. Stead, 'Government by Journalism', *Contemporary Review*, 49 (1886), 653–674 (pp. 669, 670–671).

<sup>59</sup> 'The Future of Journalism', pp. 664, 665.

<sup>60</sup> T. P. O'Connor, 'The New Journalism', *New Review*, 1:5 (1889), 423–434 (p. 430); Evelyn March Phillipps, 'The New Journalism', *New Review*, 13:75 (1895), 182–189 (p. 185).

<sup>61</sup> For the *St. James's Gazette*, see Zsuzsanna Varga, 'St. James's Gazette, (1880–1905)', *DNCJ*, p. 551.

innovation suggested.<sup>62</sup> The *St. James's Gazette* was to maintain a keen eye on the changes made at the *PMG* while, during his tenure, Stead made it part of his daily routine to read Greenwood's publication each day.<sup>63</sup>

These criticisms made of the *PMG* by a representative of the journalistic old guard were further exacerbated when an acrimonious dispute broke out in 1884 between Stead and Edmund Yates, the editor of the weekly *World* and leading exponent of New Journalism in its guise of 'society journalism'. At the heart of this clash was a front-page *PMG* article entitled 'A Plea for Tittle-Tattle', in which the newspaper gleefully reported that Yates had been found guilty of libel.<sup>64</sup> As Stead declared, 'The charm of society journalism lies in the supposed accuracy of the gossip which it retails' while inaccurate, defamatory newspaper content was to be censured. Three months later, Yates published a retaliatory leader in the *World* entitled 'Political Tipstering' contemptuously qualifying Stead's newspaper practice in the *PMG* as the 'new journalism' and turning his assailant's rallying cry for press truthfulness into an attack on Stead himself.<sup>65</sup> While proclaiming that 'Such are the tactics, such the spirited policy, of the new journalism', Yates asserted that Stead's treatment of the truth was itself deficiently based upon nothing more than unrefuted insinuation and personal dislikes.

Reading Yates's article alongside some of Arnold's more famous 1887 observations suggests that Arnold was influenced by the form and content of Yates's earlier comments. For Yates's acknowledgement that the *PMG* possessed 'ingenuity', charm, versatility, impulsiveness, spiritedness, volubility, and the allure of the new, was echoed in Arnold's recognition that Stead's paper demonstrated 'ability', 'sympathy', 'variety', 'generous instincts' and 'novelty'. Further, Yates's characterisation of Stead as an 'inspired idiot of the press' evolved into Arnold's qualification of Stead's journalism as 'feather-brained' designed to satisfy, he emphasised, an equally 'feather-brained' new electorate. The message for readers was clear: 'new journalism', as exemplified by Stead and the *PMG*, was only interested in publishing unsubstantiated observations in a new and loud manner with the sole aim of making a profit.

As I have shown, the debate over New Journalism that erupted in May 1887 was far from being the first such examination of cultural anxieties provoked by press innovation and resistance from more entrenched, traditional practices. Educational, electoral, and fiscal

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<sup>62</sup> *St. James's Gazette*, May 1880, pp. i–ii. Brake, in 'The Old Journalism and the New', p. 2, argues that 'New' was 'a pejorative term for Arnold and much of his audience'.

<sup>63</sup> Robertson Scott, *The Life and Death of a Newspaper*, p. 118.

<sup>64</sup> 'A Plea for Tittle-Tattle', *PMG*, 3 April 1884, p. 1. The libel was held to be against Hugh Cecil Lowther, 5<sup>th</sup> Earl of Lonsdale: 'What the World Says', *World*, 17 January 1883, p. 10. Yates was sentenced 2 April 1884, and imprisoned for four months in 1885 after an unsuccessful appeal.

<sup>65</sup> 'Political Tipstering', *World*, 18 June 1884, p. 5. In their article, 'Old v. New Journalism and the Public Sphere', Law and Sterenberg have also located in 'Political Tipstering' the expression 'new journalism' which they qualify as an ironic reference by the *World*.

changes had also fed into newspaper growth, changes in press content and newspaper format, and journalism's influence for social reform. Stead realised that the power of newspapers to harness affective engagement was crucial if the attention of readers was to be focused on causes of importance. Arnold, on the other hand, saw the advent of destabilising forces in the increasing democratisation of society and the growing influence of a more popular daily press. In the wake of the Second (1867) and Third (1884) Reform Acts, New Journalism represented a threat to those who feared the wide-spread distribution of more populist journalism with its capacity to influence a mass-reading public that now had power to invest at the ballot box.<sup>66</sup>

Although Stead and Arnold disagreed over the best way in which to present ideas to the public for political and social reform, they nonetheless shared the same profound desire to promote moral and spiritual improvement throughout society. The exponents of New Journalism, therefore, had to decide whether to concentrate on promoting a press dominated by commercial profit, 'peep-show' sensationalism, and a tawdry personalised agenda, or to choose something more uplifting.<sup>67</sup> This latter possibility could be realised in the development of a responsible campaigning journalism designed to promote a greater sense of personal involvement and collective well-being.<sup>68</sup> This latter representation offers a productive definition of part of Stead's journalistic mission both at the *NE* (1871–1880) and at the *PMG* (1880–1889).

The elite high-journalism of the quarterly reviews was espoused as much by Conservative- and Liberal-party supporters as by intellectuals, radical political thinkers, and commentators on the arts. The influence of such writing on newspapers was to be seen, for example, in the work of Arnold who contributed both to the quarterly reviews and to the *PMG* when under the editorship of Greenwood (1865–1880) and Morley (1880–1883). As I have contended, Arnold was exercised by the growing influence of a more popular press which, with the electoral extensions created by the successive Reform Acts, seemingly represented a threat to national coherence and identity. Gladstonian Liberal party support was strengthened by these increases in voter numbers and, in particular, by the adherence of Nonconformist voters who found in Gladstonian Liberalism a more acceptable set of political values than that espoused by the Conservative party.

As a concerned inspector of Nonconformist schools, Arnold perceived the potential dangers of increased electorates combining with the low educational standards he believed prevailed amongst the voters that constituted them. Consequently, in his view, inadequate educational provision for members of the newly enfranchised lower-middle and higher-working classes created an electorate susceptible to demagoguery and popular newspaper agitation. For

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<sup>66</sup> Aled Jones, p. 132.

<sup>67</sup> 'Government by Journalism', p. 664.

<sup>68</sup> Baylen, 'The 'New Journalism' in Late Victorian Britain', p. 385.

Arnold, poorly educated new voters supporting Gladstonian Liberalism were predominantly to be found amongst the Nonconformists. This was a perception to which he turned in the 1860s, and, again, in the 1870s and 1880s.<sup>69</sup> Denominational schism placed Arnold and Stead in opposing constituencies formed by religious, educational, and Liberal-party antagonisms. In the next section, I discuss how religion and the pervasive oppositional influences of the Church of England and Protestant Nonconformity structured the socio-political context in which Stead and Arnold fought out their differences. The struggle hardly ever pitted one against the other in a direct confrontation, but, instead, their ideas were debated in print and represented competing currents of cultural influence during the period.

### **Religious Antagonisms, Cultural Conflict, and Educational Inadequacy**

In contributions to the wider debates covering the religious, political, and social tensions from the 1860s through to the 1890s, Arnold and Stead represented largely opposing views. Arnold had already begun publishing his social commentaries in the 1860s when Stead was working as an apprenticed clerk in Newcastle, and, by 1869, with the publication of *Culture and Anarchy*, he had produced his most forthright condemnation of the perceived detrimental effect of Nonconformists on culture, educational provision, and Liberalism. Becoming editor of the *Northern Echo* in 1871, Stead was already primed to defend Dissenting interests and to campaign for civil and religious equality for Nonconformists. Although Arnold died suddenly in 1888, newspaper comment on New Journalism was frequent and allusions to Arnold's views still surfaced in observations made by Stead in the 1890s.<sup>70</sup>

The relationship between Arnold and Stead was marked by political and geographical antagonisms that pitted a conservative-minded metropolitan Liberal against a provincial, progressive Gladstonian. Animosity was further evident in their religious and cultural differences. Arnold's evocations of 'sweetness and light' informed by a Roman-Catholic inspired

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<sup>69</sup> For Stead's successive religious motivations, see this chapter, p. 32.

<sup>70</sup> There are ghostly coincidences that bring the two men together in a temporal asymmetry of antagonism. Both Arnold and Stead won prizes for writings on Oliver Cromwell. In 1843, aged twenty-two, Arnold won the Newdigate Prize for Poetry at Oxford University for a poem on Cromwell while, aged eighteen, Stead won first prize in an essay competition organised by the *Boy's Own Magazine*. Stead's entry, 'A Biography of Oliver Cromwell', was sent in from his Newcastle workplace, under the name 'W. T. Silcoates', which referenced his Wakefield school, and included a proud declaration of his Protestant roots: 'I am a Puritan, and the son of a Puritan; an Independent, and the son of an Independent'. *The Boy's Own Magazine: An Illustrated Journal of Fact, Fiction, History & Adventure* (London), 1 July 1867, Issue 55. This asymmetrical parallel between the winner of a prestigious prize at one of the foremost bastions of Anglican privilege and elitism and the winner of a prize in a popular, Christian, magazine that principally contained inspiring tales and edifying articles adumbrated what was to come. The *Boy's Own Magazine* was edited by Samuel Beeton who helped to launch the careers of Frederick Greenwood, the founding editor of the *PMG*. Christopher Mark Banham, 'Boy's Own Magazine (1855–1874)', *DNCEJ*, p. 70. Margaret Rachel Beetham, 'Beeton, Samuel Orchart (1831–1877)', *DNCEJ*, p. 44.

Anglicanism and the value of inward cultural development collided with Stead's evangelical Congregationalism, 'plain-spokenness', and iconoclasm.<sup>71</sup> While Arnold saw in cultural production a means of societal advancement equal in power to Christianity, Stead sought social improvement through a journalistic practice tempered in the evangelical fire of the Nonconformist preacher.<sup>72</sup> To inform its commitment to moral betterment, Stead's *New Journalism* enlisted the language of religious revivalism and the prospect of building a better society in the form of God's Kingdom on Earth.

From the mid-1860s through to the late-1880s, Arnold maintained that religion was fundamental as a positive force for good government, social cohesion, and political stability.<sup>73</sup> He judged that this power of religion to permeate society was best propagated nationally through the Church of England in the form of an established church.<sup>74</sup> In this, he was representative of the Whig-liberal view which held that humanity's advancement depended on its ability to work harmoniously to overcome division.<sup>75</sup> However, while Arnold believed that the Nonconformists were unlikely to enter a renegotiated church establishment, their perceived failure to inculcate the necessary cultural and spiritual values could be rectified by appropriately robust state educational provision.

Arnold put middle-class education at the centre of his political engagement believing that it represented a significant means of helping humankind along the divinely inspired path to perfection.<sup>76</sup> His insistence that the Church of England should remain the established national church was also explained by his view that Anglicanism had inherited the artistic and poetic values nurtured by Roman Catholicism but which were absent from Protestant Dissent.<sup>77</sup> These ideas, influenced by his experience of inspecting Nonconformist schools at home, and researching educational provision abroad, led him to the conclusion that Nonconformity represented a noxious influence on society that it was necessary to transform.

Arnold consistently argued that middle-class educational provision was inadequate and advocated the establishment of state-funded schools. However, throughout the nineteenth century, the Nonconformists fought a protracted campaign against state intervention in education and in favour of the voluntarist principle to ensure that government finances were

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<sup>71</sup> 'Plain-spokenness' is given as a characteristic of new journalism in the article. [Robertson Scott?], 'The Antiquity of the 'New Journalism'', *PMG*, 26 August 1887, p. 12.

<sup>72</sup> Boston, p. 94, writes of Stead becoming 'the noisiest journalistic evangelist in the whole of England' once he began editing the *NE*.

<sup>73</sup> Matthew Arnold, 'Irish Catholicism and British Liberalism', *Fortnightly Review*, n.s., 24 (1878), 26–45 (p. 26).

<sup>74</sup> 'Irish Catholicism and British Liberalism', p. 26.

<sup>75</sup> J. P. Parry, *Democracy & Religion: Gladstone and the Liberal Party 1867–1875* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 81, 83.

<sup>76</sup> Matthew Arnold, 'The Future of Liberalism', *Nineteenth Century*, 41 (1880), 1–18 (pp. 2, 5).

<sup>77</sup> 'Irish Catholicism and British Liberalism', p. 26.

not used for the promotion of denominational interests. Although the Nonconformist community and the British middle classes were not identical entities, Arnold succeeded in at least suggesting that they were and that, therefore, the Nonconformists bore a heavy responsibility for the misgivings that he expressed. In this way, religious failings, middle-class cultural inadequacy, and educational shortcomings all became associated with the Nonconformists.

These three centres of debate were linked by Arnold's hostility to Nonconformists and to his perception that their influence was destabilising. In *Culture and Anarchy*, Arnold highlighted his belief that culture served to develop all aspects of an individual's humanity, and, therefore, all aspects of society. As he did not consider this to be true for the Dissenters, society as a whole was in consequence adversely affected by this absence of what he called 'totality': 'For if one member suffer, the other members must suffer with it; and the fewer there are that follow the true way of salvation the harder that way is to find'.<sup>78</sup> This argument in favour of the continued hegemony of the Church of England highlighted Arnold's view shared with Whig-liberals that the continuing exclusion of Nonconformists from the establishment undermined the national ability to advance the common good.<sup>79</sup> Arnold further believed that the harmoniously developed aesthetic and rational sides of humankind paved the way to spiritual salvation when invested with Christian transformative values.<sup>80</sup> This perceived lack of a harmonious balance amongst Nonconformists impelled him to speak of them as 'mutilated' (p. 9), and of the nature of their humanity as suffering from 'narrowness, one-sidedness, and incompleteness' (p. 10). In summary, he declared that 'in what we call *provinciality* they abound, but in what we may call *totality* they fall short' (p. 10). This geographical and cultural 'provinciality', he asserted, was characteristic of the middle classes, Dissenters, and, importantly in the context of this thesis, newspapers, three elements that interrelated in the developing New Journalism where middle-class Nonconformists had become significant agents. From the 1860s, therefore, Arnold was exercised by the growth of more populist means of cultural expression and, in particular, by the influence of newspapers designed to appeal to the increasing numbers of voters drawn from the lower-middle and upper-working classes.

To associate daily journalism with the work of a one-time Oxford Professor of Poetry might appear curious, but it nevertheless represented an important field of activity for Arnold. In fact, his disapproval of Stead's journalism was shaped by the not inconsequential fact that he had been a contributor to the *PMG* when edited by Frederick Greenwood (1865–1880) and John Morley (1880–1883). It was also shaped by his persistent dislike of a more populist journalism

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<sup>78</sup> *Culture and Anarchy*, p. 9.

<sup>79</sup> Parry, *Democracy & Religion*, p. 92.

<sup>80</sup> *Culture and Anarchy*, p. 9.

that was already manifested in his jibes directed in the 1860s at the *Daily Telegraph* and which were transferred in the 1880s to the *PMG*. Arnold understood that, for some people, newspapers were the only reading material they encountered daily: what they provided, or did not provide, therefore, was culturally and educationally formative or deforming.<sup>81</sup> He criticised the provincial newspapers for being narrowly party-political and lacking articles of sufficient length to carry the subtle distinctions of nuanced argumentation. He asserted that ‘the provincial spirit [...] does not persuade, it makes war’, believing that it aimed ‘rather at an effect upon the blood and senses than upon the spirit and intellect; it loves hard-hitting rather than persuading’.<sup>82</sup> In Arnold’s view, the medium of the newspaper matched this provincial spirit with ‘its short, highly-charged, heavy-shotted articles’ that sought to create schism and partisanship (p. 166). By the 1880s, Stead’s sensationalist journalism would be considered by some as further proof that polemical writing had superseded rational argumentation.

The medium and the readership thus suited each other — ‘the provincial spirit likes in the newspaper just what makes the newspaper such bad food for it’.<sup>83</sup> This image of bad diet and addictive consequences was a commonly used trope to describe nourishment for the mind. Arnold’s distrust of newspapers was represented in *Culture and Anarchy* through his disdain for the *Saturday Review* (1855–1938), the high-circulation *Daily Telegraph* (1855–), Edward Miall’s *Nonconformist* (1841–1900), and John Campbell’s *British Banner* (1848–1858).<sup>84</sup> These examples of the worrying nature of metropolitan, provincial, and religious journalism were directed at educated middle-class readerships in general or, more specifically, at Nonconformist audiences.<sup>85</sup> Arnold not only criticised the newspapers but extended his negative view to the full range of reading material preferred by Nonconformists by writing of, and writing off, ‘The newspapers, a sort of eating and drinking, a literature of books almost entirely religious or semi-religious, books utterly unreadable by an educated class anywhere, but which your middle class

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<sup>81</sup> *Culture and Anarchy*, pp. 5–6.

<sup>82</sup> Matthew Arnold, ‘The Literary Influence of Academies’, *Cornhill*, 10 (1864), 154–172 (pp. 165–166).

<sup>83</sup> ‘The Literary Influence of Academies’, p. 166.

<sup>84</sup> *Culture and Anarchy*, pp. 31, 32, 44, 45, 46, 54, 82. For the *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science, and Art* (1855–1938), see Elizabeth Tilley, *DNCJ*, pp. 557–558. The *Saturday Review* was a weekly newspaper responding to a growing readership interested in cultural, political, and social issues of the day. Unsigned articles gave it the unified voice of an educated upper-middle-class readership. ‘The editorial line was cautiously liberal, mindful of class privilege and conscious of its own authority’. For the *Daily Telegraph*, see Nicholas Birns, *DNCJ*, pp. 158–159. The paper was aimed at ‘a wealthy, educated readership’. By early 1856, its circulation had reached 270 000. It treated matters of foreign policy, global politics, and the arts. For the *Nonconformist*, see Altholz, p. 60. This weekly newspaper represented ‘politicized Nonconformity, not only denouncing the established Church but adopting the full radical political program’. For the *British Banner*, see Altholz, p. 69. The *British Banner* was edited by John Campbell and was very much his conception. Generally, Campbell ‘was wise enough to give the public what it wanted, which was news spiced with polemics.’ I treat John Campbell in greater depth at the end of this chapter.

<sup>85</sup> For example, the successful populist *Star* newspaper, edited by T. P. O’Connor, did not appear until 1888.

consumes, they say, by the hundred thousand'.<sup>86</sup> Arnold believed that the class which had such great influence over the country through Gladstonian Liberalism lacked the reading material most capable of rendering it fit for the task.

Arnold's view of Nonconformist cultural and educational achievement was, however, itself tellingly deficient. He was ignorant, for example, of initiatives undertaken by Nonconformists concerning the introduction of culture-promoting elements into their newspapers. In 1868, the Nonconformist, evangelical, but unsectarian, weekly newspaper *Christian World* (1857-1961) launched the first of its monthly literary supplements which were intended to provide 'a bird's-eye view of current literature which must be eminently instructive and entertaining'.<sup>87</sup> The paper intended publishing 'candidly and judiciously selected passages' because 'to peruse select passages from the works of eminent living authors will be to hold converse with the choice spirits of the day in their choicest moments'. In the newspaper's assertion that cultural investment would occur through the propagation of 'the best knowledge, the best ideas of their time', we hear a variation on Arnold's view that uplifting culture consisted of the best that had been thought and written.<sup>88</sup> This declaration was probably made in direct response to the criticisms Arnold had made in his last lecture as Oxford Professor of Poetry. This address appeared in the July 1867 number of *Nineteenth Century* as 'Culture and its Enemies' and later formed part of *Culture and Anarchy* when it was published two years later.<sup>89</sup>

In the 1880s, at a time of tension caused by the Irish Question, Arnold again returned to the attack on newspapers deploring the influence of 'certain eager and impassioned Liberal newspapers', a view with which 'plain reasonable Englishmen generally' would, he believed, agree. Moreover, he went further in suggesting that given the circumstances in Ireland an outright ban should be placed on 'some kinds of speeches, some kinds of meetings, some kinds of newspaper writing'.<sup>90</sup> In Arnold's view, the irruption into the popular public domain of emotionally charged political advocacy fomented circumstances conducive to social disintegration which needed to be contained. However, in some important regards, Arnold's arguments lacked the sophistication that might have been expected from an opponent of stump-oration. He tended to repeat the same opinions, often in the same phrasings, from one decade to the next, in essays that recognised no evolution in the ideas of the Nonconformists, and which lacked any detailed explanation of how the aims he set out could be achieved. In

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<sup>86</sup> Matthew Arnold, 'My Countrymen', *Cornhill*, 13 (1866), 153–172 (p. 164).

<sup>87</sup> The first issue of *The Literary World. A Monthly Supplement to the Christian World* appeared on 15 February 1868. Julia Jones, 'Christian World (1857–1961)', *DNCJ*, p. 117.

<sup>88</sup> *The Literary World. A Monthly Supplement to the Christian World*, 15 February 1868; *Culture and Anarchy*, p. 49.

<sup>89</sup> Matthew Arnold, 'Culture and its Enemies', *Cornhill*, 16 (1867), 36–53.

<sup>90</sup> Matthew Arnold, 'The Zenith of Conservatism', *Nineteenth Century*, 21 (1887), 148–164 (pp. 158, 159).

truth, Arnold was as capable of presenting polemic as reasoned discussion as the Nonconformists were of exploiting the impact of impassioned assertions.

Arnold's views represent a coherent criticism of Stead and his New Journalism by offering interrelated observations on religion, education, class, and popular oratorical and journalistic rhetoric. I examine, next, how Arnold constructed, and negatively critiqued, this more populist journalism within the context of Gladstone's plans for Irish Home Rule.

### **Arnold's 'new journalism'**

Arnold's two essays, 'Up to Easter' (May 1887) and 'From Easter to August' (September 1887), were published in the *Contemporary Review* a year after Stead's two articles, 'Government by Journalism' (May 1886) and 'The Future of Journalism' (November 1886) had appeared in the Liberal, serious, and reformist *Fortnightly*.<sup>91</sup> In many respects, 'Up to Easter' and 'From Easter to August' represent a response to these latter two essays and bookend in time the tense parliamentary discussions occasioned by Gladstone's ultimately failed attempt to bring in a Home Rule Bill for Ireland. Both of Arnold's articles consider the relationship between the Irish Question, Liberal-party internal divisions over Home Rule, the power of the popular vote, the perceived inadequate levels of middle- and lower-class education and cultural immersion, and the influence of democratised forms of print culture at a time when the country was still facing the challenge of accommodating its historic constitutional structures to successive waves of electoral enlargement. Arnold's principal argument was that the relatively less well-educated, recently enfranchised, working-class voters were highly likely to be swayed by the inflamed rhetoric of mass-meeting speeches and associated appeals to the emotional understanding used by newspapers rallying support for Gladstone's Liberal-party programme. Such a combination of circumstances and agents suggested that an arrangement of tempestuous presentation and populist message would lead to decisions best suited to the wishes of the increasingly influential working-class voters. Arnold saw this as an example of the anarchy that threatened when society lost the influence of uplifting culture and the habit of measured thought and carefully planned reform. These views were countered by Stead's vision of New Journalism that sought to engage with political and social questions at the point of their greatest urgency. While Stead saw anarchy as likely to break out when social forces were denied the relief-valve of sufficient expression, Arnold propounded the view that anarchy could be prevented by the application of sufficient quantities of reserve and reasonableness. The difference between these two

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<sup>91</sup> Mark W. Turner, 'Fortnightly Review (1865–1954)', *DNCJ*, pp. 227–228.

approaches saw Stead examining in his journalism matters of urgency that Arnold construed as dangerous harbingers of insurgency.

The question remains to establish what in particular was this ‘new journalism’ of which Arnold complained and how exactly did it represent a threatening cultural phenomenon. Laurel Brake has suggested that Arnold’s May 1887 observations regarding New Journalism were in reality a ‘glancing single long paragraph’ on the subject in a piece which was more concerned with the political difficulties caused by Gladstonian Liberalism and the plans for Irish Home Rule.<sup>92</sup> This is close to my understanding although I argue, rather, that Arnold believed that a measured settlement of legitimate Irish demands risked being sacrificed to polemical populist advocacy for the much more momentous plans for Home Rule. This shaped his article into a carefully developed attack on the effect of demagogic rhetoric in newspapers and in speech on rural and urban voters.

When Arnold wrote of ‘a new journalism which a clever and energetic man has lately invented’, he was simply using the formula — ‘new journalism’— customarily employed to announce the publication of a new newspaper title or the emergence of innovative press practices. For Arnold did not write of ‘the New Journalism’ but of ‘a new journalism’ as his intention was to discuss a recent development in the *PMG* rather than any desire to suggest the existence of a new press genre. It was Stead who first capitalised the expression in the *PMG* on 3 May 1887 and he was quickly followed by other newspapers thereby lending to the term the gravitas and solidity of an established class of press.<sup>93</sup> While Arnold had not intended to project onto Stead and the *PMG* the founding of a new kind of journalism, Stead nevertheless astutely claimed just such a projection and set in train the debates that followed.

Arnold’s article gave Stead the confidence to name himself as the first editor of the new form of press that he himself had qualified as ‘the new journalism’ and outlined in his November 1886 essay, ‘The Future of Journalism’.<sup>94</sup> Stead had been careful then not to usurp the journalistic ‘sovereignty’ he envisaged but had waited for the moment when the power — ‘the editorial pen is a sceptre of power, compared with which the sceptre of many a monarch is but a gilded lath’<sup>95</sup> — was offered.<sup>96</sup> Arnold’s travesty of Stead’s journalistic intentions became in

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<sup>92</sup> Brake, ‘The Old Journalism and the New’, p. 14. Mussell follows Brake in this view. Mussell, *The Nineteenth-Century Press in the Digital Age*, pp. 43–44.

<sup>93</sup> See ‘Occasional Notes’, *PMG*, 3 May 1887, p. 4, where Stead writes three times of ‘New Journalism’ and, somewhat curiously, of ‘new Journalism’ on two others. For ‘New Journalism’, see also, *Irish Times*, 7 May 1887, p. 5; ‘By the Way’, *Globe*, 11 May 1887, p. 2; *Northern Whig*, 11 May 1887, p. 4; ‘Hampshire Rambles/A Glimpse of the New Forest’, *Shoreditch Observer*, 14 May 1887, p.2.

<sup>94</sup> ‘The Future of Journalism’, pp. 677, 678.

<sup>95</sup> ‘Government by Journalism’, p. 661.

<sup>96</sup> ‘Government by Journalism’, p. 661.

consequence the locus of aggrieved dispute although Arnold chose thereafter to stand down from any further public engagement on the issue.

In 'Up to Easter', Arnold commented on the uncertain situation in an Ireland shaken by land evictions, Irish demands for independence, and governmental measures to quell civil unrest. His purpose was, firstly, to argue for the resolution of Ireland's rightful grievances and against Gladstone's plans for Home Rule, and, secondly, to examine the effect of inflammatory press rhetoric upon an already impassioned population. Arnold sounded a warning that a provocative press could readily influence an excitable electorate in the way that Stead's type of journalism had the capacity to incite the new voters to support Gladstone's plans for Irish Home Rule.<sup>97</sup> Surprisingly, Arnold's examination of Stead's neoteric press developments and its potential for influencing the newly expanded electorate occupies the equivalent of only one page of the sixteen which form the whole of the article.<sup>98</sup> Equally surprisingly, the passage has received little close analysis in academic writing which has been largely restricted to quotation from the paragraph reproduced at the beginning of this chapter. However, when looking beyond the highly focused comments on Stead and his journalism, a wider perspective opens up onto the perceived dangers of populist newspaper engagement in political campaigning and social investigation.

Arnold built his observations in 'Up to Easter' and 'From Easter to August' into a carefully worded indictment of the ends to which an outspoken press such as Stead's could be put.<sup>99</sup> He intended that the reader should begin by identifying the 'new voters' with the 'new journalism' through the disarming strategy of enumerating some of the positive characteristics that adhered to both.<sup>100</sup> This new electorate, for example, had many merits, including 'abundance of life, movement, sympathy, good instincts'.<sup>101</sup> The 'new journalism' also had 'much to recommend it', being 'full of ability, novelty, variety, sensation, sympathy, [and] generous instincts' (p. 638). A certain diffidence characterises Arnold's main criticism that the 'new voters' and the 'new journalism' were supposedly as mindless as each other. It is initially obliquely suggested by the italicisation of the two discrete elements — '*democracy*' and '*feather-brained*' (p. 638) — that are only later directly linked: 'Well, the democracy [...] is disposed to be, like this journalism, feather-brained' (p.639). In effect, Arnold succeeded in establishing a connection between three new developments — Gladstone's 'new doctrine' of Home Rule for Ireland, the suggestible 'new

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<sup>97</sup> Kate Campbell, 'W. E. Gladstone, W. T. Stead, Matthew Arnold and a New Journalism', p. 21, has asserted that in referring to Stead, Arnold, and the *PMG*, the 'inclusive' use of the term 'new journalism' has critical purchase only when considering the contemporary political situation of Gladstonian Liberalism and demands for Irish Home Rule.

<sup>98</sup> 'Up to Easter', pp. 638–639.

<sup>99</sup> 'Up to Easter'; Matthew Arnold, 'From Easter to August', *Nineteenth Century*, 127 (1887), 310–324.

<sup>100</sup> 'Up to Easter', p. 638.

<sup>101</sup> 'Up to Easter', p. 639.

voters' of the democracy, and Stead's 'new journalism' (p. 638) — that in their combination merited serious examination. Standing between references to the opposing tendencies of the Liberal party, those represented by 'Hartington' (p. 638) and 'Gladstone' (p. 639), were the novelties of the latter's proposed Irish legislation, Stead's style of journalism, and the apparent credulity of those recently given the right to vote.<sup>102</sup>

Arnold pursued his analysis in 'Up to Easter' by declaring that the language of 'practical politics' was 'a mass of [...] phrase, fiction, and claptrap' wherein lay 'insincerity [...] useful for purposes of party or faction'.<sup>103</sup> This was not the language of Arnoldian disinterested curiosity but of one-sidedness and schism that he associated with a more populist Liberalism and the political demands of Nonconformity. He warned that the expression of lawful political agitation in newspapers, pamphlets, and in person, could serve to diffuse social tension but when inflamed and employed to support and encourage popular protest such language could act as 'kindlers and feeders' to ignite the 'incendiary fire' of civil disturbance.<sup>104</sup> Arnold was warning against the power of unrestrained language to destabilise, provoke, and stir up individuals: 'The democracy is being plied with fierce stimulants, and is agitated and chafing' (p. 639). This forceful opinion was invested with the language of bodily intake and excess customarily used to describe a morally noxious literature catering for personal pleasure rather than social improvement.<sup>105</sup> Arnold deprecated a press that could influence negatively a new electorate that lacked access to a mediating corrective and 'above all in those industrial centres where it is most left to itself, and least in contact with other classes'.<sup>106</sup> The press, the Philistines, the Populace, and provinciality, denoted for Arnold something revolutionary, foreign, and decidedly un-English. While Arnold complained that 'the democracy is being plied with fierce stimulants', thereby emphasising uniquely heightened emotion, Stead had vaunted the fact that a journalist had available a powerful means of exciting or suppressing interest in an issue: 'Every day he can administer either a stimulant or a narcotic to the minds of his readers'.<sup>107</sup> Stead's journalism inconvenienced and disturbed because it aimed to encourage comprehension in a manner that Arnold sought to repudiate, namely, understanding through the senses. It was this

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<sup>102</sup> The Liberal leader, Lord Hartington, later the eighth Duke of Devonshire, opposed Gladstone's plans for Irish Home Rule. See Parry, 'Cavendish, Spencer Compton, marquess of Hartington and eighth duke of Devonshire (1833–1908)', *ODNB* <doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/32331>.

<sup>103</sup> 'Up to Easter', p. 629.

<sup>104</sup> 'Up to Easter', p. 634.

<sup>105</sup> For an analysis of changing readerships and the increased availability of print material, see Kelly J. Mays, 'The disease of reading and Victorian periodicals', in *Literature in the Marketplace: Nineteenth-Century British Publishing & Reading Practices*, ed. by John O. Jordan and Robert L. Patten (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 165–194.

<sup>106</sup> 'Up to Easter', p. 639.

<sup>107</sup> 'Up to Easter', p. 639; 'Government by Journalism', p. 662.

presentational mode as well as the nature of some of the content of the campaigns that led to the charge of Stead's journalism being 'sensationalist'.

In an observation that is laden with the personal insult and sensationalism that were part of the New Journalism that he so deplored, Arnold suggested in 'From Easter to August' that amongst the 'mob orators' and 'Irish stump orators' stirring up the population stood Gladstone 'evoking and envenoming provincial discontents everywhere'.<sup>108</sup> Only 'a political agitator' and the 'feather-brained democracy', Arnold declared, were sufficiently off-centred to take seriously the Irish threats of violence against representatives of British imperial power in the event of coercion becoming operative in Ireland.<sup>109</sup> In this estimation, both Gladstone and Henry Labouchère, the editor of the society paper *Truth*, came under this category — as did, moreover, Arnold himself. This self-designated disinterested and grounded metropolitan social critic had become stirred up to heightened language by his own barely contained anxieties about destabilising socio-political circumstances.

Arnold feared that the lack of shared higher cultural and spiritual values amongst the middle and working classes would lead to civil unrest at moments of heightened national tension. In *Culture and Anarchy*, for example, he referred to the 23 July 1866 demonstration organised by the working-class Reform League, which took place despite a government ban. For Arnold, the resultant broken railings and civil disturbance were evidence of what he saw as the anarchy to which the pursuit of individual desires and a general government laxity tended.<sup>110</sup> Twenty years later, in May 1886, the same month which saw the publication of Stead's 'Government by Journalism', Arnold again wrote of the dangers of public spaces becoming the terrain of wide-spread disorder: he declared that 'monster processions and monster meetings in the public streets and parks are the letting out of anarchy'.<sup>111</sup> The fact that he declared that neither the middle nor the lower classes understood this observation suggests that he saw an association of perspective between these two sections of society. Indeed, he believed that they resembled each other in what he saw as their hide-bound natures and backwardness. Linked to this was Arnold's conviction that Nonconformist evangelicalism promoted a populist raw rhetoric and simplistic argumentation too easily capable of winning over the support of a mass reading public. While Arnold believed that neither class was broad-minded or insightful enough to warrant possessing political influence, they nonetheless had a decisive voice in deciding the content of the Liberal-party programme.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> 'From Easter to August', pp. 312, 319, 320.

<sup>109</sup> 'From Easter to August', p. 316.

<sup>110</sup> *Culture and Anarchy*, pp. 59–60, and editorial footnote 57, pp. 202–203; Cannadine, p. 334.

<sup>111</sup> Matthew Arnold, 'The Nadir of Liberalism', *Nineteenth Century*, 111 (1886), 645–663 (p. 647).

<sup>112</sup> 'The Nadir of Liberalism', pp. 653, 654.

The debate over New Journalism was not limited to a discussion of Arnold's views. Stead quickly issued a rebuke to Arnold, but he largely allowed arguments in favour of New Journalism, and those less so, to be made by other newspapers. These opinions were collated and republished in the *PMG* thereby energising an on-going public debate. The next section sets out how Stead conceived the New Journalism and considers the views of the wider press community regarding this potentially destabilising and, even, menacing phenomenon.

### **Stead's 'New Journalism'**

Stead assigned to cultural production the capacity to inform the growing and changing electoral demographic, thereby shaping 'the new voters' of a democratic modern state into a responsible body of influence. After Arnold had set out his objections to Stead's New Journalism in *Nineteenth Century*, the latter took the opportunity to subject them to a more democratised scrutiny by republishing the views of other newspapers drawn from a wide range of press titles.

Stead made an early rebuttal of Arnold's 1887 criticisms in which he ironically clothed his response in his adversary's language.<sup>113</sup> He wanted readers to keep in mind that Arnold was himself 'the apostle of a new kind of religion' formed of 'the grace and sweet reasonableness' of Christianity but without the Puritan onerousness of Mosaic morality. In quoting back at him words that Arnold frequently repeated as the keynotes of his own cultural practice, Stead challenged his detractor to name any other publication which made more effort 'to get at the state of things as they truly are'.<sup>114</sup> With no answer from Arnold, Robertson Scott responded in his place and asserted that no such publication existed.<sup>115</sup>

Bemused and irritated by Arnold's characterisation of the New Journalism, Stead decided publicly to challenge his critic to describe what, by comparison, constituted the Old Journalism. Arnold's silence provoked an insistent repeat of the challenge — 'When *will* Mr. Matthew Arnold give us the characteristics of the "Old Journalism"?' — but this was no more successful in receiving a response.<sup>116</sup> In any case, according to the London correspondent of the National Press Agency, those using the phrase 'The New Journalism' would have been no more able to say what they meant by it.<sup>117</sup> Writing in the 1889 edition of *Sell's Dictionary of the World's Press and Advertisers' Reference Book*, Robertson Scott asked, 'What is the "New Journalism"?' His reply was to assert simply that 'No two people seem to be able to agree as to what it really

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<sup>113</sup> 'Occasional Notes', *PMG*, 3 May 1887, p. 4.

<sup>114</sup> Compare, for example, 'to see things as they really are'; 'the sheer desire to see things as they are'. *Culture and Anarchy*, pp. 97, 33.

<sup>115</sup> Robertson Scott, 'The "New Journalism."', p. 50.

<sup>116</sup> 'Occasional Notes', *PMG*, 14 May 1887, p. 3; 'Occasional Notes', *PMG*, 23 May 1887, p. 3.

<sup>117</sup> [Robertson Scott?], 'The Antiquity of the "New Journalism."', *PMG*, 26 August 1887, p. 12.

signifies'.<sup>118</sup> In 1887, Stead was able to exploit this silence and apparent confusion over the term by tracking down and republishing in his own newspaper what the press thought of Arnold's views.

Contrary to Nicholson's assertion that Stead primarily gave a masterclass in how to manufacture a self-serving publicity campaign,<sup>119</sup> his reprinting of instances where the New Journalism was discussed in other newspapers employed a standard means of promoting press debate. Indeed, reading these extracts as they were originally published in their home newspapers throws up no obvious signs of bias in terms of newspaper title selection, or editing of the extract. Stead promoted, rather, a full and fair debate of the issues that continued to the end of the 1880s and into the 1890s.<sup>120</sup>

Stead's brand of New Journalism was invested with sensationalism and socio-political seriousness and had an important contribution to make in holding government to account and in looking after the legitimate interests of the working classes. In this respect, the *Cambridge Independent Press* reported on a lecture on New Journalism given at the Cambridge Working Men's Club by the Secretary of the University Liberal Club, Anton Bertram, of Caius College.<sup>121</sup> Bertram's assessment was that the old morning newspapers had become representative of a 'fossilised' mechanism operating principally for financial gain, contradicting thereby the common judgement that it was the New Journalism that sought principally to reap a commercial profit. Bertram also highlighted the lead role played by both Stead's *PMG* and O'Connor's *Star* in the development of a journalism committed to ensuring that proper government of the people was undertaken. Of significance were 'the interests of the masses' who, he added, would be better looked after once the country's libel laws had been reformed as they were often used to stifle legitimate inquiry into the actions of public authorities and vested interests.<sup>122</sup>

O'Connor's *Star* was launched on 17 January 1888 having already been promoted by the *Lancaster Gazette*, for example, as representing 'the new journalism', the innovative style which

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<sup>118</sup> J. W. Robertson Scott, 'The "New Journalism"', in *Sell's Dictionary of the World's Press and Advertisers' Reference Book*, ed. by Henry Sell (London: Sell's Advertising Agency, 1889), pp. 48–59 (p. 50). I suggest that Robertson Scott was the likely author of the article 'The Antiquity of the "New Journalism."' He had worked as a freelance journalist before joining the *PMG* under Stead. The unnamed Press Association journalist, author of the *PMG* article, expressed similar views to those in 'The "New Journalism."'

<sup>119</sup> Nicholson, pp. 16–17.

<sup>120</sup> I have conducted a thorough review by searchable databases of the instances 1859–1900 where the term 'new journalism'/'New Journalism' appeared in the British newspapers held by the British Library, Gale, and the British Newspaper Archive.

<sup>121</sup> 'Cambridge Working Men's Radical Club', *Cambridge Independent Press*, 8 February 1890, p. 8.

<sup>122</sup> The libel laws were changed in 1881 and amended in 1887. The 1881 Act allowed newspapers to report in the public interest, and without malicious intent, speeches made at lawful public meetings for lawful purposes. The 1887 Amendment Act protected newspaper owners from prosecution for libel and prevented more than one newspaper being sued for the same libel. Hampton, p. 34; Lee, pp. 98, 100.

had come under such scrutiny.<sup>123</sup> In 'The Modern Journalism', the *Blackburn Standard* reported upon the multiple ways in which O'Connor proposed to make of the *Star* a leading exponent of New Journalism. There were to be 'no lengthy and dreary articles', it was to be sharp and outspoken, written with 'vivacity and sparkle', and set in 'large and readable type'.<sup>124</sup> Busy business men were to be given their news 'in little bits highly condensed and highly seasoned', with brief summaries and notes to replace lengthier articles. Indeed, the paper aimed to suit 'the average reader', who, for want of time, inclination, or ability, looked to the newspaper editor ('a clever editor', in an echo of Arnold's description of Stead as 'a clever and energetic man') to provide the necessary material, thereby 'practically doing his thinking and research for him'. It was this element, designed to facilitate, which became the target of those who believed that the New Journalism was damaging to people's ability to reason for themselves. O'Connor was seen to embody the newspaper he conducted, championing those who had suffered injustice and infusing the whole newspaper with a clearly discernible purpose which was 'not only evident in the articles and editorial notes, but it flavours almost every item of news in the paper'. Contrary to Arnold's scorn for Stead's innovative measures, the *Blackburn Standard* declared that '[t]he time is highly propitious for this intelligent change in the press' and forecast that 'The day of dreary doldrum journalism is gone forever'.<sup>125</sup>

As I have shown, Stead has long since been advanced as the leading exponent of late-Victorian New Journalism. This was the result of Arnold's May 1887 article in the *Nineteenth Century* where he designated Stead as the inventor of 'a new journalism' that was principally feather-brained and scornful of the truth. As I have discussed, such negative observations were frequently made in the world of newspapers and bore witness rather to anxieties regarding societal change to which they also contributed. New Journalism emerged from the accumulation of a series of newspaper developments embraced by different genres, editors, and titles, and which resulted in the tabloid press that we recognise today. Stead's New Journalism deployed innovative techniques to strategic effect, and, in introducing sensationalism and a more personal journalism, his publications brought to public attention urgent socio-political questions that demanded action and resolution. Crucially, Christian moral standards shaped his appeals for the transformation of society for the benefit of all. Stead's New Journalism was also prominent as the vehicle of the Nonconformist Conscience, the explicit application to a secular newspaper of Christian values normally highlighted in the Nonconformist religious press. He was accompanied in this mission by Hugh Price Hughes, the founding editor in 1885 of the *Methodist*

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<sup>123</sup> 'A New London Paper', *Lancaster Gazette*, 26 November 1887, p. 5.

<sup>124</sup> 'The Modern Journalism', *Blackburn Standard*, 28 January 1888, p. 5.

<sup>125</sup> 'The Modern Journalism', *Blackburn Standard*, 28 January 1888, p. 5.

*Times*, a religious newspaper which campaigned for socio-political reform and national re-Christianisation.

While it is not possible, or even desirable, to identify any one source as the point of departure of the New Journalism, it is also the case that no one editor or newspaper title has been identified as particularly influential on Stead. Certainly, John Copleston, the founding editor of the *NE*, provided some training through the advice he gave to him about the articles he regularly sent in before he joined as editor in 1871. Stead also met Wemyss Reid, editor of the *Leeds Mercury*, ostensibly to receive advice on how to run a newspaper, even if, in the event, he dominated the conversation by the confident exposition of his own plans. He was also fortunate to have as a staff member on the *NE* the experienced journalist Michael Fooks.<sup>126</sup> However, I suggest that potentially of far greater influence was the work of the Congregational church minister, John Campbell, whose journalistic persona and press mission bear significant similarities to the path later taken by Stead, and whose potential as a source of inspiration has so far not been explored in academic writing.

When, on 26 March 1867, the Rev. Dr John Campbell died, after a short illness, at Manor House, his London home in St. John's Wood Park, the Congregational Union of England and Wales (CUEW) mourned the loss of its foremost editor, journalist, and, as they believed, defender of God's truth.<sup>127</sup> The following section examines Campbell's editorial persona and journalistic mission and suggests that he represented a powerful influence on Stead's contribution to newspapers. Through an understanding of Campbell's work, it is possible to locate in the religious press Stead's New Journalism and its particular representation of Christian values in a secular newspaper.

### **John Campbell (1795–1867): a Precursor for Stead and his New Journalism**

Although it has so far proved impossible to establish conclusively that Stead was acquainted with Campbell's publications, a number of circumstantial elements lend credence to the claim that Stead would have readily come into contact with Campbell's journalism. The CUEW was an enthusiastic backer of Campbell's work as editor of the very successful monthly journals the *Christian Witness* (1844–1871) and *Christian's Penny Magazine* (1845–1881) and considered his later independent project, the weekly *British Banner*, as almost officially representative of the CUEW itself. It is highly probable, therefore, that Stead's father, the Rev. William Stead,

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<sup>126</sup> Whyte, I, p. 31; Lloyd, p. 31.

<sup>127</sup> The *Congregational Yearbook 1868* (London: Jackson, Walford, and Hodder, 1868), pp. 260, 261. Each *Congregational Yearbook* contained reports on the proceedings of the previous year. R. Tudur Jones, 'Campbell, John (1795–1867)', *ODNB* <doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/4524>.

subscribed to at least one of Campbell's journalistic enterprises and that he would have been assiduous in promoting them to his congregation. As a Sunday school teacher, supporting his father in Howdon, Stead would also have found a direct use for Campbell's magazines while Silcoates, the school for the sons of Congregational ministers attended by Stead in the early 1860s, most probably subscribed to Campbell's publications.<sup>128</sup> Given that Campbell's work would have been in circulation amongst Congregational families and church congregations, and that careful attention was paid to the kind of reading material favoured by Nonconformist families and communities, it is highly likely that Stead would have been familiar with the leading publications associated with his own denomination.

It was to Dr Thomas Arnold, Matthew Arnold's father, that Campbell turned for inspiration in formulating his journalistic mission. According to Campbell, Dr Arnold had such a highly favourable opinion 'of the power and value of cheap periodical literature' that he was able to conceive of a radical enterprise, the realisation of a Christian, campaigning, class-dedicated, cheap magazine:

I want to get up a real 'Poor Man's Magazine,' which should not bolster up abuses and veil iniquities, nor *prose* to the poor as to children; but should address them in the style of Cobbett — plainly, boldly, and in sincerity — excusing nothing, concealing nothing, and misrepresenting nothing; but speaking the *very whole truth* in love —Cobbett-like in *style*, but Christian in spirit.<sup>129</sup>

Campbell and Stead both embraced Dr Arnold's call for an uncompromisingly combative publication that invested the mission to defend and represent the less well-off members of society with the straightforward rhetoric of the fight for social justice and Christian values. Unadorned language and the unvarnished truth were constitutive elements of Campbell's socio-religious engagement and Stead's social-reform activism, and, as such, stand in contrast to Dr Arnold's son Matthew's promotion of the elite values of an Oxford classical education and the use of measured language in debate.

First issued on 7 January 1848, the *British Banner* was a significant contribution to wider socio-political debates in Britain during the twelve months that became known across Europe

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<sup>128</sup> My enquiry to Silcoates School regarding possible archival evidence for this was answered in the negative.

<sup>129</sup> Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, *The Life and Correspondence of Thomas Arnold, D.D.*, 2 vols (London: Fellowes, 1844), I, p. 262. Letter to the Reverend Augustus Hare, 24 December 1830. Quoted in the *Preface to The Christian Witness, and Church Member's Magazine*, I, 1844, p. vi. Original italics.

as the ‘Year of Revolutions’. This CUEW-backed newspaper is of interest in the context of Stead’s religiously driven New Journalism because it reported on questions relating to church and state, not as two separate spheres of human activity, but as two inextricably linked areas of human interaction.<sup>130</sup> In emphasising this, Campbell joined those, who, like the Rev. Thomas Chalmers (1780–1847) promoted the values of evangelical Christianity in the conduct of secular affairs.<sup>131</sup> Campbell’s view of the artificiality of the separation of secular and religious matters was reiterated, in the 1860s and 1870s, by the Congregationalist R. W. Dale’s promotion of the ‘Municipal Gospel’, and, in the 1880s and 1890s, by the Wesleyan Methodist Hugh Price Hughes’s advocacy of the ‘Social Gospel’.<sup>132</sup> Stead’s contribution to these prominent approaches to social reformation can be seen in the increasingly overt emphasis he gave to Christian values as he campaigned for social transformation and re-Christianisation.

While campaigning for electoral reform, Campbell also recognised that having the vote and being capable of exercising it responsibly were not identical. Consequently, the *British Banner* aimed ‘to educate the British Elector — to form a *Model Citizen*’ so that those who possessed the vote, and those who would do so in the future, exercised their power according to Christian principles.<sup>133</sup> The Dissenting communities opposed the established status of the Church of England, but they sought to confirm their credentials as law-abiding campaigners for political reform. Every ‘uninstructed’ individual and every family desirous of receiving ‘a liberal, pure, and well-principled Paper’ would be suited by the *British Banner* which intended to bring about constitutional reform, to monitor government action at home and abroad, to approach the work of the Houses of Parliament with scepticism, to promote the British colonies, and to be a source of, and, later, a resource for, the reporting of important debates, speeches, news, and facts.<sup>134</sup> This socio-political agenda was complemented by the reiterated affirmation of Christian values and appeals for the espousing of high ideals. The *British Banner* declared that its mission was to be carried out ‘in the spirit of true patriotism and enlightened Christianity’ and ‘as an act of the highest social duty’, in which sceptical judgement was ‘a high duty of Christian citizenship’, and information conveyed was ‘for the enlargement and invigoration of the soul’.<sup>135</sup> Campbell aimed to reach a wide readership with a newspaper that sought to uphold and to inculcate the highest values and ideals possible.

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<sup>130</sup> ‘Introductory Address’, *British Banner*, 7 January 1848, p. 7.

<sup>131</sup> Callum G. Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularisation 1800–2000*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), p. 24.

<sup>132</sup> The Municipal Gospel and the Social Gospel are discussed in Chapters 3, 4, and 5.

<sup>133</sup> ‘Introductory Address’, *British Banner*, 7 January 1848, p. 7. Original italics.

<sup>134</sup> ‘Address’, *British Banner*, 17 May 1848, pp. 344–345.

<sup>135</sup> ‘Address’, *British Banner*, 17 May 1848, pp. 344–345.

Campbell's interest as a potential influence on Stead's New Journalism extends also to the presentational devices he used in his writing. In his May 1848 'Address', Campbell asked his readers:

Are you willing to submit to a small measure of the profitable pain of a little solemn thinking? Have you the mental and moral courage to enter upon an article of moderate length, and stamped with the impress of conscientious labour? Are you ready to become a pupil, that you may be trained into a good and able citizen?<sup>136</sup>

The tone of studied playfulness belies the seriousness of the mission that Campbell set himself. The emphasis on the benefits to be accrued from focusing on an article of no great length also looked to the future New Journalism with its preference for shorter articles and emphasis on presentational impact.<sup>137</sup> Further, Campbell's Victorian biographers highlighted the 'power, pungency, and grasp' of his journalism, and characterised Campbell's predilection for controversy as the tendency to be 'dogmatic, fierce, and abusive'.<sup>138</sup>

At the Annual Assembly of the CUEW in 1845, Campbell was called upon to defend the vehemence and content of some of his writing. Through a report read to the meeting, he declared that without 'energy and decision' he would be unable to write, given that his mission was 'to inform and move the multitude of our people', an impossible task 'without some point and power in the writing [being] addressed to their stagnant faculties'.<sup>139</sup> Stead was also recognised for the trenchant nature of his views and the vehemence of his campaigning and found his sensationalist strategy for capturing his reader's attention contested by more orthodox press observers.

Campbell's biographers also noted the great influence that newspaper editors could exercise but emphasised the need for an ethic of responsibility to be in place to prevent any abuses. They believed that:

There are few more influential positions in society than that of an Editor. In his official chair he sits a King, his pen a sceptre, his

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<sup>136</sup> 'Address', *British Banner*, 17 May 1848, pp. 344–345 (p. 345).

<sup>137</sup> 'Address', *British Banner*, 17 May 1848, pp. 344–345 (p. 345).

<sup>138</sup> Robert Ferguson and A. Morton Brown, *Life and Labours of John Campbell* (London: Bentley, 1867), p. 557.

<sup>139</sup> 'The report on the *Christian Witness* Fund in Aid of Aged Ministers, and on Deferred Annuities for the Support of Brethren in Old Age', *Congregational Yearbook 1846* (London: Jackson and Walford, 1847).

word law, and his opinions the inspirations by which multitudes are governed. It is scarcely possible to exaggerate the responsibility of such an office. In a day like ours, when the Press largely moulds the public mind of the world for good or for evil, how important that all connected with it should be Christian men — men capable of appreciating their high calling, — rendering it subservient to human progress, to the cultivation of right taste, the formation of soul-delivering sentiment, and the furtherance of all that is calculated to ennoble men and glorify God!<sup>140</sup>

It is possible that Stead became familiar with this biographical depiction of Campbell and that he drew inspiration from it. This representation of a highly influential law-giving editor-as-monarch prefigures the imagery adopted by Stead in his two essays of 1886, where he wrote: ‘Yet an editor is the uncrowned king of an educated democracy’ for whom ‘the editorial pen is a sceptre of power’.<sup>141</sup> The ‘new journalism’ that Stead outlined represented, in large part, his project for a ‘method of educating the democracy in the functions of citizenship’, just as Campbell had set out to prepare his readers to become model citizens and voters.<sup>142</sup> The extract above argues for the need for ‘Christian men’ conscious of the higher aims that journalism could fulfil: Stead wrote of journalists needing to see beyond the limits that they habitually set themselves so that they could realise the ‘possibilities of much higher things’ than just the reporting of the day’s passing events.<sup>143</sup>

Campbell represents a persuasive case for being a source of influence on Stead and his New Journalism. He edited publications which circulated widely amongst Congregationalists during the 1850s and 1860s, the years of Stead’s childhood and adolescence. He invested his journalistic treatment of the secular world with Christian values and demonstrated the importance of forceful writing and shorter articles in the education of his readers. Campbell’s journalism sought to educate, inspire, and morally uplift its Nonconformist readership so that they could achieve and be worthy of the same civil and religious rights enjoyed by members of the established Church of England. It was said that he would attack anyone whatever their status if in doing so it ‘would add drama and colour to his papers’.<sup>144</sup> As R. Tudur Jones writes, ‘He transformed differences of opinion into dramatic clashes of personality with Campbell himself,

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<sup>140</sup> Ferguson and Morton Brown, p. 363.

<sup>141</sup> ‘Government by Journalism’, pp. 661, 664.

<sup>142</sup> ‘The Future of Journalism’, p. 676.

<sup>143</sup> ‘Government by Journalism’, p. 664.

<sup>144</sup> R. Tudur Jones, *Congregationalism in England 1662–1962* (London: Independent Press, 1962), p. 234.

usually, at the centre of the stage. The result was that he never lacked readers'.<sup>145</sup> His example shows how closely imbricated were these techniques and the moral conviction associated with Nonconformity. Stead was to become no less adept at using his own editorial persona to such effect and courted controversy as much through his character as through his journalism.

Eventually, Campbell's dogmatic views alienated him from the CUEW and he resigned from the *British Banner*. He promptly launched the *British Standard* (1857–1867) in 1857 where he continued his journalistic mission with the major difference that he felt a greater liberty to increase his ability to support 'the cause of Christ and the good of my fellow-men'.<sup>146</sup> Stead was to share these sentiments when he was compelled to leave the *PMG* in 1889, after which he soon launched the most explicit expression of his religious views in the form of the *Review of Reviews*.<sup>147</sup> In the next chapter, I discuss Stead's conception of editorship and examine the way in which sensationalism became a central element in his New Journalism.

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<sup>145</sup> Tudur Jones, *Congregationalism in England*, p. 234.

<sup>146</sup> *The British Standard Supplement*, 2 January 1857, p. 1.

<sup>147</sup> Laurel Brake, 'Journalist, Proprietor and Publisher', in *W. T. Stead*, ed. by Brake and others, pp. 77–97 (p. 80).

## Chapter 2

### Uncrowned Kings and Typocrats: Making the New Journalism

As I have discussed in the previous chapter, nineteenth-century New Journalism emerged as term and concept as the result of a series of press innovations introduced and variously adopted according to the interests of individual newspaper proprietors and editors. I have further argued that Arnold stands as the touchstone for the values represented by higher journalism, cultural uplift, and Anglican Church predominance against which to evaluate Stead's contribution to New Journalism in his religiously invested instantiation of the phenomenon.

In this chapter, I examine how Stead represented his New Journalism in the form of a democratising engine for socio-political reform. As a central part of my discussion, I emphasise Stead's evangelical zeal in his promotion of the moral values of the Nonconformist Conscience and re-examine both the role of sensationalism in his journalism and the negative critique which it provoked. In my revision, I argue that Stead's use of sensationalism was a means to create shock and consternation as a prelude to, and not as a substitution for, reasoned debate and the creation of focused campaigning momentum. In the final section of this chapter, I discuss Stead's two 1886 press manifesto papers which represented his personal retrospective and projective evaluation of the profession he exercised.

In undertaking his New Journalistic mission, I suggest that Stead represented an important variation on the position of the public intellectual, this time transformed into a Nonconformist and democratic key and in contradistinction to the paternalist, Anglican invested, elitist role adopted by Arnold.<sup>1</sup> Arnold's work was prefigured and influenced by Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834), the poet, critic, and philosopher, and Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881), the essayist, social critic, and historian. All three debated how best to preserve the country's cultural achievements in the face of enormous democratising societal pressures that demanded change if resolution rather than revolution were to be achieved. As Robin Gilmour has written, Coleridge proposed retaining the network of parish churches and clergy as the basis for establishing a National Church and a 'Clerisy', composed of intellectuals and other literary figures, that would be entrusted with the task of caring for the cultural legacy as a binding and improving agent committed to reconciling the forces of 'Permanence' and 'Progression'.<sup>2</sup>

Raymond Williams provides a cogent account of Carlyle's interventions as a cultural commentator and prophet of social reform. In a period of destabilising socio-political forces,

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<sup>1</sup> Stewart J. Brown, 'W. T. Stead, the 'New Journalism' and the 'New Church'', p. 213, has also positioned Stead as a 'public intellectual'.

<sup>2</sup> Robin Gilmour, *The Victorian Period: The Intellectual and Cultural Context of English Literature, 1830–1890* (Harlow, Essex: Longman, 1993), pp. 12–13.

Carlyle turned to the writer-intellectual to form a cultural nexus in response to a national overvaluation of material consumption.<sup>3</sup> He proposed that an elite literary class would possess the spiritual qualities necessary to determine and proclaim the highest values at which society should aim.<sup>4</sup>

Like Carlyle, Arnold, too, saw society beset by an imbalance between an inner cultivation of cultural values and an overemphasis on the benefits of social machinery which he believed had become for many the ends in themselves rather than the means to something higher.<sup>5</sup> While Carlyle had hoped that the literary elite would set aside the creation of poetry and fiction to 'write the History of England as a kind of Bible', Arnold had counselled his young Liberal friends to refrain from entering precipitously into the world of politics.<sup>6</sup> Arnold wanted them to join him in helping to develop a greater capacity for the values of inner perfection rather than be taken up with the practical concerns of everyday politics. As he later lamented, these younger Liberals did not heed the advice and, as a consequence, Liberalism moved in the direction proposed by Gladstone rather than that represented by the more conservative Marquis of Hartington.<sup>7</sup>

In keeping with the development of New Journalistic practices and values, Stead exemplified a democratised version of Carlyle's cultural elite, and of Coleridge's Clerisy, this time engaged in daily journalism, during the period 1871–1889, and then, from 1890 to 1912, in the production of a monthly review, that carried, in a significant departure for the secular press, moral and spiritual values at their heart. While Carlyle considered that society was unable to sustain the literary class needed, and Arnold emphasised the opportunity lost by his followers of nurturing social change through a suitable spirit of inner cultural transformation, Stead brought the writer and social critic together in the democratising re-Christianising mission of his Nonconformist-influenced journalism.<sup>8</sup> While Carlyle's writings on the history of England were represented as a kind of Bible, Stead suggested that newspapers act as a record of the nation's history and a projection of its religious and moral values, becoming a Bible daily written anew.<sup>9</sup> He succeeded in transforming the elite litterateur in disharmony with the times into a democratised writer of daily and review journalism that had greater affinity with popular opinion.

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<sup>3</sup> Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society 1780–1950* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1963 (1958)), p. 96.

<sup>4</sup> Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society*, p. 96.

<sup>5</sup> *Culture and Anarchy*, p. 37.

<sup>6</sup> Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society*, pp. 96–97; *Culture and Anarchy*, p. 28.

<sup>7</sup> Hartington, the future eighth Duke of Devonshire, became the leader of the Liberals in the Commons on Gladstone's resignation in 1875 following electoral defeat for the party in 1874. Parry, 'Cavendish, Spencer Compton', *ODNB*.

<sup>8</sup> Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society*, p.95. 'The Nadir of Journalism', p. 645.

<sup>9</sup> Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society*, p.95; 'Government by Journalism', p. 663.

Stead turned to Carlyle, rather than to Coleridge or Arnold, in allying his journalism with a tradition of writers as social critics and public preachers. In 1887, Stead highlighted his view that the ambitions of social observers needed to be raised and accused both Church of England clergy and journalists with abandoning principle for financial gain. An occasion to demonstrate the influence that a writer could have on plans to improve conditions for the less well-off presented itself when a 'People's Palace' was opened in the East End of London in 1887. Stead adopted Carlyle's concept and phrase, 'The Hero as Man of Letters', to describe Walter Besant, the writer, social critic, and reformer, in recognition of his having been the inspiration behind this venture.<sup>10</sup> Besant's novel, *All Sorts and Conditions of Men: An Impossible Story* (1882), serialised in the shilling, illustrated monthly, *Belgravia* (1867–1899) from January to December 1882, included the depiction of plans for a 'Palace of Delight' in the East End for working-class recreation and educational opportunities.<sup>11</sup> Stead saw in this event the consecration of the writer in society:<sup>12</sup>

In this new order of the man of letters as hero, Mr Besant is the first, but he will not be the last. The revolution to be effected by the combined influence of cheap books and compulsory education is only now beginning.<sup>13</sup>

Stead's hailing of a literary 'new order' for a democratising New Journalism, made in the same month that Arnold published 'Up to Easter', containing his censure of the *PMG*, was a significant riposte to what, by deduction, must have been advocacy for an old order. Stead sided with the promoters of a social revolution that was founded on readily available reading material, access to education for all, and confidence in the performative value of ideas circulated through print materials.

In this chapter, I discuss the foundation- and key-stone values associated with evangelicalism and the Nonconformist Conscience that helped drive Stead's New Journalism and explore Stead's developing ideas about editorship and the powers of the press. From being a critic of extra-parliamentary agitation, he became adept at its deployment in a number of

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<sup>10</sup> 'The Hero of the Hour', *PMG*, 14 May 1887, p.1.

<sup>11</sup> Thomas Carlyle, 'Lecture V. The Hero as Man of Letters. Johnson, Rousseau, Burns', in *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1840), pp. 143–180. Simon Eliot, 'Sir Walter Besant (1836–1901)', *ODNB* <doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/30736>. 'The Hero of the Hour', *PMG*, 14 May 1887, p.1. Walter Besant, *All Sorts and Conditions of Men: An Impossible Story* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1882). The *Belgravia* carried poetry, social satire, topical essays, and serialised novels, including by M. E. Braddon, Wilkie Collins, and Thomas Hardy. Barbara Onslow, 'Belgravia (1867–1899)', *DNCJ*, pp. 45–46.

<sup>12</sup> Simon Eliot, 'Sir Walter Besant', *ODNB*.

<sup>13</sup> 'The Hero of the Hour', *PMG*, 14 May 1887, p.1.

successful political and social-reforming campaigns. He invested the provincial *Northern Echo* (editor: 1871–1880) with the moral values of the Nonconformist Conscience before introducing them in the 1880s into the metropolitan *Pall Mall Gazette* (assistant editor, 1880–1883; editor, 1883–1889) with spectacular effect even if ultimately to his personal detriment.<sup>14</sup> From 1890–1912, in the *Review of Reviews*, a publication that he owned and edited, he put into action his vaulting ambition to reach beyond the domestic readership to address the English-speaking countries of the world.

From being primarily the promoter of the Quaker Pease family's political interests in Darlington, from where the *NE* was published, Stead became a proponent of Gladstonian Liberalism in London at the *PMG*, until developing at the *RoR* a platform from which to influence world affairs. I further argue that in making journalism his profession, Stead's ambition was to be more than just the conductor of someone else's newspaper and the promoter of their interests. He came with the determination and zeal characteristic of the evangelical which he employed to make of himself a recognisable and influential figure in the country's affairs. Where religious leaders, such as the Congregationalist R. W. Dale, had declared that their involvement in politics could be explained by the fact that they had been citizens before becoming Christians, Stead stated that his engagement in politics was justified by his being a citizen before becoming a journalist.

In a challenge to those observers who denied the right of journalists to go beyond their role of reporter and correspondent, Stead declared:

The cant, that it is not for journalists to do this, that, or the other, is inconsistent with any theory of civic responsibility. Before I was an editor and a journalist I was a citizen and a man. As a member of a self-governing community I owe a duty to my country, of which the sole measure is my capacity and opportunity to serve her.<sup>15</sup>

Stead evoked the spirit of independence of a Congregational, 'self-governing community', and, in his rejection of any conflict between journalism and civic responsibility, recalled, and echoed, the spirit that invested the Municipal Gospel of the 1860s and 1870s and the Social Gospel of

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<sup>14</sup> The entanglements of his best-known campaign, 'The Maiden Tribute to Modern Babylon', which ran in the *PMG* from 10 July to 14 July 1885, saw him imprisoned on a technical charge of child abduction and greatly damaged his reputation and that of the *PMG*. The 'Maiden Tribute to Modern Babylon' campaign agitated for the raising of the age of female sexual consent through the passing of the Criminal Law Amendment Bill. See Chapter 4.

<sup>15</sup> 'Government by Journalism', p. 667.

the 1880s and 1890s.<sup>16</sup> Although he worked with, and promoted the employment of, women journalists, and readily supported initiatives led by women campaigners, he remained, at the least, unaware of a culturally entrenched patriarchal attitude in his yoking of ‘citizen’ and ‘man’. In further comment drawn from ‘Government by Journalism’, Stead limited his view of newspaper readers and editors to a male dominated perspective. ‘A man without a newspaper’, was, according to Stead, at a disadvantage in life, while journalism, as a profession, in one of his customarily exaggerated assertions, offered unparalleled opportunities to ‘a capable man’.<sup>17</sup> This patriarchal emphasis was linked to the introduction of the personal in New journalism and represented a continuing movement away from the perceived effiteness of anonymous journalism.<sup>18</sup> As Stead further declared, ‘To influence men you must be a man, not a mock-uttering oracle’ (p. 663).

Stead placed his New Journalism at the service of humanity, and, more particularly, at the service of the least well-off and most oppressed members of society. To effect change, he brought key aspects of evangelical Nonconformity into association with fundamental features of New Journalism, that included the personal, sensationalism, and a morally committed activism that encompassed the values of the Nonconformist Conscience. The physicality of evangelical conversionism translated into the impact rhetoric of New Journalistic strategies designed to convince and energise. When individuals felt that God had truly entered their souls, they were considered as having been converted to Christianity: New Journalism placed individuals at the centre of its mission to convert readerships to the causes it promoted. The activism of the evangelical found a complementary drive in the agitation of New Journalistic crusades where the cause of building the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth was translated into the campaigns for socio-political improvement.

Stead’s career in newspapers spanned four decades, three major publications, and three articulations of a developing press mission. His evolving ideas about the role of the press reflected his Nonconformist, Liberal, and democratic beliefs. Fundamental to the success of Stead’s evangelical and democratising mission, technological advances — railway improvements, printing-press innovation, telegraph and telephone connections — facilitated the capacity of newspapers to reach increasingly distant locations, and, therefore, readerships. Stead’s journalistic practice further evolved from one in which the interests of newspaper owners and advertisers represented significant editorial forces of constraint to one in which he largely achieved the journalistic freedom to act as he saw best through having achieved financial

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<sup>16</sup> ‘Government by Journalism’, p. 667. R. Tudur Jones, ‘Dale, Robert William (1829–1895)’, <[doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/7015](https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/7015)>.

<sup>17</sup> ‘The Future of Journalism’, p. 663.

<sup>18</sup> ‘The Future of Journalism’, p. 663.

independence. In the next section, I discuss some of the ways in which Stead interpreted the role of an editor and of a newspaper not only to himself but also to the wider community.

### **Representing the Editor, Representing the Press**

This section argues that Stead's New Journalism was a mission for democratisation, evangelicalism, electoral extension, and socio-political reform. It was a project that sought to provide the largest number of people with the space for public debate and public representation together with the information and opinions necessary for the formation of rationally held views. None of this pointed to the establishment of politically neutral structures as the trajectory of Stead's view of democratisation was evangelical, Gladstonian Liberal, and, to an extent, populist. He did not advocate a democratic utopia in which all views led seamlessly to a well-judged representative whole. Some opinions, those furthest from the consensus, would necessarily be rejected, but at least they would have been voiced and heard.

Press historians and newspaper editors employed various tropes to represent and explore the role of journalism in the nineteenth century. C. H. Timperley, the author of the *Dictionary of Printers and Printing* (1839), for example, suggested that newspapers liberated knowledge that was usually bound up in books, offering to the working individual the possibility of equalling the friar whose rarefied knowledge had once appeared magical to his contemporaries.<sup>19</sup> However, Timperley ignored the fact that some newspaper subscribers, with the means to form such a collection, bound their discrete issues into volumes to create book-bound consultable stores of knowledge. The unbound became rebound, indexed, archived, and accessible for future use. Writing in 1850, Knight Hunt, the journalist and medical practitioner, chose the relative novelty of the camera to suggest a newspaper's capacity to capture events as they happened.<sup>20</sup> His camera image was prompted by the invention, in 1837 and 1840 respectively, of wet plate photography using Daguerreotypes and calotypes.<sup>21</sup> Another image, evoking editors proclaiming from their desks righteous war on the perpetrators of criminality, cast them as ministers preaching from the pulpit in a depiction that had already been employed in the early nineteenth century. The essayist, William Hazlitt, for example, wrote of the 'Preaching Friar', established within every village, and teaching from the pulpit known as

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<sup>19</sup> Aled Jones, p. 48. Charles Henry Timperley, *A Dictionary of Printers and Printing* ([n.p.] H. Johnson, 1839).

<sup>20</sup> Richard Garnett, 'Frederick Knight Hunt (1814–1854)', revised by C. A. Creffield, *ODNB* <[doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/14191](https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/14191)>. Knight Hunt's *The Fourth Estate: Contributions towards a history of newspapers and of the Liberty of the Press* (London: Henry Vizetelly, 1850) was the first example of a detailed history of the British newspapers.

<sup>21</sup> By Louis Daguerre and Henry Fox Talbot respectively.

'Newspaper'.<sup>22</sup> The image of the friar highlighted his itinerancy outside closed monasteries which allowed him to interact with, and to influence, the local populations he visited. H. R. Fox Bourne, the radical journalist and newspaper conductor, likened editors and journalists to monarchs and religious ministers asserting, in 1887, that 'Newspapers are now thrones and pulpits and journalism assumes to itself the right and power to control and reform the world'.<sup>23</sup> The year before, Stead had adopted this depiction of editor as king and minister of religion in his own exploration of the role.<sup>24</sup>

Stead's New Journalism was democratic: it aimed to be ubiquitous, present in the public and private spheres, cheap to buy, available throughout the day, and easy to read on the omnibus, in the train, or at a restaurant.<sup>25</sup> He utilised references to the 'agora' of Ancient Greece and to the 'Witenagemot' and 'Folkmote' of medieval Germanic society to suggest the legitimacy of the newspaper press as the locus of the 'public forum' and of wider society.<sup>26</sup> New Journalism was sensationalist in that it appealed to the senses as well as representing a way of attracting readers' attention. The spoken word of the platform and pulpit, of the producing 'tongue' and receiving 'ear', became materialised through print as 'visible speech' for the 'eye' (p. 656), the extent of the print-run determined by the amplificatory capacity of the 'sounding-board' (p. 662). The ear, eye, and tongue represented three organs of sense deployed in the service of the virtual millions for the righting of injustice and the chronicling of events: the ear and eye also represented the targets of New Journalistic sensationalism which became a central press strategy. The tongue of speech was also the tongue of taste that gauged the appropriateness or otherwise of the content and form of the reading material placed before readerships.

Stead introduced a new image in declaring that the newspapers acted as a recording machine, as the 'phonograph of the world' (p. 656), transmitting the spoken word, as it were, over great distances, and providing a 'valuable transcript of yesterday's words, thoughts, and deeds' (p. 655). Metaphorically, the limits of the human body and of human endeavour were being extended through technological developments. The amplification of public opinion was

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<sup>22</sup> William Hazlitt, 'The Influence of Books on Manner', *New Monthly Magazine* (1828), 409–417. Quoted in Aled Jones, *The Powers of the Press*, p. 73. Hazlitt was also a painter and had acted as a parliamentary reporter for the *Morning Chronicle*. Jonathan Bate, 'Hazlitt, William (1778–1830)', *ODNB* <doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/12805>.

<sup>23</sup> H. R. Fox Bourne, *English Newspapers: Chapters in the History of Journalism*, 2 vols (London: Chatto & Windus, 1887), II, p. 390. Quoted in Aled Jones, p. 63. H. C. Swaisland, 'Bourne, Henry Richard Fox (1837–1909)', *ODNB* <doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/31993>. Fox Bourne campaigned for the rights of indigenous peoples and was editor of the *Weekly Dispatch* (1871–1887), a radical paper for a working-class readership. Graham Law and David Haldane Lawrence, 'Weekly Dispatch (1795–1961)', *DNCEJ*, pp. 667–668.

<sup>24</sup> 'Government by Journalism', pp. 661, 663.

<sup>25</sup> 'Government by Journalism', p. 662.

<sup>26</sup> 'Government by Journalism', pp. 653, 654, 666.

not, however, the sole role of the press which also fulfilled the functions of a 'perpetual note of interrogation' (p. 669), a 'watchman' (p. 667), 'the great inspector', and an 'Argus-eyed' (p. 673) entity watching over society in all its aspects. Within these references lies a tension between action and passivity, surveillance and reflection, and examination and questioning. Fundamentally, the press represented a medium for public, democratic discussion, acting as a recorder and examiner, forming a material and virtual space, and inhabiting a palpitating, living body, vital and vitalising.

Stead explored the potential of technology to deliver news and opinions to readerships increasingly distant from the point of production. The introduction of modern presses increased the print-run capacity of newspapers, and railway development pushed readership boundaries further afield by permitting provincial newspapers to reach London and Edinburgh in time for breakfast and the journey to work. This capacity to increase readership numbers through material means suggested to Stead a metaphorical depiction that transferred increases in distance and print volume to an augmentation in sound volume. In consequence, Stead represented newspapers as sounding-boards by which news and opinions could reach distant audiences with the same clarity as at the original point of distribution.<sup>27</sup>

Stead was also aware that the sounding-board phenomenon could have negative effects when newspapers amplified and exaggerated ill-founded information or deliberately set out to misinform their readers. By the late 1880s, Stead explored how newspapers could be used to decide public opinion rather than just to report it, thereby cutting out inconvenient views and favouring others.<sup>28</sup> In consequence, the reach of the press could be enlisted to skew a report of public sentiment rather than to reproduce accurately the degree of confidence behind the views expressed.<sup>29</sup>

The invention of the phonograph (1877) gave Stead a fresh image through which to describe the capacity of newspapers to link the spoken and the printed word.<sup>30</sup> The name of this new invention joined, therefore, platform, pulpit, rostrum, stage, and law court as sources of augmented speech production. These descriptions endeavoured to articulate the links between speech and writing, between the transcription and reproduction of the spoken word, and between concepts of ephemerality and permanence.

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<sup>27</sup> Stead described the ambiguous position of newspapers acting as 'sounding-boards'. Newspapers could overstate the mood of the moment rather than echo popular sentiment more accurately; they could also highlight the way in which legitimate public complaints could be made louder by the intervention of newspapers. 'At Windsor To-day', *PMG*, 5 April 1884, p. 1; 'What Should be Done in Ireland.—III', *PMG*, 22 January 1887, p. 1.

<sup>28</sup> 'Government by Journalism', p. 662.

<sup>29</sup> 'At Windsor To-Day', *PMG*, 5 April 1884, p. 1.

<sup>30</sup> Both 'the press' and 'to broadcast' are also metaphors from the fields of printing and agriculture respectively.

The priority of speech embedded in print caused Stead to reflect on the ephemerality of speech acts and of the printed word in a daily newspaper. Spoken declarations and written records were consolidated in the promotion of newspapers as an historical chronicle and by the ways in which newspapers were archived. Further, this preference for the spoken word was a feature of Nonconformist churches in which the sermon was a pivotal element in the religious service and had impact not only through the content, but, perhaps even more, through the delivery imparted by the speaker. Ex-tempore preaching bore the marks of inspiration and inner conviction while written sermons suggested artifice rather than authenticity.

The newly improved Edison phonograph launched in 1888 provided Stead with an image that enabled him to highlight these important links between the spoken and written word, newspaper ephemerality and archival resilience, sensationalism, and public-opinion forming journalism.<sup>31</sup> This primacy of the spoken word had already been explored in the *PMG* in the 1860s. In the wake of the 1867 Reform Act, the *PMG*, under the control of its founding editor, Frederick Greenwood, highlighted the capacity of the press to influence the expanded electorate through the publicity given to speeches in terms of their content, delivery, and reception.<sup>32</sup> Greenwood argued that it was not the logical argument of an address which necessarily captured the attention of the readership but the powerful rhetorical quality of the speeches themselves. As a result, the *PMG* further asserted that political success would go to those who could ‘most successfully talk over the whole people to their views’ and, most significantly, who were agitating on the populist side. In its readiness to adopt a more personal register, New Journalism proved to be particularly suited to the needs of an increasingly democratised society and would find in Stead a willing exponent of its capacity to influence opinion.

As Matthew Rubery shows, this capacity of the phonograph to reproduce not only the content but also the manner of speech recalls the New Journalistic accounts of speeches which included details of delivery and reception. James Adams, for example, a Scottish laboratory assistant in Edison’s employ, opened an exhibition at the Philadelphia Local Telegraph Company in America with a rendition of the nursery rhyme ‘Jack and Jill’. The fact that the audience was interested in Adams’s accent as well as in the mechanical reproduction of his voice highlighted the way in which the listeners ‘responded as much to the delivery as to the words themselves’.<sup>33</sup> Rubery notes that it was not uncommon for audience members to employ the sensationalism of gothic rhetoric to express their own unsettled feelings caused by listening to the

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<sup>31</sup> <<https://www.loc.gov/collections/edison-company-motion-pictures-and-sound-recordings/articles-and-essays/history-of-edison-sound-recordings/history-of-the-cylinder-phonograph/>> [accessed 1 April 2019].

<sup>32</sup> ‘Journalism and Oratory’, *PMG*, 12 November 1867, p. 10.

<sup>33</sup> Matthew Rubery, ‘Thomas Edison’s Poetry Machine’, *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 2014 (18), <[doi.org/10.16995/ntn.761](https://doi.org/10.16995/ntn.761)>.

phonograph's mechanical voice.<sup>34</sup> The rhetoric of sensationalism in playing upon the immediacy of affective impact rather than cognitive understanding highlighted the effect of spoken language.

Stead asserted that in its role of 'the phonograph of the world', the newspaper had the capacity to represent through press reports and editorial leaders the 'visible speech if not the voice of the democracy'.<sup>35</sup> While public meetings were 'the direct utterance of the voice of Demos without any intermediary', he realised that they were limited in their overall usefulness because such meetings could not be permanently in session. Stead's reference to there being no 'intermediary' evoked the Nonconformist belief that individuals did not need the services of a priest to engage in a relationship with God. Reporting directly what was said at a public meeting meant that the views of the speakers were more likely to be represented untrammelled.

Although Stead had elevated newspapers to the role of the 'agora', by 1887 he thought that the sheer number of speeches being reported was leading to nothing other than 'government by gabble'.<sup>36</sup> This recalled his earlier scepticism over extra-parliamentary agitation which he termed as 'government by clamour' and which, contrary to his future ideas about bringing public opinion to bear on government action, he deprecated.<sup>37</sup> In writing of government 'by gabble' or 'by clamour', Stead emphasised the potential for public opinion to become diffuse and chaotic in its attempts to influence government policy. His proposal for 'government by journalism' introduced a filtering mechanism in the form of questionnaires, focus groups, and, even, the potential to shape inquiries to such a degree that public opinion could become more the opinion of individual newspaper editors than the opinion of the public whose interests they claimed to represent.

Journalism provided not only accounts of fast-changing events but also the material for a more permanent historical record. The daily press dealt with an ever-changing world in which the utterances of one day were replaced by those of the next and where the material content of the newspaper and the material medium of dissemination, paper itself, were both subject to the vagaries of ephemerality. The phonograph allowed the possibility of offering some permanence to the sound of the human voice through, in Edison's case, transcription onto wax-covered cylinders of the necessary phonic signs which, when read by the appropriate machine, could play back into the world the reproduction of a lost voice. The phonograph and the press both shared the capacity to chronicle and to store for posterity aspects of the historical record,

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<sup>34</sup> Rubery, 'Thomas Edison's Poetry Machine'.

<sup>35</sup> 'Government by Journalism', p. 656.

<sup>36</sup> 'Occasional Notes', *PMG*, 21 October 1887, p. 4; 'Government by Journalism', p. 658.

<sup>37</sup> 'Government by Clamour', *NE*, 9 October 1875, p. 2.

and, in the shape of the New Journalism, they also shared the capacity to provide not only a reproduction of the words used in speeches, songs, lectures, and poetry, but indications of how they were delivered and received.

The phonograph gave Stead a powerful image with which to explore democratising journalism in terms of reach and affective impact. It enabled him to think about the nature of newspapers and language, and about the link between speech and print. In the 1880s, Stead examined how the representative function of the press gave it more direct influence than that it exercised when reporting, without observation or censure, the views of others. In line with New Journalistic populism, and with his conception of the role of the editor, Stead was committed to the dissemination of what he considered the best ideas available to the widest audience that he could reach. By 1890, in his opening remarks in the *RoR*, Stead represented himself as a guide tasked to solve the conundrum of the 'mighty maze of modern periodical literature'.<sup>38</sup> In a second illustration, Stead depicted himself as editor-*cum*-agricultural worker sorting the periodical chaff to reveal the all-important seed of useful reading material. He positioned New Journalism to appropriate and reformulate Arnold's promotion of societal cultural elevation:

Culture, according to Matthew Arnold, consists in knowing the best thoughts of the best men upon the subjects that come before us. The aim of this magazine will be to make the best thoughts of the best writers in our periodicals universally accessible.<sup>39</sup>

Arnold's 'best thoughts of the best men' became democratised into 'the best thoughts of the best writers in our periodicals', taken from the reviews in which they were originally published and made available to everyone, provided, of course, they could afford the six-penny monthly cover price or had access to a copy that was readily available in a reading room or public library. There was, at least, some irony in this reference to Arnold for whom Stead's journalism had ushered in much that the former considered unworthy of being considered amongst the best that had been written and read.<sup>40</sup>

In keeping with the re-Christianising, re-moralising mission that Stead accorded to New Journalism, he also cast journalism and his view of the editorial role in the language of religion. This was not a representation chosen for its convenience, but a fundamental choice predicated

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<sup>38</sup> 'Programme', *RoR*, 1 (1890), p. 14.

<sup>39</sup> 'Programme', *RoR*, 1 (1890), p. 14.

<sup>40</sup> 'Preface' to *Culture and Anarchy*, p. 5.

on his religious beliefs. In the early 1870s, at the *NE*, Stead characterised himself as an Old Testament avenging angel rather than as the redeeming Jesus Christ or secular advocate of social rehabilitation that he self-fashioned in the 1880s at the *PMG*.<sup>41</sup> At the *NE*, he sided with a commonly held belief that those who had committed criminal acts should face severely ‘righteous’ retributive action and be subject to closer police scrutiny.<sup>42</sup> However, this Calvinist-inspired depiction of externally administered punishment, of surveillance, and even annihilation, sat uneasily with Stead’s conception of an educationally improving journalism promoting Christian values. Leaders of the Congregational churches, such as R. W. Dale, recognised that such doctrine was harming the chances of Dissenting denominations in their plans to recruit from amongst the poorest members of society. Consequently, as Protestant doctrine softened its view on divine punishment and the horrors of eternal damnation, Stead aligned himself with those whose understanding of deprived and brutalised individuals showed itself through greater compassion and concern for their material welfare. The avenging angel of the early 1870s became the social crusader of the 1880s, impelling those with the political power to effect change, and, in the 1890s, transformed again into the bringer of tidings of joy that material help could be provided where the need was greatest.

In the 1890s, in accordance with the re-Christianising mission with which he invested the *RoR*, Stead returned to his analogy of the pulpit and the press by comparing readers of monthly magazines to church congregations. He believed that successful editors were those who managed to create a close relationship with their readerships just as successful churches existed where the ministers and their congregations enjoyed a mutually beneficial interaction. Declaring that ‘The last thing which I desire is to be a mere man in a pulpit droning a monotonous monologue in the ears of his hearers’, Stead wanted to enjoy a connection with the readership of the *RoR* that was inspiring and uplifting, one that resembled the relationship between inspiring preachers and their congregations.<sup>43</sup> Even this was not sufficient for Stead’s mission at the *RoR* because, from the relative comfort of a mission based on the rapport between a minister and a church congregation, Stead leapt to the world-girdling and empire-enhancing ambition of making ‘this Review a medium of intercommunication throughout the whole English-speaking world’.<sup>44</sup> This aim was to be fulfilled not only by the distribution of Stead’s London published *RoR*. In 1891, an American *RoR* was first published, followed, a year later, by an Australian edition. As Simon J. Potter has warned, however, Stead’s aspirations for global reach were not born out by the sales figures as the British, American, and Australian editions

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<sup>41</sup> ‘The New Year’, *NE*, 1 January 1873, p. 2.

<sup>42</sup> ‘The Executions’, *NE*, 5 January 1874, pp. 2–3.

<sup>43</sup> ‘A Word to Those Who Are Willing to Work’, *RoR*, 1 (1890), p. 53.

<sup>44</sup> ‘A Word to Those Who Are Willing to Work’, *RoR*, 1 (1890), p. 53.

had a combined print run of 200, 000, with about half of the readers residing in Britain.<sup>45</sup> Nonetheless, Stead had now set his eye on contributing to the growing movement that saw in the British Empire a divinely inspired mechanism whereby the reunification of Christianity and the extension of the Christian message could be achieved through the endeavours of the English-speaking peoples across the globe. I discuss this imperial mission further in Chapter 5.

At moments of difficulty, Stead sought comfort from three sources that united his Christian faith and his Congregational allegiance: the Bible, Carlyle's biography of Oliver Cromwell, and the American Romantic poet, James Russell Lowell (1819–1891).<sup>46</sup> Lowell's poetry became a particularly important source of consolation and influence for Stead's view of the journalistic mission which he had set himself to fulfil. Aged fifteen, Stead first discovered Lowell's work after coming across a copy of his satirical *Biglow Papers* (1848 and 1867).<sup>47</sup> When, some years later, Stead looked back on this formative source of inspiration, he located the earliest example of Lowell's influence more particularly in the 'Preface to the Editor's Creed'.<sup>48</sup> Proclaiming 'I know of no so responsible position as that of the public journalist', the fictional editor of the poem declared that the journalist occupied a position which, by rights, should have been that of the clergyman.<sup>49</sup> Underlying this view both sides of the Atlantic was the increasingly commonly held opinion that clergymen had lost something of their moral status because of the position they adopted regarding the importance of life in the hereafter. As Lowell's 'Creed' explored, it had become increasingly untenable to ignore the difficulties encountered in an individual's temporal existence while focusing on the eternal hereafter. Where preachers continued to do so, they became, in Lowell's view, nothing more than masters-of-religious-ceremonies and keepers of theological dogmas. Lowell's representation of the editor as an incarnation of Moses cast the Old Testament prophet as 'the Captain of our Exodus into the Canaan of a truer social order', giving to the journalist the capacity to create a fairer society (p. 236). Stead attributed even more significance to Lowell's 'Extreme Unction' which he believed changed his life (p. 236). In this poem, Lowell depicts a dying man confronted by visions of his past youth and idealism. The approaching end focuses his mind on the realisation that he had wasted the opportunity given by God to achieve something for the good of humankind rather

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<sup>45</sup> Potter, p. 120.

<sup>46</sup> 'Character Sketch: September. James Russell Lowell: His Message, and How It Helped Me', *RoR*, 4 (1891), pp. 235–247 (p. 235).

<sup>47</sup> Lowell published in 1848 a first series of collected articles opposing the Mexican War and the extension of slavery, and a second collection in 1867 about American Unionism. 'James Russell Lowell', *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, <<https://www.britannica.com/biography/James-Russell-Lowell>> [accessed 27 December 2018].

<sup>48</sup> 'Character Sketch: September. James Russell Lowell', *RoR*, 4 (1891), p. 235.

<sup>49</sup> 'The Pious Editor's Creed', in *The Biglow Papers*, in *The Poetical Works of James Russell Lowell* (Boston: James R. Osgood, 1871), pp. 171–348, (pp. 203–206).

than merely his own comfort.<sup>50</sup> The link between the pulpit and the press was predicated on the idea that journalists now superseded preachers in the social order. They did so when they understood and agitated for the resolution of the damaging consequences of social inequalities. It was also important that journalistic success was subordinated to the socio-political causes in the name of which it was earned (p. 237). As Stead declared, it had become necessary to do as Christ would have done: for to do otherwise would be to reject, to deny, and to crucify Him (p. 240).

In the first of the two conferences that Stead gave at the Chicago Central Music Hall, during his November 1893 visit, he spoke of the 'Gospel of Humanity', the result of the influence he attributed to Lowell's poetry.<sup>51</sup> As the *Chicago Daily Tribune* reported, Stead continued his address by declaring that if an individual wished to study how Christianity was at work in a particular country, it would be more informative to visit saloons than cathedrals: 'We must judge applied Christianity not by splendid ceremonies but by the extent to which it has been able to re-make fallen men and women. Wherever you see the mark of suffering you see the brand of anti-Christ'.<sup>52</sup> Stead's lecture was based on the 'Gospel of Humanity' which took the same focus as Dale's Municipal Gospel and Hugh Price Hughes's Social Gospel. All three iterations emphasised that there was a fundamental Christian message that exhorted people to attend to the needs of the most deprived members of society: not to do so was effectively to renounce Christ's teachings. For Stead, the Christian message became a central aspect of a press that sought to promote the ideas and actions needed to make the world morally and materially a better place for all, and particularly for the most deprived and vulnerable. To instil the necessary moral momentum in his work, Stead turned to the values of the Nonconformist Conscience which represented the ethical approach of evangelical Christians.

### **Evangelicalism and the Nonconformist Conscience**

To understand fully the nature of Stead's development of the 'Gospel of Humanity', we need to understand the place of evangelicalism and of the Nonconformist Conscience in his thinking. The term 'evangelical' denoted a form of Christian expression that was neither denominational nor politically limiting.<sup>53</sup> Theological differences were found between Calvinists (including Stead's own Congregational denomination), who emphasised the power of divine will and the existence of a group elected for salvation, and Arminians (such as the Methodists) who placed their

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<sup>50</sup> 'Extreme Unction', in *The Poetical Works of James Russell Lowell*, pp. 74–75.

<sup>51</sup> Whyte, II, pp. 42–43.

<sup>52</sup> *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 13 November 1893, quoted in Whyte, II, p. 43.

<sup>53</sup> Mark Knight and Emma Mason, *Nineteenth-Century Religion and Literature: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 122–123.

emphasis on humankind's free will and the ability for all to seek and receive salvation in the hereafter.<sup>54</sup> Evangelicals were to be found amongst Anglicans and Nonconformists: the former were often Conservative-party supporters while the latter constituted a substantial source of backing for the Liberals.

This multi-denominational, pluri-doctrinal, cross-party expression of Christian engagement was identifiable through four characteristics in particular. As David Bebbington has influentially argued, evangelicals shared a commitment to the importance of personal conversion, activism, a love of the Bible, and a belief in the centrality of the atonement of Christ.<sup>55</sup> The transformation of belief into action was an evangelical expression of commitment to changing the nature of society for the better. Evangelicals engaged with the imprecation that God's will should be done both in the Kingdom of Heaven, where they had no agency, and on earth, where they had proved to be more than capable agitators for reform. They had been instrumental in bringing about the abolition of slavery (1833), contributed to the London City Mission (founded in 1835), and were engaged in the work of the Religious Tract Society (founded in 1799).<sup>56</sup>

The desire of evangelicals to have a building in which to hold meetings was answered by the opening on 29 March 1831 of Exeter Hall. After a meeting in June 1843, convened to promote Christian Union, support for the forming of an organisation to encourage evangelical unity increased and led to the establishment of the Evangelical Alliance in 1846. Although plans for a global alliance were considered, the project was not then pursued, and focus returned instead to the work of national organisations.<sup>57</sup>

Stead's religious beliefs were formed in the Dissenting tradition of Congregationalism and bore the hallmarks of Calvinist thought and evangelicalism. His work at the *NE* was marked by a traditional Congregationalism that largely promoted the values of the Nonconformist Conscience. He adhered to the four pillars of evangelical belief. When he moved to the *London Pall Mall Gazette*, Stead took with him a Nonconformist mode that clashed with the Tory establishment and the conservative wing of the Liberal party. He continued to bring to bear the values of the Nonconformist Conscience, but began to move, in common with most Christians, towards a less monolithically inflexible acceptance of Calvinist doctrine.<sup>58</sup> It had become plain to many that it was no longer tenable to charge the deprived and the impoverished with the theological demands of pre-election for salvation and the atonement.

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<sup>54</sup> Knight and Mason, p. 123.

<sup>55</sup> Bebbington, *Victorian Nonconformity*, p. 3. Knight and Mason, p. 124, acknowledge the influence in recent research on Evangelicalism of Bebbington's summary of belief.

<sup>56</sup> Knight and Mason, p. 124.

<sup>57</sup> Knight and Mason, pp. 125–126.

<sup>58</sup> Parsons, 'From Dissenters to Free Churchmen', pp. 107–108.

A central driving force for Nonconformists included adherence to demanding moral values in public and private life which became the touchstone of excellence for the Dissenters and a subject of satirical mirth for others. These ethical exigences represented collectively the Nonconformist Conscience, a term which first appeared in the press in the 1840s, but, as I discuss fully below, which has largely been thought to have been coined in the 1890s. This has meant that a useful, short-hand, expression for the moral standards of Dissenters has been difficult to use with confidence by those attempting to apply it to the whole of the Victorian period. Yet, this term and its history represent a key element in Nonconformist thought and in Stead's New Journalistic mission.

In the last decades of the nineteenth century, the 'Nonconformist Conscience' as phrase and concept exercised significant influence in public debate. The term had come to connote the expectations of Dissenting congregations regarding matters of public as well as private concern. Representatives of the Nonconformist Conscience advanced their views on education, church rates, church tithes, disestablishment, burials, and Ireland within the context of the perceived and actual inequalities suffered by the Dissenting population. The Nonconformist Conscience engaged also with social evils that included drunkenness, sexual impropriety, and, particularly from the 1880s, the rise of opportunities for mass gambling, all of which tended to harm, and even destroy, the lives of individuals and, through them, the communities in which they lived. Each matter was considered a moral question which had gained its place amongst those taken up by Nonconformists because they formed obstacles to the spread of the gospel message and, therefore, to the building of God's Kingdom on Earth, a spiritual, but also a material world in the temporal sphere.<sup>59</sup>

Until now, academic writing has located the first appearance of the term Nonconformist Conscience in the correspondence columns of *The Times* of 28 November 1890 in a letter by 'A Wesleyan Minister' calling for the resignation of Charles Parnell, the leader of the Irish party at Westminster, recently involved in a scandalous divorce case.<sup>60</sup> However, scholars have found difficulty in accommodating this date to their studies of the issues connoted by the term. Bebbington, for example, has eschewed any anachronistic use of Nonconformist Conscience even if the term's connotations could in effect be applied to the whole of the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>61</sup> Helmstadter, on the other hand, has asked why such a powerful discursive term emerged at the very moment that the Nonconformist synthesis of political and social views

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<sup>59</sup> Bebbington, *The Nonconformist Conscience: Chapel and Politics, 1870–1914* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1982), pp. 8,9,11,13,15.

<sup>60</sup> Helmstadter, p. 64; Bebbington, *The Nonconformist Conscience*, p. 100. The 'Wesleyan Minister' was most probably Hugh Price Hughes, the founding editor of the *Methodist Times*.

<sup>61</sup> Bebbington, *The Nonconformist Conscience*, p. 11.

was weakening.<sup>62</sup> Most recently, Watts has partly resolved these difficulties by examining the issues under the heading of ‘The Conscience of Dissent’ and by reserving the use of the term the Nonconformist Conscience for the period relating to the Parnell case and after.<sup>63</sup> Although such discussions have generally raised important questions regarding Nonconformist attitudes to the major social problems of the Victorian period, the difficulty of reconciling date and meaning has nonetheless proved a stumbling block to interpretation. My research shows, however, that the on-going difficulties posed by this apparent chronological mismatch between coinage and concept can be resolved and further debate thereby promoted.

The historiographical account concerning the coining of the term has remained largely consistent for over a century and has been predominantly shaped by Dorothea P. Hughes in the biography she wrote of her father, the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes. Dorothea Hughes has recounted that the phrase Nonconformist Conscience appeared in *The Times* in 1890 in a negative context before being taken up by her father and wielded as a term for religious and political crusade.<sup>64</sup> Lovall Cocks argued later that Nonconformist Conscience should more properly be termed ‘Evangelical conscience’ because the major themes concerning individual moral improvement—intemperance, sexual impropriety, and opposition to gambling—were common to both Dissenting and Anglican Evangelical priorities.<sup>65</sup> Questions relating to educational, political, and religious equality could be placed under the category of Nonconformist Conscience as these issues often opposed Dissenting denominations and the established Anglican Church.

John F. Glaser made what he termed the first intervention to correct a part of this narrative by pointing out that the term was first used in the correspondence columns of *The Times* by ‘a Wesleyan Minister’, rather than by a critic of Nonconformity, which then fed into a leader article in the same issue of the paper.<sup>66</sup> As discussed above, Helmstadter and Bebbington have both examined the term and although attempting to reconcile coining and meaning have produced arguments that sit uncomfortably with the fact that the date of coining and the period of applicability do not match. More recently, Timothy Larsen and Stewart J. Brown have also discussed the significance of the Nonconformist Conscience in nineteenth-century Britain.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Helmstadter, pp. 61, 63.

<sup>63</sup> Watts, III, 229, 301–304.

<sup>64</sup> Dorothea P. Hughes, *The Life of Hugh Price Hughes*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1904), pp. 357–358.

<sup>65</sup> H. F. Lovall Cocks, *The Nonconformist Conscience* (London: Independent Press, 1943), pp. 7–8. D. W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A history from the 1730s to the 1980s* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1989), pp. 132–137, also recognises that evangelical Anglicans and Nonconformists shared concerns for social reform while political differences, as over disestablishment, placed them on opposing sides of the argument.

<sup>66</sup> John F. Glaser, ‘Parnell’s Fall and the Nonconformist Conscience’, *Irish Historical Studies*, 12 (1960), 119–138 (p. 135).

<sup>67</sup> Timothy Larsen, ‘A Nonconformist Conscience? Free Churchmen in Parliament in Nineteenth-Century England’, in *Parliament and Dissent*, ed. by Stephen Taylor and David L. Wykes (Edinburgh: Edinburgh

Larsen has re-highlighted Lovall Cocks's assertion that what has been in part termed the Nonconformist Conscience should more correctly be categorised as the 'Evangelical conscience'. Brown has employed the term in two essays, the second of which (2015) uses the phrase in relation to Stead's time at the *NE* without Brown's being preoccupied either with the dating of the term or offering a rectification in the scholarship so far.

My research shows that the term Nonconformist Conscience was not, in fact, coined in 1890 in the correspondence columns of *The Times*. Earlier uses of the phrase had already appeared in British newspapers during the period 1840-1889 where the sense was that of commonly held Dissenting opinion regarding matters of public interest such as church rates, national educational provision, disestablishment, and burials.<sup>68</sup> At this point, in its pre-1890 usage, the term Nonconformist Conscience carried negative connotations when opponents of Dissenting sensitivities highlighted what was perceived as the Nonconformists' expression of narrow, self-serving interests. After 1890, Nonconformists, such as the Methodist Hugh Price Hughes, adopted the term and used it as a positive campaign standard as evidenced, for example, by Nonconformist opposition to the 1902 Education Bill, the Liberal-party landslide general election victory in 1906, and the passing of legislation for Church disestablishment in Wales in 1914. This re-dating of the first appearance of the term means that it can be used more productively in debate regarding both individual and collective issues of importance to

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University Press, 2005), pp. 107–119; Stewart J. Brown, 'W. T. Stead, the 'New Journalism' and the 'New Church'', pp. 213–232; 'W. T. Stead and the Civic Church, 1886–1895', <doi:10.1017/S0022046913000638>.

<sup>68</sup> See, for example, 'Imperial Parliament/House of Lords/Tuesday April 20/Adjourned debate upon the Education Act', the *Morning Post*, 21 April 1847, p. 2 and reprinted, for example, in 'The Government Education Measure', *Essex Herald*, 27 April 1847, p. 2; 'Church Rates on their last legs', *Cheshire Observer*, 26 February 1859, p. 7; regarding Church Rates, see 'Original Correspondence/The Dissenters and the Election', *Hertford Mercury*, 5 March 1864, p. 2; regarding education, see 'Bath and Wells Diocesan Societies/Society for Education', *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, 6 October 1864, p. 3; 'Elections of Churchwardens', *Somerset County Gazette*, 27 April 1867, p. 6; regarding education, see 'The Nonconformist Conscience', *Coventry Standard*, 22 September 1871, p. 4; regarding the Liberation Society, see [Editorial], *Nottinghamshire Guardian*, 17 November 1871, p. 6; 'The Education Question.-Defeat of the Birmingham League', *Lancaster Gazette, and General Advertiser for Lancashire, Westmoreland, Yorkshire, &c.*, 9 March 1872, p. 4; regarding disestablishment, see '[Editorial], *Berkshire Chronicle*, 6 July 1872, p. 5; regarding the National Education Union, see '[Leader article], *Morning Post*, 16 April 1873, p. 4; 'Are the Clergy State Paid?', *Blackburn Standard and North East Lancashire Advertiser*, 26 February 1876, p. 2; regarding burials, see '[Leader article], *Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle*, 17 March 1877, p. 5, '[Leader article], *Glasgow Herald*, 20 February 1879, p. 4, 'The Burials Question', reprinted from the *National Church in the Exeter and Plymouth Gazette Daily Telegrams*, 28 May 1880, p. 5; regarding Gladstone's policy in Ireland, see '[Leading article], *London Evening Standard*, 9 May 1889, p. 5; regarding tithes, and also concerning precedence at public ceremonies, see 'The Moral of the Tithe War', *Western Mail*, 29 August 1890, p. 4. Earlier uses of the term 'Nonconformist Conscience' are to be found in *The Times* as follows: regarding education, 'House of Commons/Education Adjourned Debate', *The Times*, 21 April 1847, p. 3; regarding burials, 'Parliamentary Intelligence', *The Times*, 26 April 1883, p. 7; 'The Tithe Agitation in Wales', *The Times*, 30 August 1890, p. 12.

Nonconformists.<sup>69</sup> Moreover, we are no longer constrained by distractions caused by potential anachronistic use or potential misapplication of the term to particular issues.

Dorothea Hughes suggested in her biography of her father that he was decisively instrumental in giving a positive charge to the term in 1890 during the Parnell case scandal. Although Price Hughes was influential in his championing of the Nonconformist Conscience, it is more probable that he was able to enlist the energy released by changes to the civil status of Nonconformists generally. For by 1890, Nonconformists had succeeded in attaining a civil standing that included a substantial place at the ballot box based on the franchise changes brought in by the Second and Third Reform Acts of 1867 and 1884. These changes were reflected in the designations of Nonconformists generally. The assertively confrontational ‘Dissenting’ had given way to the relatively less oppositional ‘Nonconformist’. By the 1890s, however, the preferred, more conciliatory term had become ‘Free Church’ even if all three designations were still in use at the end of the nineteenth century.

The religious and secular organisations engaged in social reform had to manage the competing claims of individualism and collectivism. The fundamental question was to what extent should a person assume responsibility for their own spiritual and material well-being or did society have a greater role to play in caring for individuals in the wider community.<sup>70</sup> Politically, Liberal individualism and Conservative state interventionism had represented competing approaches to resolving social problems.<sup>71</sup> Additionally, since the mid-1860s, a usually stable alliance of Gladstonian Liberalism and Nonconformist individualism had confronted a Conservative paternalism imbricated in the established church and state machinery.<sup>72</sup> Of concern to so many interested in improving the conditions of the least well-off, the social problems of the last decade of the nineteenth century— poverty, hunger, precariousness and want of employment, slum dwellings— were as pressing as they ever had been.

Stead proved to be an effective advocate of bringing Nonconformist values to bear upon collective social problems, and, in doing so, he brought to public attention subjects that electrified and destabilised because of their sensational nature. He was instrumental in promoting the work of the Congregationalist minister Andrew Mearns and his 1883 pamphlet *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London* in which it was recognised that material deprivation was a

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<sup>69</sup> An evaluation of the use of ‘conscience’ in nineteenth-century newspapers shows that the terms ‘national conscience’, ‘political conscience’, ‘Christian conscience’, and ‘religious conscience’ were relatively far more in use 1840–1899 than ‘Nonconformist Conscience’. Source, *British Newspapers*, British Library, [accessed 16 January 2017].

<sup>70</sup> Parsons, ‘From Dissenters to Free Churchmen’, pp. 88–90.

<sup>71</sup> Bebbington, *The Nonconformist Conscience*, p. 10; Parsons, ‘From Dissenters to Free Churchmen’, p. 81.

<sup>72</sup> Parsons, ‘From Dissenters to Free Churchmen’, p. 91.

major cause of immorality rather than immorality being a cause of material poverty. Far from representing a materialist concession to collective endeavour, Evangelical protest against slum housing called for the removal of an obstacle to the propagation of the gospel. Material betterment would lay the foundations for moral progress by sweeping away the conditions that favoured criminal behaviour and, therefore, sin.<sup>73</sup>

One of the most frequently acknowledged aspects of New Journalism was sensationalism which became the focus of animosity towards the newspapers that exemplified Stead's influence. The press which had long nurtured papers forming change-resistant buttresses of socio-political establishment found itself engendering an emotive, agitation-promoting medium that campaigned on issues rather than just reporting them. In so doing, sensationalism proved to be an effective mechanism to capture the reader's attention and to persuade.

### **Applying a Differentiated Sensationalism**

Shaping Stead's crusading rhetoric was an evangelical aesthetic that drew upon sensation and sensationalism. The physical enervation provoked by sensationalist writing can be directly associated with the narratives of evangelical religious conversion that highlighted the physical experience of spiritual transformation. As Bebbington has written, central to the life of an evangelical Christian, and, therefore, to Nonconformists, was conversionism.<sup>74</sup> In descriptions of conversionism, there is an emphasis upon the recognition of the conscious awareness of the act itself. Although there could be a purely mental acknowledgement of such an event, conversion was most often described as being accompanied by physical effect. Physical sensation accompanied the mental realisation that an individual had accepted God: the mental understanding followed the physical effect. New Journalism conscripted the physical effect of sensationalism in its endeavour to convert readers to particular points of view. For mental understanding of issues, it was essential to capture the attention of the readership: to do so required the earnestness and enthusiasm present in conversion and sermons in which psychology and physiology came together. However, despite the apparent effectiveness and moral value of such rhetorical deployment, sensationalism remained a contested cultural phenomenon.

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<sup>73</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, pp. 133–135; Watts, III, pp. 290–291; Gerald Parsons, 'Social Control to Social Gospel: Victorian Christian Social Attitudes', in *Religion in Victorian Britain*, ed. by Parsons, Moore, and Wolffe, II: *Controversies*, ed. by Parsons, 39–62 (pp. 47–48).

<sup>74</sup> Bebbington, *Victorian Nonconformity*, rev. edn, p. 3.

Stead believed that sensationalism became a catch-all expression of condemnation with which opponents of New Journalism were able ‘to sneer at each fresh development’ of what he termed ‘the more advanced journalism’.<sup>75</sup> Stead understood the fundamental objections that opponents of sensationalism made — ‘It is the novel, the startling, the unexplained, that they denounce; the presentation of facts with such vividness and graphic force as to make a distinct even although temporary impact upon the mind’<sup>76</sup> — and set out under what circumstances it could be appropriately used in the press:

For sensationalism is solely a means to an end. It is never an end in itself. When it ceases to serve its turn, it must be exchanged for some other and more effective mood of rousing the sluggish mind of the general public into at least a momentary activity.<sup>77</sup>

The mind of the general public was not thought to be as agile as that of the more educated members of society and required stimulation for it to notice, even for a short period of time, important issues needing attention. In Stead’s moralised world, it was difficult to rouse the public to action as ‘even when its object-lessons have been written in characters of blood and flame, it has too often ignored their significance’.<sup>78</sup> This reference to ‘blood and flame’ recalled the official ‘war cry’ of the Salvation Army, ‘Blood and Fire’, an association of phrase that was very probably an intended gesture of respectful recognition of the organisation.<sup>79</sup> Sensationalism had, therefore, a distinct, and far from arbitrary, role to play in the press:

Now, I have not a word to say in favour of any method of journalism that can fairly be called exaggerated or untrue [...] The sensationalism which is indispensable is sensationalism which is justifiable. Sensationalism in journalism is justifiable up to the point that it is necessary to arrest the eye of the public and compel them to admit the necessity of action.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> ‘Government by Journalism’, p. 670.

<sup>76</sup> ‘Government by Journalism’, pp. 670–671.

<sup>77</sup> ‘Government by Journalism’, p. 672.

<sup>78</sup> ‘Government by Journalism’, p. 673.

<sup>79</sup> In the Salvation Army’s motto and war cry ‘Blood and Fire’, the ‘blood’ represents Christ’s blood shed on the cross to save humankind and ‘fire’ refers to the fire of the Holy Spirit and the purification of believers. Stead cultivated excellent relations with the Salvation Army from the end of the 1870s onwards.

<sup>80</sup> ‘Government by Journalism’, p. 671.

Journalism that utilised eye-catching bold titles, cross-heads, and typographical variation was more likely to stir readers to resolve their myopic, purblind understanding in the interests of action: ‘When the public is short-sighted — and on many subjects it is a blear-eyed public, short-sighted to the point of blindness — you need to print in capitals’ (p. 671). Stead argued that without such impassioned rhetorical and typographical strategies, no notice would be taken of the very issues which most needed publicising.<sup>81</sup>

Stead advised that some uses of sensationalism were to be avoided. He deprecated the use of sensationalist techniques merely ‘for purposes of harrowing the feelings of the reader’, although he firmly advocated its practice as a means of drawing attention to substantive matters concerning, most importantly, politics and social reform. He aimed to represent the interests of the least well-off and to publicise those issues that had been kept out of the public eye often through dubious claims to defend general standards of morality and decency.<sup>82</sup> As he declared:

It would not be difficult to maintain that nothing can ever get itself accomplished nowadays without sensationalism. [...] In politics, in social reform, it is indispensable. [...] It was the sensationalism of the “Bitter Cry of Outcast London,” emphasized by a journalistic sounding-board, that led to the appointment of the Royal Commission on the Housing of the Poor. And it was sensationalism that passed the Criminal Law Amendment Act.<sup>83</sup>

This defence of sensationalism summarised well Stead’s pragmatic approach to a technique that did not have unanimous support in the press and amongst the general public, but which, nevertheless, had the capacity to move opinion in the direction of progressive social reform.

In the debate over sensationalism, Stead made an important differentiation between sensationalism for its own sake and sensationalism with a purpose. In defending a ‘justifiable’ sensationalism, and rejecting a sensationalism designed merely to disturb or to titillate, he demonstrated that such a discursive strategy was far from monotonal: in his crusading journalism, he united sensationalist content and the sensationalism of evangelical sermonising. In deploying what became a prominent marker of New Journalism, Stead drew upon, in Jean

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<sup>81</sup> ‘Government by Journalism’, p. 671.

<sup>82</sup> ‘Government by Journalism’, pp. 670–673.

<sup>83</sup> ‘Government by Journalism’, p. 672. Such sensationalist struggles included the *Bitter Cry of Outcast London* housing reform campaign (1883) and Stead’s consistent advocacy for repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts.

Chalaby's description, a diffused cultural phenomenon.<sup>84</sup> Sensationalist rhetoric and content became associated not only with newspapers and novels but also with the oratorical strategies of political speakers and the preachers of sermons, and were received with both opprobrium and approval. The cultural context in which sensationalism flourished, therefore, predated its incorporation into New Journalism.

In three articles published during the second half of the 1870s, the *Saturday Review* examined the effect of sensationalism on religious and journalistic expression and established an explicit connection between more populist newspapers and revivalist preaching.<sup>85</sup> The *Saturday Review's* comments prefigured those that would be made about the New Journalism of the 1880s and gave an insight into the mechanism of newspaper crusading and Stead's press practices.

In 1875, the *Saturday Review* negatively critiqued the sensationalism of the American revivalists Moody and Sankey, seeing in the stimulating liveliness of their preaching a vulgarising degradation of both the religious message and the mental capacities of the audience for which such evangelisation was intended.<sup>86</sup> In the view of the *Saturday Review*, the revivalist gatherings were more performance and amusement for the middle classes than religious mission to religiously disaffected or seemingly unmoved working-class individuals.

In this perceived mismatch between intended and actual audience, between the democratised, although potentially vulgarising, rhetoric of sensationalism, and the customary, higher, language of traditional religious services, the *Saturday Review* identified an instance of transgression between the content of venerated messages and their rhetorical transmission. This argument was later reflected in criticism of New Journalism's more popularising rhetoric and Arnold's highlighting of the loss of an elevating cultural spirit. More particularly, as I have argued in Chapter 1, in the 1860s, Arnold targeted what he considered to be Nonconformist cultural weaknesses and the tone of less culturally uplifting newspapers. In the 1880s, Stead's Nonconformist and democratising values became enjoined in his New Journalistic mission attracting the ire of Arnold in his 1887 *Contemporary Review* articles. Stead's sensationalism, respectable and justified as he believed it to be, drew upon just such revivalist strategies, to be found on both sides of the Atlantic, and, notably, in the exuberant actions of the Salvation Army.

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<sup>84</sup> Jean Chalaby, *The Invention of Journalism* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), p. 160.

<sup>85</sup> 'Religious Sensationalism', *Saturday Review*, 20 March 1875, pp. 374–375; 'Sensational Journalism', *Saturday Review*, 6 October 1877, pp. 410–411; 'Sensational Sermons', *Saturday Review*, 15 February 1879, pp. 200–201.

<sup>86</sup> 'Religious Sensationalism', *Saturday Review*, 20 March 1875, pp. 374–375. Dwight Moody and Ira Sankey were highly influential in Britain during the religious revival of 1873–1874. Moody visited Britain three times between 1873 and the early 1890s and was highly influential in the recruitment of men for home and foreign missions and for the ministry. Sankey was a powerful influence from 1874 on the introduction of hymns and the harmonium which he played while touring with Moody. Callum G. Brown, pp. 97, 54.

Under the heading ‘Sensational Sermons’, the *Saturday Review* further elaborated on this subject by positing a link between religious expression and perceived deficiencies of popular, sensationalist journalism.<sup>87</sup> The *Saturday Review* suggested that commercial interests, as expressed by the economic laws of supply and demand, were the cause of what it termed ‘modern theological sensationalism’ and proposed that the reading public was itself responsible for the emergence of the phenomenon.<sup>88</sup> The newspaper suggested that the ‘heated pulpiteer’ would readily find sensationalist content in topical political issues, and, later, if newspaper sensationalism had not already seized upon such material, in ‘social scandal’ (pp. 200–201). The *Saturday Review*’s criticisms of overt commercial rivalry, of the deployment of a fiery rhetoric, and the piquant treatment of political issues and scabrous personal scandals highlighted a set of concerns regarding sensationalism that were common to religion and journalism.

The sensationalism of New Journalism encountered the sensationalism of religion when Stead and the *PMG* combined with the Salvation Army in the conduct of social crusades.<sup>89</sup> The Salvation Army had already met opposition for the same reasons that underlined hostility to New Journalism. The Church of England episcopal authorities, for example, spoke out against the advertisement of what they considered to be the ephemeral rewards of innovation and the creation of enervating emotion. In September 1880, James Fraser, the Bishop of Manchester, while consecrating a new parish church at Langho, near Wakefield, targeted the same elements for disapproval as those associated with New Journalism:

[T]he bishop expressed the opinion that a sobriety and calmness of discipline in the Church was more needed in England perhaps than any other influence to-day. People were running wild after excitement revivals, sensational religion, extraordinary methods of trying to win souls, dreams of conversion wrought by a word, an impulse, or a feeling.<sup>90</sup>

Bishop Fraser’s opposition to the febrile nature of ‘sensational religion’ with its emphasis on persuasion through the senses rather than on rational understanding reflected the opposition that had been voiced by the *Saturday Review* in the 1870s and prefigured that which Stead’s use of sensationalism at the *PMG* would encounter in the 1880s.

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<sup>87</sup> ‘Sensational Sermons’, *Saturday Review*, 15 February 1879, pp. 200–201.

<sup>88</sup> ‘Sensational Sermons’, *Saturday Review*, 15 February 1879, pp. 200–201.

<sup>89</sup> The most important concerned the ‘Maiden Tribute to Modern Babylon’ crusade published in the *PMG* of July 1885.

<sup>90</sup> ‘The Bishop of Manchester on Religious Sobriety’, *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 28 September 1880, p. 4.

As an example of the Bishop's disapproval, William Booth's Christian army exploited appeals to popular culture and the occupation of public spaces. Marches, bands, the launch of the *War Cry* newspaper, conversion meetings, missions to the slums, and the work of the Hallelujah lasses, all contributed to raise a storm of evangelical enthusiasm in the fight for the salvation of souls.<sup>91</sup> Similarly, William Magee, the Bishop of Peterborough, used the occasion of his triennial visitation to Leicester in 1882 to level similar criticisms at the 'extravagances' of sensational religion. Although he understood how such mechanisms could render religious affiliation more attractive and more easily achievable, he feared a lowering of spiritual rigour that could prove the undoing of religion itself:

There was an increasing danger, too, of an attempt to fill churches or gather adherents by a large use of what he must call sensationalism in religion [...] [This] carried with it the seed of its own decay and failure, because novelty could not be always novelty, and if sensationalism was persevered in the time must come when the new sensation became the old form.<sup>92</sup>

Bishop Magee's judgement was not without foundation if the momentary effect of stimulation of the senses was thought capable of anchoring a firm understanding of religious beliefs. In 'Government by Journalism', Stead recognised that sensationalism was fundamentally a means of capturing a readership's attention although the need to establish firm mental representation of particular ideas would rely on other, more orthodox, methods, such as well-crafted argumentation.

Stead's New Journalism brought together influences from the sensation novel and revivalist sermonising. Tellingly, sensationalist evangelisers accused of deploying such rhetorical elements were said to defend themselves with arguments used by sensationalist writers. In her examination of nineteenth-century theories of physiological psychology, Vanessa Ryan has shown how 'sensation novels' evoked in readers somatic responses in the manner of earlier gothic literature and melodrama.<sup>93</sup> The importance of understanding how texts were received

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<sup>91</sup> For an important account of the Salvation Army in the nineteenth century, see Pamela J. Walker, *Pulling the Devil's Kingdom Down: The Salvation Army in Victorian Britain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

<sup>92</sup> 'The Bishop of Peterborough on Sensational Religion', *Nottinghamshire Guardian*, 20 October 1882, p. 8; 'Sensational Religion', *Sheffield Independent*, 18 October 1882, p. 2.

<sup>93</sup> Vanessa L. Ryan, *Thinking Without Thinking in the Victorian Novel* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), pp. 51–53. See, also, Nicholas Dames, *The Physiology of the Novel: Reading, Neural Science, and the Form of Victorian Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

by readers was increased by the emergence of a mass reading public.<sup>94</sup> Famous ‘sensation’ writers included Wilkie Collins (1824–1889) and Mary Elizabeth Braddon (1835–1915) who stimulated physical reactions in their readers by playing on their nerves and emotions. This gave a rationale for print material to be qualified as food, stimulant, narcotic, poison, antidote, and cure. As Nicholas Dames discusses, the paradigmatic applicability of physiological psychology and its consideration of readers’ reactions to the printed text was to be found in the reading of novels. The central point of interest concerned the affects produced upon readers, the evocation of sentiments, the presence of heightened shifts in emotion, and the arousal and quiescence of emotional effect.<sup>95</sup>

The emergence of the Sensation Novel is usually associated with the publication in 1860 of Wilkie Collins’s *The Woman in White*. The genre brought together the sensational aspects of the Gothic novel and the realism of the domestic sub-genre. Sensation novels suggested that the family domain was a locus of destabilising influences where criminal acts, madness, and enduring unhappiness all lay active and hidden within the privacy of British homes.<sup>96</sup>

Social conditions were propitious for the development of the Sensation Novel. The Victorian public was eager for spectacular forms of entertainment; the abolition of the Newspaper Stamp Tax in 1856 had increased the circulation figures of penny newspapers publishing accounts of sensational crimes; penny-dreadful magazines furnished similar material for children; the 1857 Matrimonial Causes Act provided material for invasive examination of the collapsing marriages of the more prosperous classes.<sup>97</sup> Collins succeeded in capturing the public appetite for such narratives and fostered it through his deployment of ‘high-impact reportage’, combining sensational content and sensation-provoking style.<sup>98</sup>

John Sutherland has described Collins’s adoption of ‘interruptive typography’, for example in the form of italicised text and variations in line spacing, and of ‘dynamic paragraphing’ to create segmented narrative threads. The aim was to stimulate in the readers uncertainty and ambiguity by introducing atypical stylistic variation that complemented the sensational nature of the content. Novels written along such lines appealed to the somatic as well as the rational understanding of the readers.<sup>99</sup> Collins’s sensation fiction captured readerly attention and harnessed it to both the pleasures of an entertaining read and the novelised account of social inequalities that needed resolution. In his novels, the unequal civic status of

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<sup>94</sup> Dames, p. 10, and, in particular, Chapter 1, ‘Mass Reading and Physiological Novel Theory’, pp. 25–70.

<sup>95</sup> Dames, pp. 60–61.

<sup>96</sup> Matthew Sweet, ‘Introduction’, Wilkie Collins, *The Woman in White* (London: Penguin, 2003 (1860)), p. xiii.

<sup>97</sup> Sweet, pp. xiv–xv.

<sup>98</sup> John Sutherland, ‘Introduction’, Wilkie Collins, *Armadale* (London: Penguin, 1995 (1864–1866)), p. vii.

<sup>99</sup> Sutherland, pp. vii–viii.

women, imperial oppression, and the abuse of the Lunacy Laws, for example, formed the central themes of *No Name* (1862), *The Moonstone* (1868), and *The Woman in White* (1860) respectively.<sup>100</sup>

Stead's sensation journalism of the 1880s similarly deployed sensation content and sensation-provoking typography. Sexual immorality, sexual criminality, and the discriminatory civic status of women shaped the three major campaigns at the *PMG* which I examine in Chapter 4. New Journalistic devices such as crossheads, stacked headlines, a well-judged writing tempo, and impact-provoking language served to create anticipation, instability, and nervous response. Like Collins, Stead sought to capture the readership's attention and to alert it to matters of social and political unease. While Collins's middle-class readerships were shocked, inveigled, and often captivated by his fiction, Stead's middle-class readership was similarly subject to the same sensations.

Stead's 1886 caveat that there were uses of sensationalism that he did not support encountered a particular articulation of the phenomenon in the stoked-up, imperial militarism that earned the name 'Jingoism' and Stead's implacable antagonism. The insurrection of Serbs and Bulgarian Christians against Ottoman rule in 1876–1877 created the fear for some and the expectation for others of war between Russia and Turkey occasioning Britain's entry into the conflict on the side of the latter. Although not yet explicitly employing the term 'Jingoism', Stead nevertheless described with distaste the characteristics of warmongering by elements of the press:

The Press seldom exhibits so powerfully, sometimes even so terribly, its influence over mankind as when, in the midst of some great crisis, it devotes itself assiduously to inflame the slumbering animosities and excite the worst passions of the human heart.<sup>101</sup>

Stead cautioned against the irresponsible heightening of violence and negative emotion by the press in a declaration that recalls Arnold's own censure of such strategies. His observations also counter the view that Stead was himself an irresponsible purveyor of sensationalist rhetoric. As he further stated:

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<sup>100</sup> Wilkie Collins, *No Name*, rev. edn (London: Penguin, 2004 (1862)); Wilkie Collins, *The Moonstone* (London: Penguin, 1998 (1868)).

<sup>101</sup> 'The Removal of National Misunderstandings', *NE*, 10 November 1877, p. 2.

[A]lthough the vast power of the journalist is often malignantly excited to hound on nations to war, fortunately for civilisation it is often employed in removing the misunderstandings and softening the prejudices which, if neglected, may produce so frightful a harvest in the field of battle.<sup>102</sup>

While Arnold argued that the strategies of the stump-orator were damaging when introduced into populist newspapers, Stead believed that the press had the legitimate capacity to strengthen or to weaken the emotive charge that it gave to individual accounts. This imparted to newspapers the capacity to direct influence in ways that Arnold believed favoured a populist approach which threatened the political and social stability of the country.

The term 'Jingo' was introduced into popular culture by the music-hall performer, Gilbert Hastings Macdermott (1845?–1901).<sup>103</sup> Macdermott became well-known through his rendering of George William Hunt's composition 'Macdermott's War Song' which was more usually called the 'Jingo Song'. During the late 1870s, Russia's declaration of war on Turkey was seen as a threat to Britain's interests and Hunt's song, as interpreted by Macdermott, became associated with the Conservative-party factions that called for action against Russia. From the 'Jingo Song', Stead retained three organising elements to characterise this irresponsible version of imperialism: excessive pride in a nation's military might, an emphasis on national concerns at the expense of imperial responsibilities, and an overly emphatic determination to keep perceived British interests untouched by a foreign power.<sup>104</sup>

At the *PMG*, (1880–1889) Stead was the consistent opponent of a self-interested imperialism that disregarded its responsibilities towards the lands and peoples that had been occupied: 'The note of the new Imperialism before which both Jingoism and Non-intervention will flee away is not the assertion of power but the recognition of responsibility'.<sup>105</sup> Stead espoused an anti-Jingoist approach that incorporated 'a wise Imperialism, an Imperialism *plus* sanity and The Ten Commandments', a formulation that belonged to the Liberal politician, W. E. Forster, and which very probably served as the source for Stead's own advocacy in 1890 at the

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<sup>102</sup> 'The Removal of National Misunderstandings', *NE*, 10 November 1877, p. 2.

<sup>103</sup> Dave Russell, 'Macdermott, Gilbert Hastings (1845?–1901)', *ODNB* <[doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/34697](https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/34697)>.

<sup>104</sup> 'Who Are The Jingoists?', *PMG*, 12 June 1884, p. 1. These aspects spoke to Britain's on-going preoccupation with the relatively poor health of its military, the crushing defeat of the British Army by the Zulu people at Isandlwana in 1879, and the loss of the Transvaal only four years after its annexation in 1877, following a decisive victory for the Boers at Majuba Hill in 1881. Mineral deposits, including gold and diamonds, were principal reasons for keeping the South African colonies safely within the orbit of British control as well as offering a staging-post for the defence of the Indian empire if belligerent interests made themselves known via the Suez Canal.

<sup>105</sup> 'Lord Salisbury's Mistakes', *PMG*, 5 June 1884, p. 1.

launch of the *RoR* for an ‘Imperialism within limits defined by common-sense and the Ten Commandments’.<sup>106</sup> Stead advertised the view that Disraeli’s actions at the time of the Eastern Question left the country with a morally unacceptable even if strategically advantageous guiding principle:

The constant subordination of British duty to British interest, the barbaric exultation in the use and display of force, and an absolute indifference to the welfare of those populations whose lives and property were endangered or sacrificed by our policy, were conspicuous in the whole of the Eastern policy of the late Government.<sup>107</sup>

Stead held up for scrutiny the immorality of governments that placed imperial self-interest before international obligations at the expense of other peoples and their material well-being. Later, his views had to take account of such a dilemma if he were to succeed in maintaining a morally acceptable view of Britain’s overseas possessions. A potentially powerful answer to this problem lay in the attribution to expanding British interests of a sacred world view and mission. Stead adopted this world view with increasingly explicit demonstration of the importance that he accorded to it and found in his meeting with Cecil John Rhodes, the prominent imperialist, the possibility of giving expression to such values through his journalism in the *RoR*. The blueprint for this new review was contained in the two papers Stead contributed in 1886 to the *Contemporary Review*.

Stead’s understanding of sensationalism was more nuanced than might be suggested by commentaries that readily link the term to his New Journalism. His Christian mission aimed to highlight sensationalist content in order to bring home to his readership the importance of the socio-political reforms he promoted. Stead also understood the power of sensational rhetoric to persuade readers of the justice of a cause through emotional impact.

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<sup>106</sup> W. E Forster in a speech at Bradford. Quoted in ‘Who Are The Jingo?’ *PMG*, 12 June 1884, p. 1. ‘To All English-Speaking Folk’, *RoR*, 1 (1890), pp. 15–20 (p. 17). Forster was a Quaker, led discussions on the 1870 Education Bill, and served as Chief Secretary for Ireland (1880–1882). He was also Matthew Arnold’s brother-in-law. Allen Warren, ‘Forster, William Edward (1818–1886)’, *ODNB* <doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/9926>.

<sup>107</sup> ‘Who Are The Jingo?’ *PMG*, 12 June 1884, p. 1.

### **Stead's 1886 Manifesto for the New Journalism: 'Government by Journalism' and 'The Future of Journalism'**

Hampton has argued that the press of the early 1880s moved away from educational and discursive discourses towards a representative or 'Fourth Estate' model. He equates the former elements with connotations of instruction and improvement whilst the representative function comprised both the fashioning and the transmission of public opinion.<sup>108</sup> In utilising what he termed 'the reflex influence of the editor on his constituency' to create and to promote public opinion, Stead recognised that journalists had a decisive role to play through their capacity to choose which issues to put forward and what degree of emphasis to give to individual aspects of a debate.<sup>109</sup>

Rather than producing a rigorously argued philosophy of the press, Stead outlined an ideal of the role that combined politics and religion in a mission of service to society.<sup>110</sup> His scheme reflected a secular version of the great plan of Christian evangelism in its intention to broadcast 'the good news', that change was possible for the good of the majority of the population, to as wide a readership as possible.<sup>111</sup> This mission was also resolutely New journalistic.

Stead explicitly recognised the facilitating importance of technological innovation and textual accessibility and highlighted the restrictive consequences of unsuitable libel laws on the course of investigative journalism.<sup>112</sup> He emphasised the need for journalists, editors, and proprietors to introduce 'commercial common-sense and the practical method of business'.<sup>113</sup> Law and Sterenberg have argued that Stead's press manifestos represent an attempt to create 'a journalism of conviction in conditions more propitious to a journalism of commerce — the tendency to swim continually against the tide being exemplified by the remainder of Stead's admirably quixotic journalistic career'.<sup>114</sup> While technological change and improved business acumen often led to commercial success, Lee has suggested that the New Journalism only became profitable when freed from the political ambitions Stead accorded to it.<sup>115</sup> However, Lee's view ignores the religious motivations in Stead's journalism which when expressed in the

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<sup>108</sup> Hampton, p. 114. For an analysis of this educational vs representative duality, see Hampton, particularly Chapter 4, "'Representing the People': The Press as a "Fourth Estate," 1880–1914', pp. 106–129.

<sup>109</sup> 'Government by Journalism', p. 655; Hampton, p. 114.

<sup>110</sup> Baylen, 'The 'New Journalism' in Late Victorian Britain', p. 375. I differ from Baylen here in that I emphasise the centrality of the Christian characteristics of Stead's New Journalism.

<sup>111</sup> 'The Future of Journalism', p. 671.

<sup>112</sup> 'Government by Journalism', p. 674.

<sup>113</sup> 'The Future of Journalism', p. 677.

<sup>114</sup> Law and Sterenberg, 'Old v. New Journalism and the Public Sphere'.

<sup>115</sup> Lee, p. 119.

form of moral crusades presented even greater challenges to readership retention and growth because of the need to ally religion, politics, and business.

A central aspect for the success of campaigning journalism lay in the relationship created between editors, their publications, and their readerships. As Ann Hale has argued, Stead established at the *Northern Echo* a successful model for a 'media-based social activism' by his combining cause campaigning with calls for the cultivation of community involvement.<sup>116</sup> At the *PMG*, during the 'Maiden Tribute', the campaign for the raising of the age of sexual consent for young women to sixteen, Stead succeeded in creating 'a community of reading' and 'a community of feeling' out of those scandalised by the findings of the newspaper's investigation into the sexual exploitation of young women.<sup>117</sup> In 'The Future of Journalism', Stead set out the means by which newspaper readers could be formed into participatory networks that sourced content and information, gauged opinion amongst community leaders, and cultivated increasing influence for editors and their publications (p. 21). Stead's development of such participatory reader networks reached a high point at the *Review of Reviews* where numerous causes were embraced by the periodical and the active support of the readership was sought and encouraged (p. 29).<sup>118</sup> Hale's convincing exposition of Stead's career-long development of a participatory reader community occludes, however, the religious motivations that grounded his journalism in a Christianising, moral, pursuit of social improvement.

Stead's ideal of editorship was cast in the context of a society represented as having lost confidence in the efficacy of its bicameral parliament and constitutional monarchy. In his estimation, an editor possessed 'almost all the attributes of real sovereignty', including 'permanent influence', exclusive rights of 'initiative', and the power to generate public opinion.<sup>119</sup> Mutch has highlighted the importance Stead accorded to power tempered by responsibility whereas Potter sees in Stead's description of an editor as 'the uncrowned king of an educated democracy' the characteristic of a 'self-aggrandizing essay'.<sup>120</sup> Stead's explorations of power, responsibility, kingship, and democratic processes are representative of both his exaggerated ambition and a profound sense of civic duty in phrasings that carry markers of their own subversion. For in depicting the editor as an 'uncrowned king', Stead imagined a sovereign, proclaimed but not enthroned, trapped in an eternal limbo of conditionality. Joel Wiener takes

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<sup>116</sup> Ann M. Hale, 'W. T. Stead and Participatory Reader Networks', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 48:1 (2015), 15–41 (p. 17).

<sup>117</sup> Hale, p. 19

<sup>118</sup> Hale, p. 29, enumerates some of the causes that Stead promoted from within and through the *RoR*: 'world peace; workhouse improvements; support for the elderly and dying; penny postage for the English-speaking world; country-trips and adequate meals for underprivileged urban children; working conditions and hours for laborers; and quality-of-life issues, such as housing, public spaces, and access to recreational activities'.

<sup>119</sup> 'Government by Journalism', p. 661.

<sup>120</sup> Mutch, "'Are We Christians?": W. T. Stead, Keir Hardy, and the Boer War', p. 141. Potter, p. 115.

this same phrase — ‘the uncrowned king of an educated democracy’ — and associates it with Stead’s urging for an ‘inspiring call’ to inculcate in journalists the inseparability of power and duty.<sup>121</sup> Stead also used such terms in his depiction of the journalist’s pen as a ‘sceptre of power’ and status as that of a ‘ruler’ and ‘uncrowned king of an educated democracy’.<sup>122</sup> Yet, this king was a democratised version that held power at the say so of the people and their willingness to buy newspapers. The journalist as a democratising agent supported the New Journalistic project to subvert established hierarchies by overturning the power of vested interests for the good of the vast majority of the population. These associations of excess and limit reflect Stead’s view that sensationalism, one of the two emblematic markers of New Journalism, along with the incorporation of the personal, had to be used in a responsible manner rather than in an arbitrary fashion.

Stead interrogated the role and power of the press through a range of historical and metaphorical referents which represented newspapers as creating the public space in which individual opinion could be voiced and disseminated. Stead explored how the press might play an increasingly active role amongst an extended democracy affirming that the newspapers had become the ‘Chamber of Initiative’ because parliamentary measures only became substantial projects after thorough debate in the columns of the newspapers.<sup>123</sup> An editor’s power lay in the newspaper’s capacity to shine the light of scrutiny upon social evils and to communicate public opinion to government ministers through a medium upon which ‘political and social legitimacy’ had been conferred by a constantly renewed vote concretised by the payment of the newspaper cover price.<sup>124</sup>

Between the publication of Stead’s two articles, the political context became even more uncertain. Gladstone resigned over the failed Irish Home Rule Bill, with the Conservatives achieving victory in the ensuing general election with the help of the Liberal Unionists. In this blurred political situation where a Conservative ministry was formed only through the backing of Liberal MPs, Stead joined those questioning the capacity of democracy to operate effectively. He bestowed upon the press the capacity to rival if not to exceed the position of organised governments.<sup>125</sup> These hyperbolic claims, made in ‘The Future of Journalism’ (November 1886), echoed those to be found in ‘Government by Journalism’ (May 1886). The keys to such power lay, as Stead conceived things, with the mastery of the facts, a full understanding of public

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<sup>121</sup> Joel H Wiener, *The Americanization of the British Press, 1830s–1914: Speed in the Age of Transatlantic Journalism* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 171.

<sup>122</sup> ‘Government by Journalism’, pp. 661, 664.

<sup>123</sup> ‘Government by Journalism’, p. 656.

<sup>124</sup> Hampton, pp. 112–114.

<sup>125</sup> ‘The Future of Journalism’, p. 664.

opinion, and the establishment of a suitable superstructure for opinion-gathering and opinion-shaping. Ministers were, he declared,

constantly telling us that without public opinion they can do nothing; but they forget that public opinion is the product of public education, and that the first duty of a statesman is not to wait on public opinion, but to make it.<sup>126</sup>

Observers had already attributed to newspapers powers normally associated with Parliament before Stead publicised his views. In the *North British Review* of May 1859, an unsigned article highlighted the influence that the press exercised over both the legislative and executive branches of parliament.<sup>127</sup> A new power in the country, the ‘Typocrat’, had emerged ‘to sit enthroned as the absolute dictator of the commonwealth, with his foot on the neck of Queen, Lords, and Commons’.<sup>128</sup> By the 1880s, this image of the editor as dictator had been modified into a democratising power capable of replacing the existing inept parliamentary structures. Charles Pebody, for example, who became editor of the *Yorkshire Post* in 1882, contended that the press had effectively taken on a number of the main functions of Parliament, namely ‘most of its chief functions of public criticism, most of its functions of debate, and many of its functions as a constitutional check upon the conduct of Ministers’.<sup>129</sup> He saw this as a positive development at a time when confidence in constitutional structures was low. In similar fashion, Stead wrote of ‘the parliament of the Press’, declaring that ‘The newspaper has become what the House of Commons used to be’, but he also went further in claiming that the press was ‘almost the most effective instrument for discharging many of the functions of government now left us’.<sup>130</sup> In this scheme, newspapers fulfilled both a legislative and an executive function giving them great responsibilities, but also creating the need for external powers of independent scrutiny of the press.

Stead was highly ambitious for his ‘new journalism’ in its religious and political mission. His project — ‘the practical realization of the religious idea in national politics and social reform’

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<sup>126</sup> ‘Government by Journalism’, p. 660.

<sup>127</sup> *North British Review*, 30 (1859), 367–402 (p. 396). Quoted in Anon., *The Newspaper Press of the Present Day: Its birth and growth throughout the United Kingdom and British Islands, from 1665; including the young cheap press and the metropolitan and suburban district papers, 1860* (London: Saunders, Otley, 1860), p. 2.

<sup>128</sup> *North British Review*, 30 (1859), p. 396. Quoted in Anon., *The Newspaper Press of the Present Day*, p. 2.

<sup>129</sup> Charles Pebody, *English Journalism and the Men Who Have Made It* (London: Cassell, Petter, Galpin, 1882), pp. iv–v. Quoted in Hampton, p. 110.

<sup>130</sup> ‘Government by Journalism’, pp. 666, 673, 674.

— aimed to create a ‘great secular or civic church and democratic university’.<sup>131</sup> However, these two attributes of terrestrial power, the secular and the religious, appeared to be antagonistic and therein lay the tension at the core of Stead’s wish to create a civic church.<sup>132</sup> In effect, Stead did not resolve these competing forces until he succeeded in explicitly anchoring Christian values to the scheme he proposed. Stead’s Christianised view of the press accompanied his belief that, in its ‘present undeveloped and rudimentary stage’, newspapers were incapable of fulfilling a more ambitious political role.<sup>133</sup> Stead extended the reach of such ideas to the level of the nation whereby patriotism and religion were also to be considered as closely intertwined. I show in Chapter 5 how this association of Christianity and patriotic duty influenced Stead throughout his life and no less so than during the 1890s when he established the *RoR* at a time of international and imperial tensions.

For Stead, Christian faith was an immanent force within journalism, capable of creating a press of high quality, aware of its spiritual mission, and able to protect the interests of both its immediate constituent readerships and wider society beyond.<sup>134</sup> He believed that the press had the obligation to produce morally and spiritually improving material as newspapers appeared to have replaced the Bible as the sole reading material from Monday to Saturday for millions of people.<sup>135</sup> He argued, moreover, that every morning and evening, newspaper content had to be produced that was sufficiently uplifting to substitute for the spiritual good of religious services when they were no longer attended. Journalists could be expected to present their readerships with access to ‘much higher things’ than simply the record of daily life.<sup>136</sup> Stead also evoked other religious roles that journalists might be called upon to fulfil such as those of ‘missionary’, ‘apostle’, ‘prophet’, and ‘preacher’. While he did not consider any further at this point these duties of the journalists of the future, he had nonetheless staked a place for such re-Christianising roles in the secular journalism of late-Victorian England. Moreover, Stead’s understanding of the values of the Nonconformist Conscience gave him a set of moral values which both shaped the way in which he approached socio-political reform and invested him with the drive necessary to contribute to national debates and, where possible, to the resolution of a vast range of issues. Both of Stead’s 1886 manifesto essays proclaim his religious motivations through explicit statement and rhetorical expression.

The texture of his thinking owed a constant debt to his religious beliefs. For instance, he believed that the socio-political trend was for people to be less tolerant of intermediaries

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<sup>131</sup> ‘The Future of Journalism’, p. 678.

<sup>132</sup> ‘The Future of Journalism’, p. 678.

<sup>133</sup> ‘Government by Journalism’, p. 661.

<sup>134</sup> ‘Government by Journalism’, pp. 663, 673.

<sup>135</sup> ‘Government by Journalism’, p. 663.

<sup>136</sup> ‘Government by Journalism’, pp. 663, 664.

between themselves and the exercise of power, preferring, for example, MPs to be sent to Parliament to represent and promote constituent opinion rather than just to stand in the place of the constituents.<sup>137</sup> This recalled the Congregational principle of priority for the relationship between the individual and God over that of the priest interceding between an individual and the Deity, an association reinforced by the ‘constituency’ of newspaper readers resembling congregations.<sup>138</sup> Further, the identification of the press with the pulpit was recognisable to contemporaries as trope and truism. As Stead asserted, the ‘spiritual power wielded in earlier times by the clergy’ had now been bequeathed, in large part, to the press and journalists of principle.<sup>139</sup> Such a conviction drew on the imagery of editor/minister, journalist/preacher, press/pulpit, and readership /congregation, and highlighted the perceived reality of a decline in religious belief and practice. It also emphasised the conviction shared by Stead that the established Church of England failed to imbue the nation’s affairs with the values of Christianity thereby weakening its claims to an established status.<sup>140</sup>

Christopher Underwood has noted that the period 1850–1880 saw the launch of many new newspapers and an influx of ill-educated and untrained entrants to the emerging profession.<sup>141</sup> Stead consciously raised the expectations that readers could have of journalists as the ‘highest journalism’ could not be ‘above the high-water mark of the faith and intellect of the individual journalist’.<sup>142</sup> As Lee asserts, even in the 1880s, journalism could with difficulty be equated with a profession, being ill-paid precarious work for all but the higher press appointments. Lee describes a ‘truly rootless semi-intelligentsia’ made up of amateur, freelance, and casual journalists at one end of the scale with editor-journalists and high-status contributors from the world of politics and government at the other.<sup>143</sup> The National Association of Journalists was established in 1886, but as a newspaper-owners’ organisation under the auspices of which union activity on behalf of working journalists was not possible.<sup>144</sup> Under these early conditions of professionalisation, Stead’s emphasis on the need for better quality journalists represented both an ideal and an understandable aim.

Higher expectations from the readership could only be met by higher standards from the journalists themselves. If only by association, Stead alluded here to the ‘higher journalism’

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<sup>137</sup> ‘Government by Journalism’, pp. 653, 658.

<sup>138</sup> ‘Government by Journalism’, p. 655.

<sup>139</sup> ‘Government by Journalism’, p. 667.

<sup>140</sup> ‘The Church Really in Danger’, *NE*, 11 December 1879, p. 2.

<sup>141</sup> Christopher Underwood, ‘Institute of Journalists’, in *The Encyclopedia of the British Press*, ed. by Griffiths, pp. 646–647 (p. 646).

<sup>142</sup> ‘Government by Journalism’, p. 663.

<sup>143</sup> Lee, pp. 107, 115.

<sup>144</sup> Lee, p. 114. The National Association of Journalists was reformed under Royal Charter and became the Institute of Journalism in 1890.

of writers like Arnold in the quarterly and monthly reviews, which had been held in greater regard, by some, at least, than the work of the more popular press. Stead was turning the tables upon such views and did so by calling explicitly for journalistic improvement, and by allying 'faith' and 'intellect'.<sup>145</sup> The pairing of 'faith and intellect' recalled Arnold's use of Jonathan Swift's phrase 'sweetness and light' in *Culture and Anarchy* but highlights belief and reason rather than the Arnoldian culture and reason in a conscious call for the agents of the press to recognise and observe the highest values in their work.

While Arnold had deprecated the lack of normalising validation for provincial, middle-class Nonconformist cultural expression, Stead proposed such an 'essential centre-point' in the editor's own personality, placing it at the heart of his idea of 'the true journalism of the governing and guiding order'.<sup>146</sup> In this more personal journalism, he depicted the press as influential, masculine, and unorthodox enough to name its contributors whose personal influence became interwoven with that of the newspapers themselves. This masculine journalism, recalling the form and values of muscular Christianity, included the nurturing of close relationships between journalists and all manner of experts, prominent individuals, and opinion makers.<sup>147</sup> As Callum Brown has argued, muscular Christianity emerged from the separate spheres debate and the association of piety with a feminine domesticity of hearth and home to which men's religious devotion had to conform.<sup>148</sup> Later, the need arose to recreate a masculine piety that linked physicality to spirituality and which could be taken outside the home and into wider society.<sup>149</sup>

Throughout his life, Stead manifested his ambition of reaching as many people as possible with his Christianising mission and commitment to democratisation and sought the best means of realising this. General awareness of the nature of the senses, enervation, and physical responses showed the public how external stimuli affected the body. Such questions of materiality linked to advances in technology and informed debate on how information, including that published in newspapers, might be preserved for future re-actualisation as well as broadcast to ever expanding audiences. The invention of the phonograph gave Stead a fresh metaphor for the press which he used to explore the capacity of newspapers to disseminate their messages across the nation and Empire. Eventually, his drive to invest society with a Christianising and democratising mission would cross the borders between what many

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<sup>145</sup> 'Government by Journalism', p. 663.

<sup>146</sup> 'The Future of Journalism', p. 663.

<sup>147</sup> 'The Future of Journalism', p. 668.

<sup>148</sup> Callum G. Brown, p. 88.

<sup>149</sup> Callum G. Brown, p. 96. The aim of reintroducing a specifically masculine character to religious piety was seen in the founding of the Volunteers (1860), the Glasgow Foundry Boys' Religious Society (1866), and the Boys' Brigade (1883).

understood to be this world and that of the hereafter. Stead's interest in Spiritualism, and his establishment of Julia's Bureau in 1909 for the transcription of messages from beyond material existence represented for him a furthering of his mission into the universal and the eternal.

Stead's New Journalism promoted service to the oppressed, the vulnerable, and the destitute for whom the newspapers represented a means by which injustice could be brought to the attention of the public, for '[w]hen men cease to complain of injustice, it is as if they sullenly confessed that God was dead'.<sup>150</sup> Stead's accumulation of ideas, references, causes, beliefs, and motivations is somewhat bewildering and makes any attempt to define in a few words what he represented either very simple or an impossible task. The simplistic view that he was a 'muckraker', shallow showman, bigoted Jingoist, eccentric pressman, and self-obsessive is not, however, borne out by the breadth of his vision and action. A greater appreciation of his religious convictions helps to provide a better sense of his motivations and his journalistic career.

Stead's journalistic mission combined religious sensibility and political conviction. As a Nonconformist and Gladstonian Liberal, he came to understand that the deficiency in parliamentary efficiency, and the rise in socialist and trade-unionist activism, demanded a response from the Christian churches and support for extra-parliamentary agitation. New journalism, and Stead's contribution to the project, furnished the means for increased democratisation of knowledge, influence, and power: newspapers were register, reference, and medium of broadcast. In Stead's hands, the New Journalism represented a means for socio-political agitation and for the re-Christianisation of society. As I discuss in the following chapters, Stead's mission was carried out within three major publications: a north-east of England daily newspaper (the *Northern Echo* 1871–1880), a metropolitan evening daily newspaper and review (the *Pall Mall Gazette* 1880–1889), and a monthly journal (the *Review of Reviews* 1890–1912). I examine these in detail in the pages to come, turning first to Stead's work at the *Northern Echo* where we see how his journalism developed to become both a significant political force and an engine for the promotion of the moral values of the Nonconformist Conscience.

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<sup>150</sup> 'The Future of Journalism', p. 669; 'Government by Journalism', pp. 667–668. The phrase 'God is Dead' is commonly associated with the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900).

### Chapter 3

#### The *Northern Echo* Years (1871–1880)

On 1 January 1870, after three months of print trials, the first half-penny morning newspaper in the country was launched from a former thread and shoelace factory in the Priestgate district of Darlington.<sup>1</sup> Owned by John Hyslop Bell, edited by John Copleston, and founded at the suggestion of the politically active Quaker Pease family, the *Northern Echo* (*NE*) was a four-page broadsheet publishing material ‘on all matters of social, commercial, or political interest’.<sup>2</sup> Run according to progressive management techniques, printed on improved presses, and speedily distributed by train from the foremost railway-hub town of the north-east of England, the *NE* was part of the expanding modern newspaper industry of the 1870s.<sup>3</sup>

In 1871, Stead replaced Copleston as editor of the *NE* and spent the rest of the decade developing the newspaper into a regional success with a national reputation. By the end of his tenure, he had seen the *NE*’s circulation figures increase ‘sevenfold in seven years’, witnessed John Bright, the radical Quaker MP, qualify the paper as ‘a triumph of cheap literature’, and Gladstone, the Liberal party leader, dub it ‘a most ably conducted journal’.<sup>4</sup> Stead was responsible for promoting the political interests of the Pease family in Darlington, but he also, and more importantly, broadened the scope of the *NE* so that it became a leading political platform for the regional advocacy of Gladstonian Liberalism and a pulpit from which to promote Nonconformist moral standards.

At the heart of Stead’s journalism lay his conviction that Christianity had a major role to play in both the life of the individual and of the nation. His Congregational upbringing, religiously inspired moral values, and evangelical inflection influenced the development of his journalism at the *NE*. The evangelical priorities of conversion and activism shaped his crusading purpose while the Nonconformist conception of freedom of conscience found political expression in Liberal ideas of civic equality. As Congregational doctrine evolved, Stead followed the shift of emphasis from the Atonement of Christ to the Living Jesus, and accorded greater importance to the need to improve the material living conditions of the poorer members of society.<sup>5</sup> This

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<sup>1</sup> Lloyd, p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Hyslop Bell was a former Methodist minister who had taken over the weekly *South Durham and Cleveland Mercury* in 1855. Robertson Scott, *Life and Death of a Newspaper*, 95; Anne Humpherys, *DNCJ*, pp. 457–458; Nicholson, ‘The Provincial Stead’, p. 10; Prospectus, *Northern Echo*, 1869. The Pease family had extensive political and business interests in Darlington, and generally in South Durham, and counted on the *NE* for newspaper support. Lloyd, pp. 23–25.

<sup>3</sup> Prospectus, *Northern Echo*, 1869.

<sup>4</sup> *May’s British & Irish Press Guide and Advertiser’s Dictionary and Handbook, 1879* (London: May, 1879), pp. 55, 77. John Bright was a Quaker, radical Liberal politician, and parliamentary reformer. See, Miles Taylor, ‘Bright, John (1811–1889)’, *ODNB* <doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/3421>.

<sup>5</sup> Bebbington, *Victorian Nonconformity*, rev. edn, pp. 2–3.

suggested that what mattered most was a decent moral existence in the here and now rather than the deferred promise of a better life for the soul in God's Kingdom of the hereafter. In this respect, Stead's New Journalistic practice became most readily identified with novelty for the sake of novelty which itself became linked to a sensationalist approach. Yet, his own evaluation of his use of innovative press practice was to stress the need to create an effect so that understanding could be advanced. His aim was not to create a series of mere impressions but to express relevant ideas in the pursuit of a Christian reforming mission.

In this chapter, I discuss the religious, political, and journalistic contexts in which Stead participated in the forging of an alliance between Gladstonian Liberalism and Protestant Dissent which was increasingly energised by the enfranchisement of middle- and working-class, Nonconformist urban voters. Stead's campaigning involved appeals to the Nonconformist Conscience on the subject of temperance, a long-held commitment to the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts, and a regional campaign promoting country-wide demands for a reversal in the Disraeli government's foreign policy over the Bulgarian Atrocities (1876). The particularity of Stead's journalistic achievement lay in his ability to promote and maintain Christian moral values and evangelical mission in a non-religious Liberal newspaper that developed the capability to influence public opinion and the actions of power elites.<sup>6</sup> In doing so, he not only promoted the Nonconformist re-moralising agenda of the latter half of the Victorian period but also affirmed, while at the *NE*, the general Nonconformist contention that moral betterment and social improvement were best driven by the engines of individual conscience and personal endeavour.<sup>7</sup> This combination of Nonconformist evangelical Protestantism and Liberal-party allegiance was shared by a wide range of individuals — journalists, members of parliament, municipal councillors, business owners, and influential religious figures — who all derived from this alliance a strong sense of political activism, religious engagement, and social mission. This list of generic participants in the Nonconformist-Liberal cross-society alliance hides the fact that it would have been almost wholly composed of male contributors, and, therefore, omits the hugely significant role played by leading women social reformers and their supporters. Although formally excluded from so many avenues of public

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<sup>6</sup> J. O. Baylen has long since identified the two main trends that this innovatory press practice would adopt by the end of the 1880s: the religiously moralising and politically committed New Journalisms of Stead (editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, 1883–1889; assistant editor, 1880–1883) and of T. P. O'Connor (founding editor of the *Star*, 1888–1890) on the one hand, and the commercially oriented publications founded by Alfred Harmsworth (*Daily Mail*, 1896) and Arthur Pearson (*Daily Express*, 1900) on the other. See Baylen, 'The 'New Journalism' in Late Victorian Britain', p. 385.

<sup>7</sup> Helmstadter, 'The Nonconformist Conscience', pp. 81–82. Helmstadter's overall thesis has been challenged by Parsons, 'From Dissenters to Free Churchmen', pp. 86–109; and Bebbington, *Victorian Nonconformity*, rev. edn, pp. 43–51. See the Introduction, p. 26, footnote 73.

engagement, women nonetheless exercised great influence through the work of the social reform associations that they formed, organised, and led.

Yet, the 1870s also witnessed great tension between Nonconformity and Liberalism as Dissenters judged Gladstone's ministry — in office since 1868 — to have failed them by not introducing the legislation for which they had hoped, most particularly the disestablishment of the Church of England and the enactment of an equitable Education Bill.<sup>8</sup> It would take the defeat of the Liberals in the 1874 general election and an international conflict two years later for Liberals and Nonconformists to enter once more into a productive relationship and for which Stead's *NE* campaign for the protection of the Bulgarian Christians is said to have provided significant impetus.<sup>9</sup> In the next section, I explore the press context of the 1870s in which the *NE* was launched, in which Stead gained a regional and national reputation, and during which he laid down important aspects of his New Journalism.

### **The Place of the *Northern Echo* in the Secular and Religious Press of the 1870s**

The *NE* was launched in 1870, at a time when technological advances, supported by government control over the telegraph, facilitated an expansion in newspapers which gave them the capacity to influence the growing urban communities and to shape their political views. This change coincided with Gladstone's first Liberal ministry and the growing confidence of Nonconformist middle- and working-class urban voters who now had the right to exercise direct power at the ballot box. The *NE* was new to Darlington and gave to Stead the opportunity to carve out for himself a committed readership whose Liberal opinions he could form and represent and whose moral views he would support through his advocacy of the Nonconformist Conscience.

In 1836, the balance of metropolitan newspaper power lay with the Conservatives, but, by 1846, this position had come to an end after the Peelite split over the abolition of the protectionist Corn Laws.<sup>10</sup> The London newspapers did not become a national press until the end of the nineteenth century, a position which accentuated the antagonisms between metropolitan and provincial newspapers. The Conservatives were distrustful of the provincial press which had expanded, firstly, in the wake of the reduction in stamp duty in 1836, and, secondly, through the effects of the democratising measures of franchise enlargement (1867), parliamentary seat redistribution (1868), and the provision of universal elementary education (1870).<sup>11</sup> Liberal domination of the English provincial press continued into the 1890s although,

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<sup>8</sup> Watts, III, 249.

<sup>9</sup> Watts, III, 256.

<sup>10</sup> Lee, p. 146.

<sup>11</sup> Lee, pp. 133–134.

at the beginning of the 1880s, the Conservatives had begun to take back some of this press power from the Liberals.<sup>12</sup>

When Stead took over at the *NE*, he became part of a network of editors and journalists whose publications included a strong political and Nonconformist presence in the provinces. His first appointment in the newspaper industry was made in a region where political priorities and religious affiliation were clearly sign-posted in favour of Liberalism and Nonconformity. In the 1870s, the north-east of England represented a bastion of radicalism which advocated republicanism, Chartism, and Liberalism.<sup>13</sup> The towns of Newcastle, Sheffield, Darlington, and the North and South Shields provided some of the staunchest political centres for Liberalism in the whole of the country up to the end of the nineteenth century. Newcastle had two one-penny morning papers in the *Northern Daily Express* (founded in 1855) and the *Newcastle Daily Chronicle* (1858– ), and, in 1873, Sunderland saw the launch of the half-penny morning *Daily Echo*.<sup>14</sup> Beginning in 1855 as a telegraphic sheet, by 1864 the *South Shields Gazette* had become a fully-fledged half-penny evening Liberal paper which claimed in 1873 to have the second largest daily circulation in the north-east.<sup>15</sup> In 1864, the (North) *Shields Daily News* also first appeared.<sup>16</sup> In Darlington, until the launch of the *NE*, the Liberal press was controlled by Henry King Spark who owned the weekly *Darlington and Stockton Times*. More generally, in the provinces, Liberal newspapers were more numerous than Conservative publications with, in 1874, no Conservative daily newspaper existing in Birmingham, Huddersfield, Darlington, Hull, and Leicester. In Liverpool and Leeds, where Conservative newspapers did exist, the Liberals were still at a clear advantage by having three times as many newspapers on which they could rely for support.<sup>17</sup>

The strong presence of the Liberals in the provinces did not mean that they were absent from the capital. In 1870, the Liberals could count on the support of the following London newspapers: the *Daily News* (1846–1912), a Nonconformist and Liberal-party advocate; the *Daily Telegraph*, which led in terms of circulation; the new *Daily Chronicle*; the half-penny, radical, *Echo* (1868–1905), aimed at London workers and small tradesmen; the one-penny evening society newspaper, the *Glowworm*; the two-penny evening *Pall Mall Gazette*; and the three-penny *Morning Advertiser*.<sup>18</sup> The Conservatives derived support from the one-penny, old-Tory, morning *Standard* (1827–1916), that declined under the challenges of New Journalism,

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<sup>12</sup> Lee, p.158.

<sup>13</sup> Lee, p. 135.

<sup>14</sup> Joan Allen, 'Newcastle Chronicle (1764–1858), Newcastle Daily Chronicle (1858–)', *DNCJ*, p. 446. Lee, pp. 135, 136.

<sup>15</sup> Lee, pp. 136, 274.

<sup>16</sup> Lee, p. 136.

<sup>17</sup> Lee, pp. 136, 134.

<sup>18</sup> Lee, p. 134.

and the evening edition of the same paper; the three-penny, reforming, radical, and independent *Times* (1785–); and the imperialist and conservative in tone *Morning Post* (1772–1937).<sup>19</sup> Overall, as Lee contends, the relative strengths of the metropolitan Liberal and Conservative newspapers made ‘the London of 1870 journalistically a Liberal capital’.<sup>20</sup> Yet, as Parry has observed, London was more a bastion of Whig-liberalism and conservative-minded parliamentary representatives than supportive of Gladstone who more easily found sympathisers in the provinces and amongst Nonconformists.<sup>21</sup> It was this metropolitan-provincial divide and that between progressive Gladstonian and conservative Whig conceptions of Liberalism which Stead was able to exploit, firstly at the *NE*, and, later, at the *PMG* in London itself.

The influence of Nonconformity strongly permeated provincial newspapers. In 1852, Joseph Woodhead took control of the *Huddersfield Examiner* and turned it into a leading voice for Nonconformist Liberalism while, in 1858, P. S. Macliver, the radical Scots Congregationalist, started the *Western Daily Press* having learnt about journalism in Newcastle.<sup>22</sup> J. W. Jevons ran the *Nottingham Daily Express* (founded in 1860) and gained for it the reputation of being a ‘rather radical and strongly Nonconformist paper’ while the first editor of the *Bolton Evening News* (1867) was the staunch Nonconformist, William Brimelow.<sup>23</sup> However, the expression of strong Nonconformist guiding principles was not always thought to be beneficial. The quality of the *Leeds Mercury*, for example, was judged to have improved in the 1870s once Wemyess Reid had become editor and after Edward Baines, whose father had acquired the title in 1801, had moderated the more vehemently Nonconformist tones of the paper (p. 170).

Denominational newspapers exercised significant influence and included the evangelical Anglican *Record* (1828), the High-Church *Guardian* (1846), a general newspaper with a religious perspective and a literary tone, and the *Church Times* (1863), the only new religious newspaper launched with the aim of appealing to the popular market. The *Patriot* (1832–1866) was dominated by Congregationalists, targeted at a middle-class readership, and established purposely to engage in debate in the year of the Great Reform Act of 1832. The Salvation Army founded the *War Cry* in 1879 and influenced the formation, by Wilson Carlile, of the Church Army and its newspaper the *Battleaxe* (1883–1886) which was later renamed the *Church Army Gazette* (1886). John Heaton began the Liberal, weekly *Freeman* (1855–1899) which was retitled

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<sup>19</sup> See the following articles in the *DNCJ*: John Kofron, ‘*Daily News* (1846–1912)’, p.158; Kery Chez, ‘*Globe* (1803–1921)’, p. 253; John Richard Wood, ‘*Echo* (1868–1905)’, p. 188; ‘*Standard* (1827–1916)’, pp. 596–597; ‘*The Times* (1785–)’, pp. 627–628; ‘*Morning Post* (1772–1937)’, p. 427; ‘*Morning Herald* (1780–1869)’, p. 427. Lee, p. 134.

<sup>20</sup> Lee, p. 134.

<sup>21</sup> Parry, p. 79.

<sup>22</sup> Lee, pp. 137–138; 144.

<sup>23</sup> Lee, pp. 143, 141, 275.

the *Baptist Times and Freeman* (1899). The Unitarians launched the *Inquirer* (1842– ), as a general Liberal newspaper with a religious character, and the one-penny weekly, Unitarian, *Herald* (1861–1889), founded by the novelist Elizabeth Gaskell's husband, William, together with three other religious ministers, which aimed, like the *Church Times*, to exploit the abolition of the last of the newspaper taxes.

As Josef Altholz has discussed, the religious newspapers were as adept at exploiting the medium of the press as their secular counterparts.<sup>24</sup> Although Altholz describes the religious press before 1855 as unexciting and appealing to a 'safely middle-class audience', after the abolition of the stamp duty in 1855, he contends that a new class of religious newspaper appeared, reflecting the growth of the general press and attracting a readership from the growing lower-middle classes.<sup>25</sup> The example of three religious newspapers — the Nonconformist *Christian World* (1857), the Roman Catholic *Universe* (1860), and the High-Anglican *Church Times* (1863) — shows that healthy circulations of over 100,000 were attainable while by the end of the nineteenth century, William Robertson Nicoll's Nonconformist *British Weekly* (1886), and Hugh Price Hughes's *Methodist Times* (1885–1937), had become examples of highly influential religious newspapers (p. 13). The religious editor came to represent a significant force in society in a way which had already been suggested in the work of the Congregationalist John Campbell at the *British Banner* and the *British Standard*.

Besides circulation figures and a high degree of influence, the presence of editors who worked in both secular and religious newspapers and the adoption of shared journalistic practices showed that there was common ground between the two newspaper sectors.<sup>26</sup> With the support of the publishers Hodder and Stoughton, Robertson Nicoll, for example, also founded and edited both the *Bookman* and *Women at Home*.<sup>27</sup> As the nineteenth century progressed, the religious press deployed the innovatory practices of New Journalism in terms of appearance, content, an increased capacity to target readership interests, the inclusion of high-quality illustration, and the use of diverse narrative forms including the sensational.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Altholz, p. 11.

<sup>25</sup> Altholz, pp. 12–13.

<sup>26</sup> Margaret Rachel Beetham and Mark Knight, 'Religious Press', *DNCJ*, pp. 534–535.

<sup>27</sup> The publishing firm of Hodder and Stoughton was founded by the Nonconformists Martin Hodder (1830–1911) and Thomas Stoughton (1840–1917) in 1868. William Robertson Nicoll (1851–1923) worked in partnership with the company from 1884. Nicoll founded in 1891 the *Bookman* (1891–1934), an illustrated, part trade, part celebrity magazine, and, in 1893, *Women at Home* (1893–1920). Nicoll was assisted at this latter magazine by Annie Swan, the pseudonym of Mrs Burnett Smith, novelist, journalist, and 'agony aunt', and, as assistant editor, by Jane Thompson Stoddart (1863–1944), former teacher, novelist, and, from 1890, assistant to Nicoll at Hodder and Stoughton and the *British Weekly*. Marie Alexis Easley, 'Hodder and Stoughton (1868–)', *DNCJ*, pp. 283–284, and, '*Bookman* (1891–1934)', *DNCJ*, pp. 64–65. Margaret Rachel Beetham, 'Swan, Annie (1859–1943)', *DNCJ*, p. 611, 'Stoddart, Jane Thompson (1863–1944)', *DNCJ*, p. 603.

<sup>28</sup> Beetham and Knight, *DNCJ*, pp. 534–535.

Stead was representative of these diverse contextual elements, being a Congregationalist, engaged for a secular Liberal newspaper by a former Methodist minister at the suggestion of a politically committed Quaker family. This association of Old and New Dissent and of progressive Liberal political engagement, on the one hand, and of the Nonconformist pulpit and the northern press, on the other, was part of a wider pattern of generally unplanned alliance between Liberalism and Dissent. Stead remained for nearly ten years at the *NE* until he accepted an offer from Henry Yates Thompson to join the London *Pall Mall Gazette* to work, firstly, as assistant editor to John Morley, the future Liberal MP for Newcastle, and, secondly, as the senior editor at the paper.<sup>29</sup> Meanwhile, in the decade that led to the move to the metropolis, Stead was to become a nationally recognised journalist whose political influence and ability to work up a successful newspaper campaign made him someone of whom to take note and even of whom to be wary.

Stead's journalistic career at the *NE* was shaped by Nonconformist moral values and civil expectations in a period of general religious and political alignment between Dissent and Liberalism. As the next section argues, his Liberal and Nonconformist brand of journalism found additional impetus in the assertion by prominent church leaders that religion had a distinct part to play in the socio-political life of the nation. This helped to cement in Stead's mind the idea that evangelical Dissenters had the possibility, even the responsibility, to engage in politics in the light of their religious convictions. This he subsequently took to London where his application of a rigorous Nonconformist morality helped to shape the religious ethic of his New Journalism.

### **The 1870s: The Municipal Gospel, Religious Parity, and Political Equality**

Stead became a journalist and editor at a time when Nonconformists were still campaigning for an equitable civic and religious status. His tenure at the *NE* witnessed an increasing confidence in Nonconformist political influence and his own growing ability to run a newspaper that engaged in significant political issues, contested vested interests, and sought to transform the lives of the paper's readership and of the wider community. For much of the nineteenth century, religion and politics occupied a contested space in which Nonconformists sought repeal of discriminatory measures and were on guard against increased privileges being accorded to the established Church of England. To advance their case, Nonconformists highlighted the inherent hypocrisy of Church of England leaders, who benefited from the privileged position of the

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<sup>29</sup> Alan Bell, 'Thompson, Henry Yates (1838–1928)', *ODNB* <[doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/36492](https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/36492)>. John Morley, Liberal politician and writer, editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* (1880–1883), of the *Fortnightly Review* (1867–1882), and of *Macmillan's Magazine* (May 1883–summer 1885). See David Hamer, 'Morley, John (1838–1923)', *ODNB* <[doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/35110](https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/35110)>.

national church, but censured what they judged to be the petty jealousy of Dissenting congregations. On the other hand, the Nonconformists had long affirmed that established churches had no foundation in Scripture and merely served to undermine the strength of national religious investment.<sup>30</sup>

Activist Nonconformists like Stead would have been aware that political engagement was not limited to lay members of individual congregations but included the contribution of leading ministers of religion. Amongst these latter were R. W. Dale, the renowned Birmingham Congregationalist, C. H. Spurgeon, the leading London-based Baptist, and H. W. Crosskey, the prominent Birmingham Unitarian. Dale and Crosskey both had links with the Congregationalist Edward Miall, the influential MP and founding editor of the *Nonconformist* newspaper, and with George Dawson, the unconventional, one-time Baptist minister beloved of Unitarians, who had founded his own Church of St. Saviour in Birmingham.<sup>31</sup> Of these, Dale has been hailed as ‘the greatest intellect of Victorian Congregationalism’, and, amongst his contemporaries, he was considered to be a highly effective advocate for the inmixing of religion and politics.<sup>32</sup> In his 1869 Congregational Union addresses as chairman, he called for a renewed acknowledgement and affirmation of the role that the Christian religion could play in the safeguarding and improvement of society. His arguments rested upon the belief that a state voided of religion was fundamentally incapable of confronting and resolving the major problems that challenged contemporary society. These general principles were greatly to inform Stead’s work at the *NE* as well as more particularly Joseph Chamberlain’s mayoralty of Birmingham during the years 1873–1876.<sup>33</sup>

Dale, Spurgeon, and Crosskey, proclaimed the inherently religious appropriateness of political engagement, and especially did so through the advocacy of the Dawson-inspired Municipal Gospel.<sup>34</sup> As Dale’s son asserted:

[R. W. Dale’s] conception of the religious life was essentially Protestant; it recognised no priesthood save the universal

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<sup>30</sup> R. W. Dale, ‘The Politics of Nonconformity: A Lecture’ (Manchester: Nonconformist Association, 1871), pp. 8–9, 30–31; Anon., *The Principles of Nonconformity; by a Layman* (London: John Snow, 1860), pp. 37, 42.

<sup>31</sup> Watts, III, 231.

<sup>32</sup> A. W. W. Dale, pp. 398–417; *Protestant Nonconformist Texts*, ed. by Alan P. F. Sell, 4 vols (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), III: *The Nineteenth Century*, ed. by D. W. Bebbington with Kenneth Dix and Alan Rushton, document II.16, ‘R. W. Dale on the Atonement, 1878’, p. 65.

<sup>33</sup> For an account of Chamberlain’s implementation of the municipal gospel in Birmingham during his mayoralty (1873–1876), see Asa Briggs, *Victorian Cities*, rev. edn (London: Penguin Books, 1990), pp. 219–231.

<sup>34</sup> See, for example, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, ‘A Political Dissenter’ (Manchester: Nonconformist Association, 1870); Henry W. Crosskey, ‘The Nonconformist Programme and Policy’, *Theological Review* 9:38 (1872), 356–372; R. W. Dale, ‘The Politics of Nonconformity’, p. 32.

priesthood of all Christians; it ignored the conventional distinction between things sacred and things secular; all work, it held, is sacred in which a man can do the will of God, and God's thought and purpose are as wide as life itself. In politics, therefore, whether national or municipal, Dale felt himself to be an "ambassador for Christ."<sup>35</sup>

According to R. W. Dale, the victory of good over evil could be achieved by serving Christ 'in the polling-booth or on the platform, in Parliament, in the Town Council, or on the Board of Guardians'.<sup>36</sup> In this promotion of the Municipal Gospel, of the justifiable, even obligatory, involvement of Christians in municipal affairs, he argued that religion, society, and politics were not discrete areas in life but important inter-dependent fields of action.<sup>37</sup> He contended that religious doctrine should be reflected in everyday morality and that religious beliefs and acts of worship should shape people's daily lives rather than merely represent parallel experiences.<sup>38</sup> Dale's prescriptions stopped short of the public endorsement of specific political groupings: support was to be given, rather, to ideas, individuals, and legislative measures.

Adherents of the Municipal Gospel succeeded in giving an early answer to a question that became central to the last three decades of the nineteenth century. Social reformers recognised that the living conditions of the poorer classes needed improvement but were divided as to whether this was a matter for state intervention or for individuals to bring about through their own efforts. Underlying this debate, the belief was taking root that neither the churches nor the local authorities could alone provide the radically improved social conditions necessary for the poorer classes.<sup>39</sup>

In Birmingham, Dawson and Dale represented Nonconformist support for improvement in municipal facilities. Progressive Nonconformists advocated a re-examination of orthodox theology when seeking solutions to chronic material deprivation. Dawson preached, for example, that Christian philanthropy was more important than evangelical orthodoxy and that involvement in politics was a Christian duty.<sup>40</sup> He declared that a Christian did not cease being a citizen, and, indeed, had the additional obligation of aspiring to a higher ideal of citizenship than

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<sup>35</sup> A. W. W. Dale, p. 399.

<sup>36</sup> A. W. W. Dale, p. 400.

<sup>37</sup> Frank M. Turner, *Contesting Cultural Authority: Essays in Victorian Intellectual Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 3.

<sup>38</sup> David Englander, 'The Word and the World: Evangelicalism in the Victorian City', in *Religion in Victorian Britain*, ed. by Parsons, Moore, and Wolffe, II: *Controversies*, ed. by Parsons, pp. 14–38 (p.29). R. Tudur Jones, 'Dale, Robert William (1829–1895)', *ODNB* <[doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/7015](https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/7015)>.

<sup>39</sup> Parsons, 'Social Control to Social Gospel', pp. 47–48.

<sup>40</sup> Watts, III, 231

that normally demonstrated.<sup>41</sup> Dale's political engagement entailed accepting Christ's authority in the terrestrial realm including in the fields of art, literature, commerce, and politics.<sup>42</sup> Overall, improvement in educational provision and municipal facilities was considered the best way in which to bring about the practical realisation of these principles.<sup>43</sup> The Municipal Gospel had the support of the *Birmingham Daily Post* (1857–), the leading Midlands daily, designed to suit the business and professional classes, that was edited from 1862 by John Thackray Bunce, a committed supporter of the Liberal party.<sup>44</sup>

The work of Dawson and Dale in Birmingham has additional significance in that it predated by some two decades the publication of Mearns's social-reforming manifesto, *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London* (1883), and its associated campaign for better living conditions for the poor in the capital. Yet, it is Mearns's intervention which is considered as having priority in declaring to religiously invested reformers that saving the soul could only be undertaken when material conditions permitted.<sup>45</sup>

Although most of the discriminatory legislation against Dissenters had been abolished by 1871, the year in which Stead was appointed editor of the *NE*, major sources of Nonconformist discontent remained. The 1869 disestablishment of the Irish (Anglican) Church, for example, had not led to similar legislation in England and Wales, and Nonconformists continued to believe that the Education Act of 1870 favoured Anglicanism. Moreover, the vexed issue of enacting a new Burials Bill to allow Nonconformists to be interred according to Nonconformist rites in Anglican-managed parish churchyards did not become a reality until 1880.<sup>46</sup> Disestablishment, education provision, and equitable religious arrangements for burials were all issues for which Stead campaigned at the *NE*.

By 1870, the Nonconformists had realised that Gladstone's Liberal government did not intend to reciprocate for the political support it had received during the 1868 general election. This represented the moment when the extended electorate created by the Second Reform Act of 1867 and including a very strong Nonconformist constituency had participated for the first time.<sup>47</sup> In the autumn of 1871, Dale addressed the Manchester Nonconformist Association in

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<sup>41</sup> A. W. W. Dale, p. 52.

<sup>42</sup> A. W. W. Dale, p. 398.

<sup>43</sup> Watts, III, 231–232.

<sup>44</sup> Buchanan, '*Birmingham Daily Post* (1857–)', pp. 55–56.

<sup>45</sup> See Chapter 4 for further discussion of Mearns's campaign and its significance to social reform in the 1880s onwards.

<sup>46</sup> Watts, III, 243–245. Albert Peel, *These Hundred Years: A History of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, 1831–1931* (London: Congregational Union of England and Wales, 1931), pp. 290–291, records that the hope was expressed on both sides that the passing of the Burials Act would lead to better relations between Anglican churchmen and Nonconformist ministers.

<sup>47</sup> Watts, III, 249.

the Free Trade Hall on the subject of 'The Politics of Nonconformity'.<sup>48</sup> His lecture represented a call to arms of the Dissenting congregations during which he upbraided a Liberal party that had benefited from Nonconformist voter support and which it had now left distrustful and resentful.<sup>49</sup> This represented, therefore, a significant moment when the Nonconformists moved from being supportive political activists to politically independent agitators (p. 11) who were prepared to break their ties with Liberalism and, if necessary, to break the Liberal party itself (p. 4).

Spurgeon and Crosskey supported Dale in these views. In 1870, Spurgeon exclaimed that an independently minded Nonconformist had to expect to be labelled by opponents 'an odious political Dissenter' in response to which he counselled piety, courage, and the need to speak out against the political attacks of entrenched establishment supporters.<sup>50</sup> However, unity of approach did not exclude differences in emphasis. While Dale argued that political engagement was inherently religious, Spurgeon saw political action as compelled by the call of duty to oppose 'the sins of the State' (p. 3). In a speech, delivered at the beginning of 1872, Crosskey confirmed the reality of the bitter disputes between established church interests and Dissenting opinion.<sup>51</sup> Nonetheless, he asserted that Christianity lay at the heart of social improvement and that church ministers were indispensable to 'its civilising and redeeming work' (p. 358).

During Gladstone's first ministry, the disestablishment of the Church of England was high on the agenda of Nonconformist Liberals.<sup>52</sup> Nonconformists considered a state church both fundamentally unjust and scripturally unsound although religion was still judged to be central to the good functioning of a moral state:

We deny that the will of the State should control the Church of Christ; but that the will of Christ himself should control the laws, the institutions, the policy of the State — that is our incessant and agonizing prayer. To deny that our national life and legislation are to be governed by the will of Christ, is a heresy that would destroy the hopes of the human race. It is blank atheism.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> R. W. Dale, 'The Politics of Nonconformity.'

<sup>49</sup> R. W. Dale, 'The Politics of Nonconformity', p. 3.

<sup>50</sup> Spurgeon, 'A Political Dissenter', p. 2.

<sup>51</sup> Crosskey, 'The Nonconformist Programme and Policy', p. 356.

<sup>52</sup> Watts, III, pp. 245, 249.

<sup>53</sup> R. W. Dale, 'On Christ and the Controversies of Christendom', in *Congregational Yearbook 1870* (London: Congregational Union of England and Wales, 1870), pp. 2–24. On 11 May 1870, Dale gave his Chairman's spring address, entitled 'On Christ and the Controversies of Christendom', to the Union Conference held at Finsbury Chapel in London. His address considered how Christianity could be reapplied

As I have already discussed, Dale argued that Nonconformists could both militate for disestablishment and promote the 'right to speak of the will of Christ regarding the laws and institutions of nations.'<sup>54</sup>

For some Nonconformists, such as Edward Miall, the close relationship between the State and the Anglican Church had to be broken if true religious and social equality were to be achieved. Those Nonconformists who argued that religion was for the hereafter and politics for the here and now also failed to see that Anglicanism represented a powerful religious influence anchored in the temporal affairs of the nation. In the year following the 1874 general election defeat of Gladstone's Liberal government, R. W. Dale and J. Guinness Rogers, a Congregational minister, friend of Gladstone, and contributor to the Nonconformist, non-denominational, *Christian World*, embarked on a campaign tour to promote the cause of disestablishment in Bradford, Liverpool, Leeds, Manchester, Norwich, Derby, and London. The meetings were well-attended by enthusiastic audiences which demonstrated that the Nonconformist message for religious equality still had traction.<sup>55</sup>

Stead's advocacy of disestablishment was in part built on widely held criticism of the Church of England. He declared that the national church had failed to offer the nation adequate Christian leadership which, while holding legal and political status, often passed over in silence the major political issues of the day. In the months leading up to the 1880 general election, Stead highlighted this perceived weakness of the Church of England in a judgement that had the support of Gladstone: 'Whatever may be the influence which the Church exerts, either in saving the souls of men or in purifying their private life, it manifestly neither enlightens their civic conscience nor supplies them with a standard of political morality'.<sup>56</sup> Stead's observations resonated with R. W. Dale's 'Municipal Gospel' by highlighting a perceived mismatch between spiritual care of an individual's private earthly existence and their commitment and contribution to a public, political life. While Dale promoted the idea that to contribute to political life was a religious duty, Stead highlighted an Anglican lack of Christian moral influence on politics: both attested to the need for religious teaching and personal conduct to coincide whether in the action of the state or of the individual.

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to improve material conditions and inculcate spiritual values in a manner which could bring about effective religious engagement.

<sup>54</sup> R. W. Dale, 'On Christ and the Controversies of Christendom', pp. 2–24.

<sup>55</sup> Stephen C. Orchard, 'Rogers, James Guinness (1822–1911)', *ODNB* <doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/35813>. The *Christian World* was a Nonconformist, weekly newspaper founded in 1857 by the Baptist minister Jonathan Whittemore. Altholz, p. 62. Watts, III, 254

<sup>56</sup> 'The Political Influence of the Establishment', *NE*, 20 June 1879, p. 3.

In the 1870s, disestablishment, the provision of elementary education, and the place of religious instruction in schools remained important areas of concern for Anglicans and Nonconformists. In addition to disestablishment, the *NE* also supported disendowment which would release monies for the benefit of the 'mental, moral, and physical condition' of the whole population rather than solely for the upholding of Anglican creeds and doctrines.<sup>57</sup> These were neither purely religious nor purely secular matters and by their inmixing became matters for religion, politics, and society. Indeed, Gladstone came to the support of Nonconformists by stating that the Church of England had failed in its obligation to provide 'right moral judgements'.<sup>58</sup> As Stead declared:

The Establishment may, as Mr Matthew Arnold dreams, establish a centre of sweetness and light in every parish in the land, but from a political point of view it is a great agency for the prevention of political progress and for the strengthening of much that is selfish, unjust, and anti-Christian in our national life.<sup>59</sup>

Ten years after the publication of *Culture and Anarchy*, Stead refuted Arnold's support for establishments in terms that Arnold had used against Nonconformists. While Arnold had identified in Dissent an arrested, inward-looking, backward religion, Stead asserted that for all its cultural pretensions the Church of England was grossly self-regarding and no less inimical to the Christian development of the country.

The example of forthright, politically engaged, profoundly Christian church ministers left a strong impression upon younger Nonconformists such as Stead who were witnessing a rise in public pride at being Nonconformists and were becoming increasingly confident in their growing political power. As I discuss next, Stead turned the *NE* into a radical newspaper that called for reform from within a Liberal political framework and which explicitly promoted Christian morality and Nonconformist ideals of individual conscience and sustained personal effort. He undertook campaigns that focused upon political issues, moral questions, and political controversies that manifested a distinct moral component, and, in so doing, gained a national reputation for himself and for his journalism that he took, at the beginning of the 1880s, to London when he became assistant editor of the *PMG*.

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<sup>57</sup> 'The Struggle for Religious Equality', *NE*, 10 October 1878, p. 3.

<sup>58</sup> 'The Political Influence of the Establishment', *NE*, 20 June 1879, p. 3.

<sup>59</sup> 'The Political Influence of the Establishment', *NE*, 20 June 1879, p. 3.

### **The *Northern Echo* Years (1871–1880): Moral Progress and Material Improvement**

During the fifty-year period 1830–1880, the Nonconformist emphasis on the transformative role of personal endeavour found political expression in Liberalism. For Liberals and Nonconformists, self-advancement was a central aspect of a society free from unnecessary state intervention, energised by commercial entrepreneurship, and empowered by free-market forces.<sup>60</sup> The Liberals could rely upon the Nonconformist electorate so long as the privileges of the established Anglican Church were kept to the minimum and preferably eliminated altogether. Through the Liberals, Nonconformists obtained access to the political platforms that could make their ambitions realisable. The provincial press provided a forum for the political aspirations of Liberals and Nonconformists, and, through Stead and the *NE*, a pulpit for the explicit promotion of Christian moral values in society. Moreover, religious revivalist activism and political campaigns shared techniques for the dissemination and embedding of views through the means of leaflets, newspapers, tracts, sermons, speeches, and press editorials.

After the Liberal Party's 1867 general election victory, Gladstone's government sought to enhance social equality by reining in some of the vested interests commonly associated with the established church and the Tory party. The government also aimed to raise the moral standards of the population with a particular focus upon the needs of the lower classes.<sup>61</sup> However, while both the Education (1870) and the Licensing (1872) Acts met the Liberal administration's reforming intentions, they also provoked the disapproval of Nonconformists. Dissenters criticised the Education Act for its apparent promotion of the state financing of sectarianism while the temperance legislation was condemned as an attempt to manage a social problem thought to be better resolved by individuals themselves. Nonconformists judged that the place of religious instruction in education was a purely denominational issue while the abuse of alcohol and its effects on individuals and families was a moral question rather than one to be solved by coercive legislation.

It was John Copleston, the first editor of the *NE*, who encouraged Stead to become a journalist rather than a Nonconformist minister. Whether this was the deciding influence or not, Stead became persuaded that journalism could be as powerful a medium for the dissemination of the Christian message as the pulpit.<sup>62</sup> As Baylen has argued, Stead's choice of the press rather than the religious ministry enabled him to turn the *NE* into 'the most influential voice of Radicalism and the Nonconformist Conscience in the North Country and one of the most vocal

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<sup>60</sup> Helmstadter, pp. 82, 66.

<sup>61</sup> J. P. Parry, 'Liberalism and Liberty', in *Liberty & Authority in Victorian Britain*, ed. by Peter Mandler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 71–100 (pp. 83–84).

<sup>62</sup> Kenneth D. Brown, *A Social History of the Nonconformist Ministry in England and Wales 1800–1930* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p. 91.

provincial journals in Britain'.<sup>63</sup> This combination of Liberal politics, Nonconformist moral values, and evangelical activism informed the development of Stead's New Journalism and gave it the organising structures within which to trial innovative press practices.

Stead's religious values and allegiances helped to shape his work at the *NE* supporting socio-political campaigns that spoke firmly from within the Nonconformist moral framework. He advocated Christian revivalism for both the individual and for society more generally; politically, he campaigned for the disestablishment of the Anglican Church; party politically, he supported the increased organisation and effectiveness of the Liberals that occurred under Gladstone's leadership. For both Stead and Hyslop Bell, the owner of the *NE*, improvement in national morality was, therefore, necessarily politically linked to endorsement of the Liberal party. Indeed, the newspaper contributed significantly to the securing of County Durham for the Liberals in the 1874 general election, in which the Conservatives were victorious, and, later, to the unexpected overall Liberal triumph in the general election of 1880.<sup>64</sup>

Less than a quarter of a century after the Religious Census of 1851 had influentially, if inaccurately, suggested that religious faith was nationally in serious decline, the role of religion was once again being revitalised and, in Stead and the *NE*, the secular press of the north-east of England disposed of a powerful means of promoting and sustaining religious revivalism. In pursuit of this objective, Stead advocated the religiously conservative ideology that attributed to moral improvement alone the means by which those in need could achieve better living conditions. On these issues, Stead deployed the rhetoric of an evangelical preacher in warning against 'the vast masses of our industrial population' and the 'heathenism which clings to the capital of Cleveland'.<sup>65</sup> The solution to the looming prospect of mass discontent and social disturbance lay with an emphasis on the 'awakening of spiritual life' and the raising of the great majority of the population 'to a higher sphere of life and action'. In these exhortations, it is easy to hear Arnold proclaiming the importance of religion and its associated cultural influences to the divine project of perfecting humankind. The difference between Stead and Arnold lay in the

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<sup>63</sup> Baylen, 'The 'New Journalism' in Late Victorian Britain', p. 368. Baylen has listed in detail the wide range of issues for which Stead undertook to campaign, and which demonstrate the breadth and depth of his socio-political engagement: 'Stead produced a torrent of acute leaders and personal commentaries on public affairs advocating the cause of the Liberal Party, the Salvation Army, the publication of cheap literature, compulsory universal education and equal educational opportunities for women, women's suffrage, repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts, collective bargaining, international arbitration, Irish home rule, British imperialism, autonomy for the Balkan Slavs, and an Anglo-Russian entente, and inveighing passionately against gambling, intemperance, immorality in high society and public life, the Poor Law, trades union discrimination against women, militarism, and jingoism' (p. 370).

<sup>64</sup> This was as part of a north-east of England Pease family press battalion comprising the *NE*, the *Darlington and Stockton Times*, and the *Darlington and Richmond Herald*. Baylen, p. 370; Lloyd, pp. 26–27, 30. 'The Day of Decision', *NE*, 11 February 1874, p. 2; 'Mr Disraeli's Turn', *NE*, 12 February 1874, p. 2; 'Durham's Triumph', *NE*, 13 February 1874, p. 2; 'A Splendid Victory', *NE*, 12 June 1874, p. 2.

<sup>65</sup> 'Religious Revival', *NE*, 18 October 1873, pp. 2,3.

emphasis on the application of a rigorous morality by the former and the cultivation of an inward spiritual aesthetic on the part of the latter.

The Rev. Joshua Clarkson Harrison, chairman of the Congregational Union for 1870, explicitly brought religious and political conceptions of liberty together by declaring that Christ had set humankind free in order to follow his teachings rather than the urgings of individual self-will.<sup>66</sup> In order to promote this revivalism in the press, Stead wanted to see more newspaper space allocated to the promotion of Christianity and deplored the fact that, for example, the annual autumn military exercises received far greater attention in the newspapers than did reports of the bi-annual conference meetings of the various religious denominations.<sup>67</sup> Stead campaigned for religion and peace to replace militarism and war.

According to the *NE*, the overall outcome of improving measures had so far merely been the creation and maintenance of ‘the hell of corruption, of ignorance, of debauchery — in one word, of selfishness’.<sup>68</sup> Stead depicted life in the north-east of England like that in the jungle where many of the inhabitants ‘live like savages and die like brutes.’<sup>69</sup> He likened people living in one of the richest countries in the world to the apparently uncivilised, animal-like, non-Christian communities that were then being encountered by foreign missionaries on other continents. Africa was very much in the public imagination at this time because of the success of the journalist and explorer Henry Morton Stanley in finding, in 1871, the celebrated Scottish evangelical explorer, David Livingstone, believed lost while searching for the source of the Nile. While foreign missionaries continued to set out for Africa, Asia, India, and the Pacific region to convert non-Christian indigenous peoples,<sup>70</sup> Stead questioned what could yet be done to bring about lasting improvement to the inhabitants of the poorer districts of the towns and regions in Britain.

In 1869, Dale had preached that the Living Christ had the power to restore revitalised Christian values to society.<sup>71</sup> He contended that ‘By preaching Christ, we shall best discharge our duty to this troubled and restless age’ and thereby find strength for the fight against unbelief, class alienation, and impoverished social conditions.<sup>72</sup> That secular solutions existed was not in doubt, but, as Dale asserted, their overall effectiveness was inconclusive:

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<sup>66</sup> Joshua Clarkson Harrison, ‘On Liberty in its Relation to Christ’, *Congregational Yearbook 1871* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1871), pp. 4–5.

<sup>67</sup> ‘Religious Revival’, *NE*, 18 October 1873, p. 2.

<sup>68</sup> ‘Religious Revival’, *NE*, 18 October 1873, p. 2.

<sup>69</sup> ‘Religious Revival’, *NE*, 18 October 1873, p. 2.

<sup>70</sup> Hugh McLeod, *Religion and Society in England, 1850–1914* (London: Macmillan, 1996), pp. 145–146.

<sup>71</sup> *Congregational Yearbook 1870* (London: Congregational Union of England and Wales, 1870), pp. 2–24.

<sup>72</sup> R. W. Dale, ‘On Christ and the Controversies of Christendom’, pp. 2–24 (pp. 5, 7).

We are confused and bewildered by the schemes of social reformers [...] How that hereditary pauperism, which no changes in our commercial policy, no manufacturing prosperity, no reforms in the method of administering relief, no schemes of emigration, seem able altogether to remove, is at last to disappear, I cannot tell.<sup>73</sup>

Four years after Dale had addressed the Congregational Union on the general failure of measures taken to provide for education, religion, public health, law, order, workers' rights, and protection, Stead also recognised that contemporary social conditions were failing to improve enough to make a substantial change.<sup>74</sup> Although by 1873, Stead showed a certain weariness at the lack of lasting change, he nonetheless still saw value in promoting acts of religious renewal.<sup>75</sup> He highlighted the increasing normalisation of religious action designed to stir up idling, or dormant, religious fervour, insisting that now was not the time for interdenominational factionalism. Religious revival had become — for some, at least, and including within the Anglican Church — an acceptable manifestation of religious life even though 'in times not so long ago, revivalism was regarded as an offspring of Dissenting fanaticism'.<sup>76</sup>

It became increasingly clear, however, that religious observance and personal efforts alone could not lead to the better living conditions that were so urgently needed for so many. Consequently, even as Stead continued to promote belief in the Christian mission of establishing on Earth the Kingdom of God, he expressed a sense of scepticism at how little good had been produced so far by religious revival alone.<sup>77</sup> The poor needed material assistance, at least initially, if living conditions were not to undermine efforts for moral improvement. The provision by religious agencies of material assistance to the poor was already a well-attested custom through a wide range of charitable, humanitarian actions. In the period 1800–1850, on average six new charitable agencies were set up each year. At the same time, evangelicals declared themselves against the systematic provision of public assistance, maintained the categories of

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<sup>73</sup> R. W. Dale, 'On Christ and the Controversies of Christendom', p. 21.

<sup>74</sup> 'The dwellings of the Poor', *NE*, 31 July 1874, p. 2. Parsons, 'Social Control to Social Gospel', pp. 48–50. Gareth Stedman Jones discusses some of the attitudes towards the material/moral debate in *Outcast London: A Study in the Relationship Between Classes in Victorian Society* (London: Verso, 2013), pp. 180–181, 183. Watts, III, 289, describes how Joseph Chamberlain, the Unitarian (as he then was) Mayor of Birmingham, concluded that material improvement had to occur for levels of morality to rise.

<sup>75</sup> 'Religious Revival', *NE*, 18 October 1873, pp. 2–3.

<sup>76</sup> 'Religious Revival', *NE*, 18 October 1873, p. 3.

<sup>77</sup> 'Religious Revival', *NE*, 18 October 1873, pp. 2–3. Today's political-party conferences that are held in the spring and autumn each year follow the scheduling of nineteenth-century denominational meetings. This indicates the growing replacement of religion by politics.

deserving and undeserving poor, and wished to see the needy able-bodied help themselves.<sup>78</sup> Eventually, it became accepted amongst those seeking to evangelise the poor that such efforts failed when the living conditions left people with no human or financial resources to do anything other than survive.<sup>79</sup> This shift in emphasis reflected a mainstream re-centring of religious thought that saw the importance of the atonement of Christ being superseded by the meaning of the living Christ. Leaders of Christian thought and social reform became increasingly accepting of the idea that individuals born into impoverishment needed a dual material-spiritual response to the problems that confronted them: they could be helped by the more scientific approach of secular reformers without their religious needs being negated.<sup>80</sup>

More personally, in July 1874, Stead committed his private feelings to a series of meditative notes that he customarily composed on his birthday or at the turn of a new year.<sup>81</sup> Writing, 'I am less of a prophet and more of a journalist than in 1871', and, 'What is my message? That is what troubles me. I have not got a message', Stead revealed his near despair at losing both a sense of inner duty and a conviction of certainty in his principles.<sup>82</sup> The exercise was generally intended as an opportunity for self-reflection, but, to twenty-first-century readers, offers an insight into the influence of Nonconformist Christian beliefs on his feelings and motivations. Aged twenty-five, and three years into his tenure as editor of the *NE*, he was buffeted by an inner spiritual conflict occasioned by his sense of an all-too-encompassing material and domestic comfort. What he wished to recover was the evangelical fervour, activism, and somatic expression that marked Nonconformist religious sensibilities: what he feared losing was the conviction that he had been accorded a role as 'a God-sent messenger to the age in which I live'. These markers of evangelical engagement also designated the purpose of Stead's sensationalism. Stead's belief was that a cosseted and unchallenged individual would lack the impetus to become involved in resolving pressing social problems, and, therefore, needed to be shaken up to the point of action. Nonetheless, the one driving force in which he had not lost faith was that he perceived as being provided by God's spirit.

By the end of 1873, Stead had begun to shift his emphasis from material improvement based on moral betterment to moral elevation emerging from material regeneration. Although he supported, for example, the Tory Home Secretary Richard Cross's slum clearance plans for the capital, the programme had merely succeeded in forcing the poor into even worse conditions of overcrowding thereby making 'the condition of many of the poorer quarters of

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<sup>78</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, pp. 120–122.

<sup>79</sup> McLeod, p. 143.

<sup>80</sup> R. W. Dale, 'On Christ and the Controversies of Christendom', pp. 2–24.

<sup>81</sup> Quoted in Robertson Scott, *The Life and Death of a Newspaper*, pp. 99–102.

<sup>82</sup> Quoted in Robertson Scott, *The Life and Death of a Newspaper*, pp. 100, 101.

that City a disgrace to our Civilization and our Christianity'.<sup>83</sup> Such material deprivation affected national conceptions of metropolis, cultural development, and moral progress but there would be no advance in cultural and religious affirmation until material conditions had been adequately improved. As Stead declared:

[P]overty is perforce acquainted with vice, and vice not unfrequently bears fruit in crime. It is useless seeking to effect a moral reformation among men and women herded together in a poisonous atmosphere in one small chamber, in which they live, eat, sleep, and die. The improvement of the homes of the London poor is an essential pre-requisite to any improvement in their morality.<sup>84</sup>

Stead's focus here upon the housing conditions of the London poor was suggested by the actuality of Cross's redevelopment plans but there was also a polemical issue to be addressed. The slum clearances provided an opportunity to depict London as the Modern Babylon of immorality, vice, and licentiousness that Stead could attack. In accommodating the power elites, London hoarded their wealth, and harboured their places of amusement: the metropolis represented all that was wrong, sinful, and un-Christian about the country. He was to revisit the argument that moral progress rested initially upon material improvement in the *PMG's* promotion of the *Bitter Cry of Outcast London* where none of the religious organisations named received praise for their efforts.<sup>85</sup>

Stead did not use his Congregational allegiance as a reason to withhold support from the Church of England and its social improvement campaigns as he recognised that it would be both futile and unjust to offer to Dissent unqualified praise and to Anglicanism only grudging approval. The *NE*, therefore, willingly promoted the work of the Church of England in its campaigns for religious revival and for the cause of temperance because they helped to consolidate Nonconformist agitations that had the same ambitions. Amongst such campaigns for change figured the battles against alcohol abuse and the unofficial state sponsoring of prostitution created by the terms of the Contagious Diseases Acts. As the next section demonstrates, these were concerns in which Stead took great interest and for which he deployed his journalistic skills and resources. As both causes already represented generally

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<sup>83</sup> 'The dwellings of the Poor', *NE*, 31 July 1874, p. 2. Stedman Jones, p. 200.

<sup>84</sup> 'The dwellings of the Poor', *NE*, 31 July 1874, p. 2.

<sup>85</sup> 'The Temperance Crusade', *NE*, 17 October 1874, pp. 2–3. Andrew Mearns, *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London: The Condition of the Abject Poor* (London: James Clarke, 1883).

acceptable social issues for which to campaign, he was provided with an opportunity to develop his journalistic strategies without opening the *NE* up to the adverse reaction of the newspaper's readership.

### **Moral Crusades: Temperance and the Contagious Diseases Acts**

From the 1830s to the 1930s, the temperance movement aimed to persuade men, women, and children of the perils of alcohol use and to encourage their adherence to a pledge of abstinence.<sup>86</sup> Evangelicals saw in excessive drinking a clear facilitator of sin and a grave impediment to conversion on the part of sinners. The terrors of a family life blighted by alcohol abuse, so often linked to the horrors of working-class poverty, were so many examples of why social reformers sought material reform and why Nonconformists emphasised the importance of salvation of the soul as the route to salve of the body.<sup>87</sup> Moreover, temperance was a social issue that lent itself particularly well to the crusading and persuasion techniques that Stead developed into central aspects of the New Journalism of the 1880s. As the Congregational minister, the Rev. Dr Alexander Raleigh observed in 1876 in his paper 'Intemperance', the abuse of alcohol was physically, mentally, and spiritually corrupting: 'It debases the body; it darkens and degrades the mind; it ruins the soul [...] the drunkard himself shall not inherit the Kingdom of God'.<sup>88</sup> By attacking the strength of an individual's conscience and sense of duty to self and family, alcoholism represented an issue that Nonconformist evangelical preaching addressed by urging sufferers to adopt a 'righteous and sober' life.<sup>89</sup> Moreover, a crusade against the powerful grouping of brewers, publicans, and determined drinkers was a campaigning opportunity for redemptive action that called for robust advocacy to which Stead's style of press-pulpit preaching was suited and for which there was already an illuminating earlier example in the person of the Scots Baptist, Joseph Livesey (1794–1884).

In the late 1830s, Livesey had called for a combination of temperance and high-quality popular newspapers in the cause of improved national standards of morality. It was not poverty, he declared, that caused social disturbance but 'the want of *mental culture and moral worth*' exacerbated by poor quality popular print material.<sup>90</sup> Too aggressively partisan in their politics, too heated in their contempt for rival publications, and overly concentrated on the battle for

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<sup>86</sup> Annemarie McAllister, 'Onward: How a Regional Temperance Magazine for Children Survived and Flourished in the Victorian Marketplace, *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 48:1 (2015), 42–66 (p. 43).

<sup>87</sup> Watts, III, p. 149.

<sup>88</sup> Alexander Raleigh, 'Intemperance', in *Congregational Yearbook 1877* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1877), pp. 138–142 (p. 138).

<sup>89</sup> Helmstadter, pp. 81–82.

<sup>90</sup> *Livesey's Moral Reformer*, 10 February 1838. Quoted in Aled Jones, p. 102. Original italics.

circulation figures, popular newspapers were, in consequence, less likely to focus on good advice and useful knowledge.<sup>91</sup> To improve matters, Livesey advised that articles should be '*well written, in a plain, pithy, lively style*' as well as '*short and interesting*', and visually enlivened by the inclusion of woodcuts.<sup>92</sup> The elements of clear, concise, and attractive journalism that shaped Livesey's temperance newspaper, the *Moral Reformer*, stand as forerunners of the qualities and capacities that were to form part of Stead's brand of New Journalism in the 1880s.

Unlike the Nonconformists, the prohibitionist United Kingdom Alliance (UKA), founded in Manchester in 1853, pressed for state legislation rather than individual conscience as the means to tackle the problem of intemperance.<sup>93</sup> Opposed by other temperance organisations that favoured moral argument over legal measures, the UKA also found that the parliamentary efforts that it supported were either repealed or defeated.<sup>94</sup> Stead, however, campaigned along the lines adopted by Dissenters for the 'systematized, steady action against the great enemy of morality' and he wanted the 'recognised representatives of morality', the Christian churches, to be involved in a movement that Nonconformists believed should be underpinned by moral values and individual endeavour rather than by legislative coercion.<sup>95</sup> As Stead powerfully declared: 'Political teetotalism has failed totally, ignominiously failed, as all attempts to build a house without foundations must inevitably fail'. Although he accepted, in part, the UKA's contention that moral persuasion had come to nothing, he did not see this as a reason to abandon the line of morality. Instead, he exhorted 'every regiment' to enter the fight 'against the common enemy' in a militaristic rhetoric that was determinedly evangelical, and which would later be employed by agencies such as the Salvation Army in their fight for the body and soul of those in need.<sup>96</sup>

Although Stead was against repressive state agencies being involved in what Nonconformists saw as moral struggles, he nonetheless counted the police amongst those he wished to participate in the fight against alcoholism. He argued that the police could be deployed as enforcers of public order if its agents harnessed individual conscience to realise a collective endeavour for the social good. In comparing the police to Cromwell's Ironsides, the mounted forces of the New Model Army of 1645, Stead emphasised the importance of religious conscience to the involvement of the police in the fight against drunkenness and disorder. The

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<sup>91</sup> Aled Jones, pp. 102–103.

<sup>92</sup> Aled Jones, p. 104; *Livesey's Moral Reformer*, July 1838, p. 179. Quoted in Aled Jones, p. 148. Original italics.

<sup>93</sup> The United Kingdom Alliance (UKA) was launched in Manchester in 1853 to call for the prohibition of the sale of alcohol. Helmstadter, p. 82.

<sup>94</sup> Helmstadter, p. 82. The Sale of Beer Act 1854 restricted Sunday opening hours but was repealed after popular unrest; a Prohibition Bill, put forward in 1859, was heavily defeated in Parliament.

<sup>95</sup> 'The Temperance Crusade', *NE*, 17 October 1874, pp. 2–3.

<sup>96</sup> 'The Temperance Crusade', *NE*, 17 October 1874, p. 3.

party-politicking, which Livesey had earlier censured, needed to be replaced by a generalised nation-binding patriotism. The ambition was for these values of individual conscience and collective national feeling to combine with the authority of state legislation to ensure that public houses respected every detail of the law.

Yet, before this could be put in motion, Stead gave primacy to the need to change public opinion regarding intemperance. In this instantiation of the concept of 'public opinion', newspapers generally did not represent public opinion as such, but, in a clear example of Hampton's concept of the educative role of the press, instead shaped the views of the general population. Once the public had accepted that overindulgence in alcohol was harmful, the cause of temperance could be undertaken for the causes of 'Christianity [...] disgraced, civilisation [...] endangered, and humanity [...] outraged by our national drunkenness'.<sup>97</sup> When Stead wrote of 'civilisation', he meant the civilising influence of the Christian religion that had the capacity to effect moral improvement. Similarly, when Liberals spoke of liberty of conscience, they meant the freedom to obey the law of Christ.<sup>98</sup>

In the 1870s, Stead's campaigns in support of temperance and against the Contagious Diseases Acts (CD Acts) followed the orthodox evangelical view that individuals were responsible for their own salvation whether it be temporal or eternal. This was evident in his suggestion that temperance societies be set up in all churches, that a 'Band of Hope' be established in every Sunday school, that 'a few words' be addressed to the young on the subject of temperance at their confirmation, and that 'an earnest appeal' upon the matter be made to those being admitted to Church-membership. Informing the organising structures was the recommendation that 'The Rules and Regulations of these societies may, nay must, vary as infinitely as do the local circumstances of each church and congregation'.<sup>99</sup> This highlighting of the need for variation was more than just a call for flexibility: it was a reminder that Congregational churches were independent, each free from any external hierarchical authority, although able nonetheless to unite loosely for shared objectives. Evangelical activism had to be avowedly motivated by considerations of conscience for it to be a valid response to a collective issue and could not be driven by external compulsion.

Stead's call for the establishment of 'Bands of Hope' nationwide also demonstrated an aspect of his journalism that needs to be emphasised. Stead was often not the originator of the campaigns which he supported but rather a particularly gifted advocate for issues suggested by others: what he succeeded in doing was bringing to public attention matters that needed re-actualisation in a new political, religious, or social context. In this, Stead's publications acted as

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<sup>97</sup> 'The War Against Intemperance', *NE*, 21 August 1875, pp. 2–3.

<sup>98</sup> Parry, 'Liberalism and Liberty', p. 73.

<sup>99</sup> 'The Temperance Crusade', *NE*, 17 October 1874, p. 3.

the 'sounding board' and 'phonograph' for the dissemination of Nonconformist and Liberal messages that he wished to reach a readership and an audience that was as large as possible.

As we have already seen, this analogical positioning of forms of technological modernity replaced some of the pulpit/prophet casting of Stead's journalism and helped to shape the newness of his New Journalism. This call for the introduction of 'Bands of Hope' appeared fresh in its exhortation, but was, in fact, for a movement that had begun in 1847, in Leeds, under the auspices of Jabez Tunnicliff, a General Baptist minister, and Anne Carlile, widow of an Irish Presbyterian pastor.<sup>100</sup> Organised primarily for children, with the aim of encouraging as many as possible to take the pledge to abstain fully from alcohol, the movement counted three million members by the end of the nineteenth century and made highly effective use of periodical publications.

Two Band of Hope magazines became highly successful publications. As Annemarie McAllister has noted, the *Band of Hope Review and Sunday Scholar's Friend*, founded in 1851 and becoming the *Band of Hope Review* in 1861, aimed to produce 'lively and engaging material', and included illustrations, short articles, poems, and devotional material. Further, the *Band of Hope Review* recognised the importance of human-interest stories and the provision of more accessible features, elements which were both later to be seen as part of the New Journalism.<sup>101</sup> A second magazine, *Onward: The Organ of the Lancashire and Cheshire Band of Hope Union* (1865—1910) incorporated a generally more informal register and highlighted opportunities for inter-reaction between the magazine and its readers. This regional Band of Hope used its periodical as a central means of creating a sense of supportive association and community relationship.<sup>102</sup> For Stead, Bands of Hope represented an organising structure that was already in place and which could be profitably re-energised to suit the new circumstances. Such forms of re-energisation were important to Stead's emerging profile as a leading exponent of New Journalism.

Rates of alcoholism in the population represented markers of overall poor living and working conditions as well as of existential distress and remained a problem exacerbated by the impact of vested interests. Amongst these, the breweries and publicans stood firm to protect their commercial viability and overall profitability; religious denominations had identified a social concern that represented fertile terrain for their evangelical approach; and government intervention on a collective scale risked the long-term alienation of wide sections of the population. Even gradual legislative action had become problematic in a sphere where temperance had become synonymous with *intemperance* and where legislative action did not

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<sup>100</sup> Watts, III, 149.

<sup>101</sup> McAllister, pp. 44–46.

<sup>102</sup> McAllister, p. 49.

have the support of the religious denominations. While at the *NE*, therefore, Stead supported a Liberal politics that emphasised restricted state intervention, and the revival of Christian values to counteract the perceived moral weakening of the social fabric.

In similar vein, the second notable campaign for social reform undertaken by Stead, to which I now turn, concerned the series of laws known collectively as the Contagious Diseases Acts to which he showed implacable opposition. Stead consistently spoke out against the CD Acts to the extent that for this issue alone he refused to allow any kind of positive advocacy to appear in the publications he edited.<sup>103</sup>

Stead's participation in the campaign against the CD Acts was in part formed by his mother's strong opposition to them as well as by his own belief in their absolute unacceptability; it also contributed to a general north of England movement for the removal of the Acts from the statute book. The Northern Counties League for Repeal, founded in 1872, was intended to rally the support of churches and chapels and to influence parliamentary candidates and existing members of parliament against this legislation.<sup>104</sup> Consequently, the *NE* reported with approval that 'The opponents of the Acts would not merely succeed in repealing an obnoxious, immoral law, but would raise permanently the standard of public morality'.<sup>105</sup> Stead was emphasising that it was not acceptable for a law to be just legal; it had to be both legal and moral.

The social reform for which Stead campaigned concerned this time the repeal of existing legislation rather than opposition to new laws being enacted. The CD Acts of the 1860s represented what Philip Harling has described as the Victorian state's 'most infamous effort at moral control beyond prison walls.' Formidable opposition to this legislation was offered by Josephine Butler and the Ladies' National Association for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts founded by Butler and Elizabeth Wolstenholme in 1869.<sup>106</sup> After the Crimean War, the state of health of men in the British army and navy was found to be very poor and the Acts had been passed to secure some control over sexual health by preventing the spread of venereal disease in garrison and dockyard towns. The Acts had the consequence of legalising prostitution and of empowering the police to compel women it suspected of being prostitutes to be medically examined and, if required, held for treatment for up to nine months. The legislation brought to the fore complex attitudes including opposition to state intervention in moral issues thought to be properly the province of individual conscience; disapproval of the reinforcement of sexual double standards whereby men escaped censure and women were subjected to invasive

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<sup>103</sup> Sydney Robinson, p. 3.

<sup>104</sup> Watts, III, 296.

<sup>105</sup> 'A Moral Crusade', *NE*, 13 November 1874, pp. 2–3.

<sup>106</sup> Philip Harling, 'The Powers of the Victorian State', in *Liberty & Authority*, ed. by Mandler, pp. 25–50 (pp. 37–38). For a discussion of Stead's contribution to feminism in the late Victorian period, see Alexis Easley, 'W. T. Stead, Late Victorian Feminism', pp. 37–58.

procedures and personal humiliation; and condemnation of the temporary loss by women of rights considered fundamental in English law.<sup>107</sup>

Feminist opponents of the CD Acts judged prostitution to be a moral evil and, consequently, very quickly secured the support of the Nonconformist churches for their campaigning. Resistance to the abolition campaign came from leading figures in society which included members of parliament, a large part of the medical profession, the military authorities, and Anglican clergymen, all of whom were male. Some considered themselves to be pragmatists tolerating for the time being what they considered to be, nonetheless, an evil; some medical and political opinion positively supported the measures.<sup>108</sup> Under Stead, the *NE* was an uncompromising adversary of the legislation and swung its weight behind Butler and her National Association.

Stead's support for Butler's 'Social Purity' campaign involved him in several major interconnected public issues. Religion as an indispensable and effective means of confronting a 'perverse and unbelieving generation' underpinned Butler's campaign against sexual exploitation.<sup>109</sup> The leaders of the repeal movement and many of the supporters were Dissenters with particularly strong support coming from the Quakers. Stead found himself out of step with his own denomination because the Congregationalists joined the campaign later than most largely because Alexander Hannay, the secretary to the Congregational Union, had not allowed public discussion of the topic until 1881.<sup>110</sup> Such an agitation also confronted what Stead presented as the conniving silence of newspapers on a subject where they were more interested in not losing readers or advertisers than in dealing with difficult subject matter. Stead believed it to be the newspaper editor's moral, civic, and journalistic duty to speak out, and he did so through the *NE* just as he was to do in the 1880s at the *PMG*, where, most famously, he launched the 'Maiden Tribute' crusade which was also to receive little or no support from the other major London daily papers. The publicity of Stead's noisy journalism worked to break the silence that colluded with the immorality of individual and collective conduct.

If we compare the way in which other newspapers treated the campaigning for the abolition of the CD Acts, we arrive at a better understanding of the impact of Stead's crusading journalism. Other newspapers in the north-east did report in favour of repeal of the offending legislation, but they lacked the campaigning intensity and moral urgency of the *NE*. In 1873, the

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<sup>107</sup> Helen Rogers, 'Women and Liberty', in *Liberty & Authority*, ed. by Mandler, pp. 125–155 (p. 125); Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, pp. 134–135; Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (London: Virago, 1992), pp. 22–24; Philippa Levine, 'Consistent Contradictions: Prostitution and Protective Labour Legislation in Nineteenth-Century England', *Social History*, 19:1 (1994), 17–35 (pp. 22–25).

<sup>108</sup> McLeod, p. 129.

<sup>109</sup> 'Social Purity', *NE*, 3 December 1877, pp. 2–3.

<sup>110</sup> Watts, III, 295–296.

Middlesbrough *Daily Gazette*, for example, supported the movement for abolition by favourably covering a repeal meeting, but, in contrast to the *NE*, it maintained distance and restraint.<sup>111</sup> The report of what transpired sounds falsely controlled to modern sensibilities in an account that failed to deal with the subject's fundamentally conflicted nature.<sup>112</sup> This was seen in the way that the legislation worked to present the debilitating effect upon men of sexually transmitted diseases but silenced the responsibility of men for their participation in the commerce of prostitution. The *Daily Gazette's* account, for example, was dominated by the tension between patriarchal control and the barely expressed although central theme of female sexual exploitation. The meeting — gathered to discuss a matter opaquely described as 'the subject they were met together to consider' — was represented as monolithically male, being held in the 'Workmen's Social Club', in the presence of a wholly male platform-party composed of representatives of the secular and religious authorities. Expressions of general moral condemnation and civic indignation were seconded by disapproval of taxpayers being made to pay 'for the sins of a portion of the community', a perhaps welcome word of morality curiously dropped into a denouncement of fiscal waste (*Daily Gazette*, 3 November 1873, p. 3). The male domination of public calls for the repeal of measures that protected men at the expense of women could hardly have met a more obvious example of the omission of women's voices, wishes, and actions. The only reference to women in the newspaper report occurs after the passing of the second resolution when the Rev. W. A. P. Johnman 'maintained that women ought to stand before the law in a position of perfect equality with men' (*Daily Gazette*, 3 November 1873, p. 3). Until then, the reader might have been forgiven for having forgotten that the brutal mistreatment of women and the contested state-licensing of prostitution were matters at the very heart of the measures against which resolutions were being passed in the country at large. Stead's very public support for the work of Josephine Butler redressed the balance in this respect and made of the *NE's* contributions important calls in explicit support of the political agitation.

In May 1878, Stead created out of the *NE's* intervention a wide-scale condemnation of the overall political spirit that it believed was underpinning Disraeli's Conservative government.<sup>113</sup> Stead suggested that a common thread of bad spirit underlay a series of socially disturbing occurrences: the original passing of the CD Acts (ironically, for Gladstonian Liberals, the work of Lord Palmerston's last Liberal ministry), the Tory election victory of 1874, the Blackburn and Lancashire cotton mill strikes and riots, and the demonstrations in Hyde Park. Stead represented this spirit of national destabilisation as the work of 'the World, the Flesh, and

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<sup>111</sup> 'The Contagious Diseases Act/ Public Meeting at Middlesbrough', *Daily Gazette for Middlesbrough, Stockton, and District*, 3 November 1873, p.3.

<sup>112</sup> 'The Contagious Diseases Act/Public Meeting at Middlesbrough', *Daily Gazette*, 3 November 1873, p. 3.

<sup>113</sup> 'Atheism: Political and Social', *NE*, 22 May 1878, pp. 2–3.

the Devil', principles that ignored 'human wrongs and sufferings' and which set themselves in 'cynical defiance of all Divine law or Constitutional principle which has now become incarnate in the Administration of Lord Beaconsfield'.<sup>114</sup> Stead suggested that the legal violation of women under the provisions of the CD Acts and the inadequate policy of Disraeli's government regarding the Turkish ill-treatment of Bulgarian Christians were linked by the same disregard for 'liberty' and 'morality' and thereby put to the test the 'reality of Conventional Christianity' (*NE*, 22 May 1878, pp. 2–3). Stead denounced what he characterised as the selfishness of whole swathes of the population, the vacuity of a Christianity that he contended played more a role of fashion in society than one of informing religious truth, and, amongst the wider population, a conspicuously complete loss of faith. He also declared that as the editor of a daily newspaper he had the potential to energise public opinion in favour of evangelical religious action, thereby protesting against morally bankrupt legislation and encouraging the inculcation of Christian values. Just as importantly, he understood that a good newspaper campaign that concerned matters of public health and sexual conduct had to run the risk of offending the very readers that it sought to persuade of the correctness of its arguments. This was because he understood that euphemism, circumlocutory tactics, and, at the worst, complete silence, could all be used to soften, and, even, falsely divert, the direction of a reforming campaign.

These two moral crusades for temperance and against the CD Acts exemplified the tension that existed between appeals for greater individual effort, as espoused by evangelical Christianity and the liberal philosophy of self-improvement, and the advocacy of increased state intervention in the lives of the population. At the same time, the causes of temperance and the protection of women against enforced medical examination and possible detention differed in that the first concerned men and women while the second demonstrated a gross inequality of treatment according to gender. When Stead became involved in the 'Bulgarian Atrocities' campaign, he dealt with what was fundamentally a political battle dealing with British foreign policy. As the next section argues, it was a campaign in which he called for Christian-inspired moral judgements to be made and government inaction to be roundly censured.

### **Political Crusades: The *Northern Echo*, the *Daily News*, and the 'Bulgarian Atrocities'.**

Stead had decided to support the popular movement against Turkish oppression by launching between 23 August and 27 September 1876 the first stage of the *NE*'s 'Bulgarian Atrocities' campaign.<sup>115</sup> In so doing, he employed rhetorical and presentational strategies that became constitutive elements of his conception of New Journalism in the 1880s. During the campaign,

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<sup>114</sup> 'Atheism: Political and Social', *NE*, 22 May 1878, pp. 2–3.

<sup>115</sup> 'The North Country and Turkish Atrocities', *NE*, 23 August 1876, pp. 2–3.

Stead invested political action with Christian values in proclaiming the need for the country to support the weak and to deplore the moral bankruptcy of political expediency. Other elements that were to prove intrinsic to the development of New Journalism included the capacity both to report and to shape public opinion and to foster extra-parliamentary public pressure in favour of popular demands. Campaigning techniques included sensationalist reporting designed to appeal to the emotional understanding of the readership and, in deploying these press strategies, Stead showed for the first time that he possessed the ability to influence matters at a national level.<sup>116</sup> Indeed, such was the success of the campaign that Stead has been credited with giving Gladstone sufficient reason to resurrect his temporarily stalled political career.<sup>117</sup>

To bring a crusading campaign to life in newsprint involved conveying and combining the fervour of an evangelical revival and the clear argumentation of the issue. Bebbington has described how spontaneous religious revivals of the early nineteenth century were shaped by the uninhibited expression of their religious fervour. As the nineteenth century advanced, the adoption of specific evangelising techniques such as the isolated ‘anxious seat’, where individuals were encouraged to make repentance and confess their belief, became central to the planning of ‘arranged revivals’. Evangelicalism went on to achieve impact by the organisation of ‘regular methods of mission’ to include home visitation, Sunday services focused on the evangelistic task, and Bible classes.<sup>118</sup>

In this narrative of spontaneous revivals giving way to ‘arranged’ forms — that included forward planning, with advertised dates and locations, specially invited speakers, pre-selected subject matter, and a chosen, targeted audience — the unrestrained aspect of spontaneous enthusiasm required substitution. While arranged revivals benefitted from the presence of preachers particularly well-versed in methods of rousing their congregations, the inclusion of sensationalist elements and innovatory techniques of presentation in newspaper campaigns served the purpose of evoking, stoking, and maintaining a sense of heightened emotional response to the causes being promoted. These methods became particularly important to the New Journalism which often included sensational and novel elements intended to stir up and focus the readership.

Despite Gladstone remaining personally popular, the failure of the Nonconformists to obtain either Church Disestablishment or an entirely satisfactory national scheme of elementary

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<sup>116</sup> Goldsworthy, p. 388; Richard Shannon, *Gladstone and the Bulgarian Agitation 1876* (Hassocks: Harvester, 1975); Maurice Milne, *The Newspapers of Northumberland and Durham: A Study of their Progress during the ‘Golden Age’ of the Provincial Press* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Frank Graham, 1971), p. 93; Griffiths, *Fleet Street*, p. 117; Paul Adelman, *Seminar Studies in History: Gladstone, Disraeli and Later Victorian Politics* (London: Longman, 1970), p. 38; Sydney Robinson, p. 28; Nicholson, p. 12.

<sup>117</sup> Baylen, ‘The “New Journalism” in Late Victorian Britain’, p. 371.

<sup>118</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, pp. 116–117.

education had led to a distinct cooling of the relationship between the Dissenting supporters of Liberalism and the Liberal party itself.<sup>119</sup> Although, to the surprise of many, the Tories under Disraeli won the 1874 general election, this was not necessarily the consequence of Nonconformist voters turning their backs upon the political party which still best represented their aspirations. As Watts argues, the Conservative victory was more a matter of Anglican voters being determined to go to the polls to oppose vociferous Nonconformist demands. However, if the Liberal party were to be in a position of regaining power, a *rapprochement* needed to be encouraged between Liberalism and Dissent and the healing of this rift was facilitated by Stead's moral condemnation of what became known as the 'Bulgarian Atrocities'.

The 'Bulgarian Atrocity' crusade represented a nationwide campaign that combined expression of public indignation, the reporting and shaping of public opinion, and the association of Christian morality and politics on an issue that opposed a large part of the population and Disraeli's government. It was an example of extra-parliamentary agitation that engaged the support of parliamentary representatives and which appealed beyond them to the electorate and to those not yet enfranchised. Anyone with the money to buy a newspaper or the opportunity to visit a public reading room was able to participate in the campaign.

In the spring of 1876, an attempt by Bulgarian Christians to throw off Turkish rule was put down with great brutality. Britain's avowed government position had historically been that of physician to the 'Sick Man of Europe', as Turkey had become known, but, by its initial refusal to believe the accounts reaching England, the Conservative government seemed to be supporting an atrocity-perpetrating regime.<sup>120</sup> Britain's support for the Ottoman Empire was based on perceived national interests: bolstering Turkey was seen as creating a bulwark against any potential Russian threats to British imperial hegemony in India.<sup>121</sup> Disraeli misjudged the public's response to the slaughter of insurgents and the retributive butchery visited on Eastern Orthodox Christians.

More detailed information only reached the British government when the *Daily News* published the first of a series of accounts by its 'special commissioner', Januarius Aloysius MacGahan.<sup>122</sup> Liberal party anger against such government diffidence was increased by the reports emanating from Turkey declaring that England was determined to help end the revolt and to defend the regime against Russia.<sup>123</sup> Gladstone joined the protest with the publication on 5 September 1876 of his pamphlet *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East*, and, struck

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<sup>119</sup> Watts, III, 244–245.

<sup>120</sup> The phrase 'The sick man of Europe' is usually attributed to John Russell quoting the Russian Tsar Nicholas I before the outbreak of the Crimean War.

<sup>121</sup> Cannadine, p. 376.

<sup>122</sup> Goldsworthy, p. 388; Eckley, pp. 19–21.

<sup>123</sup> Watts, III, 255.

by the relative cohesiveness of the Nonconformist protest, went on to re-establish a working alliance between Liberalism and Nonconformity.<sup>124</sup> However, the argument influentially offered by Baylen that the success of the national ‘Bulgarian Atrocity’ campaign lay with the work of Stead is difficult to sustain now, as, indeed, it was at the time.<sup>125</sup> In his biography of Gladstone, John Morley did not attribute to Stead such great influence while Gladstone wrote that he had begun working on his pamphlet having heard about the possibility of a people’s meeting being organised in Hyde Park.<sup>126</sup> Further, Cannadine, for example, does not mention Stead but writes of the support offered to Gladstone by provincial, radical, and Nonconformist opinion and of the organisation of five hundred demonstrations nationwide against the government’s pro-Ottoman stance.<sup>127</sup> The connection of influence and debt of gratitude that came to exist between Gladstone and Stead is partly explained by the *NE* having caught and created a strong regional identity in the support offered for the indignation meetings. Further, more prosaically and quite simply, Stead had provided Gladstone with copies of the *NE* with the relevant articles helpfully marked up for his attention.<sup>128</sup> This method became part of Stead’s projected scheme in ‘The Future of Journalism’ and represented part of a system whereby editors could gauge public opinion on specific issues.<sup>129</sup>

Stead formally launched the *NE* crusade on 23 August 1876 when, in his leader article, ‘The North Country and Turkish Atrocities’, he positioned Darlington and Hyslop Bell’s newspaper at the heart of the extra-parliamentary agitation.<sup>130</sup> The declaration of regional pride — the campaign began ‘in the North’ — served to emphasise the perceived moral emptiness of the metropolitan centre and invested the north-east generally with the projected capacity to represent what was considered to be national right-minded conviction. Stead succeeded in suggesting a close link between the regional and the national campaigns by confidently asserting that ‘all true hearted Englishmen’ would find their views echoed in the *NE*’s leader articles while the communities of the north-east would express their opinions in the accents, outspokenness,

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<sup>124</sup> Watts, III, 256–257. K. Theodore Hoppen, *The Mid-Victorian Generation 1846–1886* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 622. Watts places the date of publication of Gladstone’s pamphlet one day earlier than Hoppen who agrees with Shannon in this. Richard Shannon, *Gladstone: Heroic Minister 1865–1898* (Allen Lane, 1999), p. 172.

<sup>125</sup> Baylen, ‘The ‘New Journalism’ in Late Victorian Journalism’, p. 371.

<sup>126</sup> Gladstone, quoted in John Morley, *The Life of William Ewart Gladstone*, 3 vols (London: Macmillan, 1903), II, 616. In a footnote to an extract from Gladstone’s diary, p. 550, Morley observes: ‘Mr Stead. Then at the *NE* in Darlington, began his redoubtable journalistic career in pressing this question into life’. Morley appears to have ignored the momentous work of the *Daily News*.

<sup>127</sup> Cannadine, p. 377.

<sup>128</sup> Sydney Robinson, p. 30.

<sup>129</sup> ‘The Future of Journalism’, pp. 673–674.

<sup>130</sup> ‘The North Country and Turkish Atrocities’, *NE*, 23 August 1876, pp. 2–3. ‘The North Country and the Turkish Atrocities’ or ‘The North Country and the Atrocities’ became the usual heading in the *NE* for the discussion of the campaign’s progress.

and the free expression 'of outraged Humanity'. The sacred and the secular, Anglican clergy and Nonconformist ministers, established-church attendees and Dissenting-chapel members were all proclaimed to be rising up to express forceful moral indignation. In declaring the newspaper's wish to uphold the cause of 'Humanity, Civilization, and Christianity', Stead conjured up the image of a processional banner carried at the head of a demonstration of popular discontent.<sup>131</sup>

At this point, Stead showed that it was important to impart a sense of confidence in the rapid growth of the campaign by announcing the expectation of a 'rapid succession of demonstrations'.<sup>132</sup> A campaign on the move was suggested by a succession of time-indicators signalling future public meetings: 'To-night [...] To-morrow [...] On Monday [...] through the whole of next week'.<sup>133</sup> A sense of regional unity and mass participation was educed through the personification of towns and districts: 'Darlington last night spoke out'; 'The North Country is thoroughly roused'; 'The North Country is up!'; and 'The numerous rising towns of the Cleveland district are moving'.<sup>134</sup> Stead further underlined that Darlington and the *NE* were the leading promoters of the Christian values and political opinions of regional communities by highlighting other major towns that were appearing slow to react (Leeds), 'displaying a strange and unusual apathy' (Newcastle), or appearing lethargic to an extraordinary degree (York).<sup>135</sup> The general success of the campaign was advertised when its effects were reported as having crossed regional borders thereby allowing Stead to declare that 'The North-Country no longer stands alone in the protest against the Turks'.<sup>136</sup> This propagation of a moral political message resounded with evangelical fervour and conviction of faith. At a time of crisis, Stead combined the power of regional affiliations to Liberalism and Nonconformity in a direct call upon national government to change its policy towards international affairs.

The campaign deployed presentational strategies that expressly promoted reader interest in the material published. To avoid the enforced perusal of columns of densely printed reporting, the paper adopted a diverse approach that included editorial comment, accounts of town hall meetings, with, or without, lengthy verbatim speech extracts, reports wired from Bulgaria, telegrams from Constantinople, parliamentary reports, and readers' letters.<sup>137</sup> The

<sup>131</sup> 'The North Country and Turkish Atrocities', *NE*, 23 August 1876, pp. 2–3.

<sup>132</sup> 'The North Country and the Atrocities', *NE*, 28 August 1876, p. 3.

<sup>133</sup> 'The North Country and the Atrocities', *NE*, 31 August 1876, p. 3.

<sup>134</sup> 'The North Country and the Atrocities', *NE*, 26 August 1876, p. 3; 28 August 1876, p. 3; 29 August 1876, p. 3; 29 August 1876, p. 3.

<sup>135</sup> 'The North Country and the Turkish Atrocities', *NE*, 30 August 1876, p. 3; 'Leeds', 30 August 1876, p. 3; 'York', 2 September 1876, p. 3.

<sup>136</sup> 'England and the Atrocities', *NE*, 4 September 1876, p. 3.

<sup>137</sup> See, for example: (leader articles) 'The North Country and Turkish Atrocities', *NE*, pp. 2–3, 23 August 1876; (reports of meetings) 'The North Country and the Atrocities', *NE*, 30 August 1876, p. 3; 31 August 1876, p. 3; 'England and the Atrocities', *NE*, 4 September 1876, p. 3; (letters) 'The North Country and the Atrocities', *NE*, 31 August 1876, p. 3; 'England and the Atrocities', *NE*, 6 September 1876, p. 3.

coverage was multi-layered and supported by a typographically multi-textured presentation. Headline stacks proved adept in giving to the newspaper accounts a narrative structure and an index of the matters that were to be explored. This presentational layout helped to build up anticipation in the reader and to impart partial understanding before the main points were enlarged upon in the newspaper reports themselves. The *NE*, for example, set out the core features of the great campaign meeting in Darlington as follows: ‘The North Country and the Atrocities/Great Indignation Meeting at Darlington/Recall of Sir Henry Elliott Demanded/Speech of Mr. Backhouse, MP’.<sup>138</sup> The headings resembled chapter titles, and, in the case of campaign-promoting pieces, also represented an evocation of what newsvendors might have cried out in their efforts to attract the attention of passing customers.

Three elements require further exploration. Firstly, the ‘Bulgarian Atrocities’ campaign played a significant role in representing public opinion to the government as well as representing the opinion of Stead and the *NE*. The legitimacy of this position has led, however, to exaggerated claims, detailed below, that Stead and the *NE* had, in effect, instigated and driven a nationwide campaign. Secondly, this aspect has been linked to the recognition that Stead had played an important role in re-establishing positive relationships between Gladstone and the Nonconformists. Lastly, Stead’s journal highlights the evangelical, conversion-narrative rhetoric of his private account of events, foregrounding an accompanying motivation that has often been lost in accounts of his journalistic practices.

Stead’s journalism both reported upon and helped to shape a press campaign that promoted a sense of collective moral indignation and showed that he was proving to be a skilled gatherer and disseminator of relevant newspaper material. The campaign represented an example of extra-parliamentary action bearing down upon a government judged to be disconnected from the public’s disapproval of its foreign policy. The existence of an identifiable public opinion which could be articulated and broadcast as well as projected and focused had given to the press the capacity to exercise great influence. However, it is difficult to maintain the claims to uniqueness, national prominence, and leading influence that the *NE* attributed to itself and that subsequent commentary has often supported. A month after the Darlington meeting on 25 August 1876, Stead recalled the significance of the event:

That Friday marks the commencement of the agitation which has been the distinguishing characteristic of the Recess. It was the first meeting held after the rising of Parliament, and it was announced simultaneously with the publication of the first

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<sup>138</sup> ‘The North Country and the Atrocities/Great Indignation Meeting at Darlington/Recall of Sir Henry Elliott Demanded/Speech of Mr. Backhouse, M.P.’, 26 August 1876, p. 3.

detailed letter from Bulgaria, from which the outburst of national indignation may be said to date.<sup>139</sup>

Stead placed the originality of the summer extra-parliamentary agitation firmly within Darlington and in the pages of the *NE* and, yet, at the same time, signs of doubt as to the overall originality of the project marked the narrative. Although the first protest meeting took place in Manchester on 9 August, Stead judged that ‘it stood alone, and produced no immediate effect [...] it was so distinct from the “atrocities meetings,” which commenced on the 25<sup>th</sup> of August’. Indeed, it was later thought necessary to hold another meeting in Manchester in September.<sup>140</sup> In what reads as an editorial apology for an erroneous claim, Stead had found himself compelled to acknowledge that Manchester had the right to a degree of priority for the atrocities campaign that had been running for over a month before the *NE* became involved. He also failed to acknowledge that the information published was, in fact, the work of the special correspondent contracted to the *Daily News*, a leading Liberal metropolitan paper, rather than just an item retrieved from that paper. Moreover, it was the *Daily News* that set the moral tone for the extra-parliamentary political engagement that shaped Stead’s crusade.

The Right Rev. James Fraser, Bishop of Manchester, whose letter was read out on 9 August, influenced Stead’s reporting of the campaign launched two weeks later in Darlington. Stead’s compelling inaugural campaign leader in the *NE* of 23 August 1876 shared three structural components with the form and content of the Bishop of Manchester’s letter published in the *Daily News* on 10 August 1876. These comprised evocations of horror at the accounts of the atrocities received, protestations of public indignation, and the moral obligation upon individuals to speak out if they were not to be considered complicit in the Turkish attacks upon the Bulgarian Christians.<sup>141</sup> Despite this, the *NE* represented itself as the point of origin of the ‘Bulgarian Atrocities’ campaign to the extent that this has become a dominant and accepted account of Stead’s journalism on this issue.<sup>142</sup> Yet, the *NE* only followed the example of the *Daily News*. Moreover, the series of North-Country ‘Atrocity’ meetings were not the first because such protests had already occurred in the north-west of England, in Manchester, and in the south, in Portsmouth and in Battersea Fields.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> ‘The North Country and the Atrocities’, *NE*, 27 September 1876, p. 3.

<sup>140</sup> ‘The North Country and the Atrocities’, *NE*, 27 September 1876, p. 3.

<sup>141</sup> ‘Manchester and the Bulgarian Atrocities’, *Daily News*, 10 August 1876, p. 6. ‘The North Country and Turkish Atrocities’, *NE*, 23 August 1876, pp. 2–3. The *NE* reported on the Bishop of Manchester’s letter from the original city meeting in ‘The Bishop of Manchester on the Bulgarian Atrocities’, 11 August 1876, p. 3.

<sup>142</sup> Whyte, II, 43.

<sup>143</sup> The *Daily News* reported upon these meetings in the following articles: ‘Manchester and the Bulgarian Atrocities’, 10 August 1876, p. 6; ‘The Turkish Atrocities in Bulgaria/Public Meeting at Portsmouth’, 15

Stead's 'Bulgarian Atrocities' campaign was, nonetheless, a crucial moment in which the political breach between the Liberal party and Nonconformity was largely healed. Stead imparted to the campaign a sense of galvanised action, rightful ire, and a unifying national plea for a change in government policy. Yet, a study of the campaign in the *Daily News*, the newspaper which truly dominated the reporting of the Turkish Atrocities in Bulgaria, brings to our attention a press campaign that was in many respects the equal or better than that run in the *NE*. As this thesis contends, Evangelical Nonconformity strongly influenced the evolution of Stead's journalism, and it is in the religiously moral aspect of the 'Bulgarian Atrocities' that Gladstone was drawn to the crusade in the *NE*.

Behind the public nature of Stead's contribution to the 'Bulgarian Atrocities' campaign lay the private pain that he experienced. For many years, at New Year and on, or soon after, his birthday in July, Stead was accustomed to giving an account of the events of the previous few months. In January 1877, he wrote of the 'Bulgarian Atrocities' crusade and of his delight in the national leadership role that he felt had fallen to him.<sup>144</sup> The time preceding his decision to work up a campaign is laden with the unmistakable characteristics of evangelical conversion narratives and led to the jubilant declaration that he felt that he had been instrumental in persuading Gladstone to oppose Disraeli's government policy. Stead believed that he had been divinely called and that the agitation had led to rejuvenated patriotism, renewed Liberalism, and revitalised faith in God. He described the physical disturbance of his conversion in the following terms:

I had a terrible afternoon. It was like a Divine possession that shook me almost to pieces, wrung me and left me shuddering and weak in an agony of tears. [...] I knew not how it would be taken [...] I threw myself heart and soul, and the paper heart and soul, into the movement [...] It was with fear and trembling that I went to the first meeting at Darlington, but it was a great success.<sup>145</sup>

Symptoms of anxiety and fear commonly marked religious conversion narratives as signs of authenticity by those describing the moment when they believed that God had entered their lives. Stead's conversion here concerned acceptance of what he saw as the divine will that he

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August 1876, p. 5; 'The Turkish Atrocities', 21 August 1876, p. 6 (Battersea Fields). Battersea Fields in London is now known as Battersea Park.

<sup>144</sup> Robertson Scott, *The Life and Death of a Newspaper*, p. 104.

<sup>145</sup> Quoted in Robertson Scott, *The Life and Death of a Newspaper*, p. 104.

should become involved in advocating a change in Disraeli's foreign policy. For Stead, the meetings that followed the inaugural assembly in Darlington, and, more particularly, Gladstone's eventual assumption of the lead political role, represented validation of his actions. Overall, Stead gave to the campaign the form of a crusade:

I look back with unfeigned joy to the strain and exertion of that exciting time. I wrote dozens of letters a day, appealing, exhorting, entreating and at last I roused the North. I felt that I was called to preach a new crusade.<sup>146</sup>

Through these instances, we gain important insight into Stead's conception of his inner motivation, of his call to religious action, and of his need to convert others to the opinions he was supporting. Stead was not unique in this as such activism was fully commensurate with evangelical expectations and a worldview that he shared, for example, with Gladstone, himself a High-Church evangelical Anglican. It is also important for us to recall that Stead was primarily responsible for the launch of a successful campaign that was regional in extent rather than nationally inspirational as is sometimes implied.

Despite the success of the 'Bulgarian Atrocities' crusade, Stead was not yet ready to trust unreservedly the use of extra-parliamentary agitation since to override parliamentary democracy with populist movements brought with it the still disturbing evocations of French Revolutionary fervour and the power of the undifferentiated, destabilising, masses. Moreover, after decades in which Liberals and Nonconformists had fought for increased democracy through parliamentary representation, it would have been curious to have agitated for the removal of the same institutions.

Three years into his editorship of the *NE*, Stead experienced a period of self-doubt. His intention had been to bring to the role of the journalist the power of the preacher and the strength of the prophet, but instead he found himself more preoccupied with the form of his journalism rather than with the issues that he treated.<sup>147</sup> At this pivotal moment, he asked:

What is my message? That is what troubles me. I have not got a message. I am not by any means so ardent a Radical or as ardent in anything as I was. [...] At present almost the only fixed principle which I possess, almost the only message which I have

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<sup>146</sup> Quoted in Robertson Scott, *The Life and Death of a Newspaper*, p. 104.

<sup>147</sup> Robertson Scott, *The Life and Death of a Newspaper*, pp. 100–101.

to deliver is the duty of England as a civilising power among the weaker, more degraded nations of the earth.<sup>148</sup>

Stead feared having lost his commitment to the cause of the poor and felt that he no longer believed that international arbitration could prevent the need for nations to go to war.<sup>149</sup> He explained matters by comparing the contentment he derived from his family life and home comforts with the dissatisfaction he experienced at the dissipation of his religious convictions. He expressed this in the following terms:

My religion hitherto has not been so much of a peace as of unrest. It has given me fiery, restless impulse. It made me uneasy unless I was working with the last pound of steam on. Only in that vehement labour could I find the semblance of rest.<sup>150</sup>

For Stead, as an evangelical, religious faith needed to be experienced through an individual's whole being and not merely through spiritual otherworldliness. The Bulgarian Atrocities campaign reignited his sense of religious and civic duty.

Stead spent nine highly successful years as editor of the Darlington *NE*, which led to the offer of a new post, this time in London. Once Stead had taken the decision to move to the *PMG* and to the opportunities afforded by contact with, and engagement in, metropolitan political circles, he brought with him to the capital the ambition to help rid the city of its morally poisonous conditions and attitudes. In the next chapter, I discuss how Stead came to be associated with the emergence of New Journalism in London during the 1880s and how he continued to develop a method of evoking and interweaving Christian values and rhetoric in campaigning secular journalism.

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<sup>148</sup> Robertson Scott, *The Life and Death of a Newspaper*, p. 101.

<sup>149</sup> Robertson Scott, *The Life and Death of a Newspaper*, p. 101.

<sup>150</sup> Robertson Scott, *The Life and Death of a Newspaper*, p. 100.

## Chapter 4

### The *Pall Mall Gazette* Years (1880–1889)

Upon his appointment in 1880 as assistant editor to John Morley at the *Pall Mall Gazette*, Stead settled in relatively rural Wimbledon, necessitating a change of house and chapel. 'Cambridge House' fulfilled Stead's needs for a new home and the local Congregational Church became the family's place of worship.<sup>1</sup> Stead remained at the *PMG* until the end of December 1889, at which time, having made a name for himself which seldom met indifference, he left both the newspaper and the strenuous demands of full-time daily journalism.

The unexpected general election defeat in 1880 of Disraeli and the Conservative party prompted a change in the *PMG*'s ownership and political allegiance. The high-Liberal, anti-Gladstonian *PMG*, when owned by George Smith and edited by Frederick Greenwood, became a pro-Gladstonian Liberal newspaper when control passed to Smith's son-in-law, the illuminated-manuscript collector and generous benefactor, Henry Yates Thompson.<sup>2</sup> This repositioning of the paper was designed to give full support to Gladstone's second ministry and his brand of Liberalism from within the capital. This change of political allegiance represented a major reorientation given that, under Greenwood, the *PMG* had done the most amongst London newspapers to undermine Gladstone's government.<sup>3</sup>

To understand Stead's New Journalism at the *PMG* necessitates an appreciation of his developing religious motivations and of the particular Nonconformist inflection of his Christian faith. While at the *NE*, he had largely followed the complementary values of progressive Liberalism and of the Nonconformist Conscience. At the *PMG*, however, his political support for Gladstone did not preclude criticism of Liberal government policy nor the mobilisation of his moral principles against transgressive moral behaviour that was often left unpublicised. Stead, therefore, was not entirely at the service of particular Liberal party interests nor restricted to what the Nonconformist moral conscience considered seemly to investigate.

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<sup>1</sup> John Morley (1838–1923) Liberal politician and writer; editor of the *PMG Gazette* (1880–1883); of the *Fortnightly Review* (1867–1882); and of *Macmillan's Magazine* (May 1883–summer 1885). Hamer, 'Morley, John', *ODNB* <doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/35110>. The majority of residential roads in Wimbledon did not come into existence until the 1870s and the 1880s. *The London Encyclopaedia*, ed. by Weinreb and Hibbert, p. 992. Eckley, p. 31. Oliver Cromwell, a major Protestant figure for Stead, represented Cambridge in the Short (1640) and Long Parliaments (1640–1649).

<sup>2</sup> George Murray Smith was part of the publishing house of Smith & Elder and launched the *Dictionary of National Biography* and the *Cornhill Magazine*. Yates Thompson was Smith's son-in-law, supported greater understanding between Britain and the United States of America, and donated valuable illuminated manuscripts to the nation. Robertson Scott, *The Life and Death of a Newspaper*, pp. 2–4.

<sup>3</sup> Parry, p. 79.

In the autumn of 1880, Stead set down in his private notes thoughts about journalism in general, and, more particularly, ideas about the direction in which to take the *PMG*.<sup>4</sup> In quoting from the Lord's Prayer — 'Ideal to be aimed at, "Thy Kingdom Come, Thy Will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven"' — Stead chose a line that in its simplicity confirmed in Christian social reformers their growing commitment to saving the most vulnerable from the morality-sapping degradation of material deprivation.<sup>5</sup> They concluded that for the soul to be saved, salve had to be applied to the distress caused by abject poverty. Stead's private notes reveal his ideals for the *PMG* in tones that are evangelical and incarnationalist, investing his plans in faith terms and references. He adhered to the evangelical belief that humankind, as planned for by God's design, was perfectible, and that earnestness, 'To work on, to yearn on, in faith', together with belief in the example of the incarnated Jesus, were inherently amongst the soundest principles to adopt (p. 117).

In this chapter, I explore how Stead demonstrated this commitment to Christian values in undertaking three newspaper campaigns in which he trialled, adapted, and adopted combinations of religious rhetoric, sensationalism, and argumentation grounded in social investigation. All three campaigns concerned London and all three uncovered horrendous truths about sexual immorality and outright criminality in the capital. The New Journalism of the 1880s, through which Stead promoted his Christian mission, shaped both form and content. Telegraphed contributions, telegram-length news items, crossheadings, and stacked headlines were amongst the most obvious emerging typographical features while the investigative and novelistic reporting included strong sensationalist elements.

In the first of the three campaigns, Stead heavily publicised Andrew Mearns's *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London* published in 1883. The pamphlet showed why housing reform was necessary for the poorest as a partial, but important, solution to the immorality that was widespread in dilapidated, overcrowded, ill-serviced tenements. The second campaign, launched in 1885 and entitled 'The Maiden Tribute to Modern Babylon', remains Stead's most remarkable and controversial agitation in which the *PMG* put its weight behind legislation to halt the sexual exploitation of young women and girls. The third campaign of 1887 concerned Stead's support for Mrs Mildred Langworthy who was pursuing her husband through the courts for breach of promise to marry and refusal to pay alimony. This time, Stead conscripted a version of the chivalric code of Christian knighthood through which, in the face of male oppression, to defend the legal rights of women to a just and fair legal hearing.

This chapter further assesses the increasingly complex structuring that Stead adopted to explore the sensationalist content of the campaigns. The reporting devoted to the *Bitter Cry*

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<sup>4</sup> Robertson Scott, p. 117.

<sup>5</sup> Robertson Scott, p. 117.

of *Outcast London* was divided into two parts: the first republished sensationalist extracts from Mearns's pamphlet, accompanied by Stead's analysis, while the second, published some months later, focused on the *PMG*'s own inquiry into the housing conditions of the relatively better off working poor. The 'Maiden Tribute to Modern Babylon' presented reports from the Special Commission which Stead had set up at the *PMG* to carry out research into sexual licentiousness and criminal immorality within the capital. Stead aimed to let the sensational facts speak for themselves by avoiding both euphemistic rhetoric and orchestrated attempts to raise the emotional tone. The more sensationalist rhetoric of condemnatory fire-brand pulpit-preaching was contained in the articles which accompanied the reports. The *PMG*'s Langworthy marriage campaign had already begun when Arnold's May 1887 essay 'Up to Easter' was published and bore the consequences of the commercial, legal, and interpersonal complications that had arisen from the 'Maiden Tribute to Modern Babylon' crusade. This inquiry was multi-faceted and included investigative reporting, opinion-shaping commentary, promotion of Christian moral values, steadfast support for the legal rights of women, and strong opposition to the use of the law to delay proceedings and humiliate adversaries. The campaign additionally introduced a new element to Stead's journalism in the form of novelised *reportage* whereby the major part of Mildred Langworthy's battle for recognition of her marital status was narrated in the form of discretely organised chapters. This represented the first formal attempt by Stead to produce, in Gregory Jackson's formulation, a homiletic novel, which would lead to the publication, in 1894, of his social gospel novel, *If Christ Came to Chicago*.<sup>6</sup>

The *Bitter Cry* and the 'Maiden Tribute' campaigns concerned individuals whose squalid living conditions and personal sufferings were often out of the public eye. R. F. Wearmouth has noted that, in the period 1868—1918, government reports recorded 2,864 cases of death by starvation, or accelerated by privation, whose demise required a coroner's inquest. One hundred years on, the details still make harrowing reading: 'Woman unknown, 30, [...] Exhaustion from exposure to cold'; 'Woman unknown, 36, [...] Exhaustion, pneumonia, want of medical attendance and necessaries of life. Removed to workhouse when dying'; 'Man unknown, about 35; found on Thames embankment. [...] Bronchitis, accelerated by starvation and exposure'; 'Woman unknown, 43. [...] Found in footway ... in a very filthy condition and covered with vermin'.<sup>7</sup> These anonymous individuals were part of those whom Stead and his collaborators sought to save, if possible, from 'that world of human suffering where men and women were forgotten and forsaken and finally hurried to the grave unwept and uncared-for'.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Gregory S. Jackson, "'What Would Jesus Do?': Practical Christianity, Social Gospel Realism, and the Homiletic Novel', *PMLA*, 121:3 (2006), 641–661.

<sup>7</sup> R. F. Wearmouth, *Methodism and the Struggle of the Working Classes 1850–1900* (Leicester: Edgar Backus, 1954), pp. 26, 28, 30.

<sup>8</sup> Wearmouth, p. 25.

London as locus of inquiry was more than a convenient example of what was represented as a degenerate city where civic inequalities and damaging living conditions wrought misery amongst the poorer sections of society. The capital was also a stronghold of Whig-liberalism that could count on the majority of the principal daily newspapers for support in a shared opposition to Gladstone's then otherwise dominant form of progressive Liberalism.<sup>9</sup> Stead agreed to move to London as part of a strategic move to stake a strong claim in the capital for Gladstonian Liberalism through the columns of the *PMG*. He also came with a more personal agenda, driven by personal ambition and pretensions to leadership, to confront what he identified as the morally iniquitous behaviour of established elites which a collusive metropolitan press passed over in silence.

### **Housing the Abject Poor: *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London***

New models for the combination of religious sentiments and ameliorative actions appropriate for modern social conditions were already being developed when James Clarke & Co. published in October 1883 one of the more significant documents produced to tackle these entrenched social difficulties. *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London: An Inquiry into the Condition of the Abject Poor*, a twenty-page, one-penny pamphlet written by the Rev. Andrew Mearns, then secretary to the London Congregational Union, brought the problems of overcrowded dwellings, insanitary conditions, wide-spread immorality, and exorbitant rents once again to the attention of politicians and the public. Insufficient and insalubrious housing represented an almost intractable problem in the capital that Mearns explicated in a manner that demanded substantial action from the State rather than reform through free-market forces.<sup>10</sup> These concerns over poor-quality housing also reflected church and chapel anxieties regarding the relative importance to be accorded to material and spiritual responses to such social challenges.

Six months after his election to Parliament in February 1883 as the Liberal member for Newcastle, John Morley resigned from the *PMG* leaving Stead in post as the senior editor. Stead lost no time in launching his first major social-reform campaign at the *PMG*. The question of whether or not to include elements of religious engagement into the newspaper had resulted in an uneasy truce between Morley, an agnostic, and Stead, a committed Christian, according to which neither atheistic nor religious claims would be introduced into the newspaper.<sup>11</sup> With the departure of Morley, however, Stead set about a long-held aim which was to infuse his

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<sup>9</sup> Parry, p. 79.

<sup>10</sup> Lee Jackson, *Dirty Old London: The Victorian Fight against Filth* (Newhaven: Yale University Press, 2014), p.210.

<sup>11</sup> Robertson Scott, p. 119.

journalism with the values of Christian morality that had been until then kept in check. It would not be necessary to align the newspaper or his editorial position explicitly with Congregationalism, but he did seek to invest his journalistic writing with the language and spirit of religion even if he had initially to be circumspect in his ambitions.

By the 1880s, a practical religious approach to tackling social improvement had emerged to shape contributions to the running of local and national affairs. As David Englander has discussed, R. W. Dale placed great importance upon reducing the discrepancy between doctrinal matters and everyday morality, between the beliefs to which people subscribed and the effects of their worship on their daily lives.<sup>12</sup> Beginning in the 1860s, Dale had sought to promote a moral revival in the way that the community lived materially and spiritually by outlining 'a proper conception of practical righteousness and an appropriate moral training'.<sup>13</sup> He developed thoroughly and systematically his version of the 'Municipal Gospel' in which theology, morality, and evangelical religious thought shaped the implementation of policies for substantial civic reform.<sup>14</sup> As a result, with the political ambition and energy of radical Liberal politicians such as the Unitarian Joseph Chamberlain, Birmingham saw the realisation of a range of identifiable, substantial material improvements. Dale's work married the theoretical and the practical in the belief that neither the churches nor the local authorities alone could achieve the radical social changes necessary for the betterment of the poorer classes.<sup>15</sup>

In the early 1880s, tenacity of character and religious conviction were still considered sufficient for individuals to effect improvement in their material lives even though, almost ten years before, reformers such as Octavia Hill had declared that concerted action on a far wider scale was needed. Hill had found that a gradualist approach to housing improvement was ineffective and that the task was beyond the capacities of individuals and philanthropic societies.<sup>16</sup> As far as immorality was concerned, Hill took an uncompromising stance, declaring that 'those leading immoral lives are made either to reform or go'.<sup>17</sup> This stark choice made no concessions to rehabilitation through improved accommodation: better lodgings were the reward for sustained, ameliorated, moral conduct. Having concluded that improving the housing of the London poor would need the engagement of agencies above the level of individuals and associations, Hill nevertheless came to the view that society as a whole had nothing to gain by providing necessities of life such as accommodation for some members of the population. She

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<sup>12</sup> David Englander, 'The Word and the World: Evangelicalism in the Victorian City', in Parsons, Moore, and Wolffe, eds, *Religion in Victorian Britain*, II: *Controversies*, ed. by Parsons, pp. 14–38 (p. 29). R. Tudur Jones, 'Dale, Robert William (1829–1895)', <doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/7015>.

<sup>13</sup> Englander, p. 29.

<sup>14</sup> Parsons, 'Social Control to Social Gospel', p. 47.

<sup>15</sup> Parsons, 'Social Control to Social Gospel', pp. 47–48.

<sup>16</sup> Octavia Hill, 'The Homes of the London Poor', *Macmillan's Magazine*, 30:176 (1874), 131–138 (p. 131).

<sup>17</sup> Hill, 'The Homes of the London Poor', p. 132.

believed that plans for re-housing people from slum lodgings were not beneficial overall and asserted that even if this were possible for all those in such a situation, 'the people themselves are not fit to be so moved, *and can only very gradually become so*'.<sup>18</sup> This approach countered the view shared by Stead that lodgings could significantly raise the character of individuals by removing the dehumanising aspect of dilapidated housing.

The ability of religious organisations to tackle social deprivation was no longer a tenable position for those who saw in secular political ideologies the means to ending material poverty. The Fabian Socialists, for example, had set aside religious sentiment in their investigation of the housing crisis, focusing their energies instead upon empirical enquiry. In 1883, Beatrice Potter (later to become Webb), the social scientist and reformer, observed that the service of God had been replaced by the service of humankind concluding that the role of 'social investigator' would be 'the most hopeful form of social service'.<sup>19</sup> Potter's evolving hopes for the future were influenced by Auguste Comte's positivist philosophy and predicated upon 'a deliberately scientific organisation of society' and the instilling of a capacity to engage in altruistic service within the whole population.<sup>20</sup> In 1883, the Socialist Democratic Federation, founded by Henry Mayers Hyndman, adopted a programme that included nationalisation and an eight-hour working day and accepted Stead's invitation to outline their ideas in the *PMG*.<sup>21</sup> A letter from General William Booth, the leader of the Salvation Army, and the views of the evangelical Anglican, Lord Shaftsbury, were also accommodated.<sup>22</sup> These ideas represented a range of responses to the increasing urbanisation of society and the perceived diminution in religious belief that some judged to be the major causes of social and moral degradation amongst the working classes.<sup>23</sup>

*The Bitter Cry of Outcast London*, the relative brevity of which belied the impact that it was about to have, described the appalling material and moral conditions in which lived not only the impoverished inhabitants of the capital but also, and surprisingly to many readers, the working poor.<sup>24</sup> Mearns's account is multi-layered being variously a religious sermon, a social

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<sup>18</sup> Octavia Hill, 'Common Sense and the Dwellings of the Poor: I Improvements Now Practicable', *Nineteenth Century*, 14:82 (1883), 925–933 (p. 926). Original italics.

<sup>19</sup> Beatrice Webb, *My Apprenticeship* (London: Longmans, Green, 1926), p. 150. John Davis, 'Webb [*née* Potter], [Martha] Beatrice (1858–1943)', *ODNB* <doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/36799>. Beatrice Potter did not marry Sydney Webb until 1892.

<sup>20</sup> Webb, p. 151.

<sup>21</sup> 'Revolutionary Socialism', *PMG*, 29 October 1883, pp. 1–2.

<sup>22</sup> William Booth, 'The Bitter Cry of Outcast London', *PMG*, 22 October 1883, p. 11. 'The Dwellings of The Poor', *PMG*, 12 November 1883, p. 10.

<sup>23</sup> In 1851, the population census showed that for the first time the majority of the population lived in urban areas, while the first, and only, official religious census had appeared to show a worrying decline in church attendance.

<sup>24</sup> Andrew Mearns, *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London: The Condition of the Abject Poor* (London: James Clarke, 1883), hereafter, *The Bitter Cry*. Mearns acknowledged the help of James Munro and of W. C.

investigation, institutional auto-criticism, and some self-congratulation, narrated in the language of colonial exploration and empirical enquiry. The document is partly sensational and partly documentary in its reporting of statistical findings, and it represents influences from both Conservative paternalism and the Nonconformist municipal gospel.

Mearns came to two major conclusions. Firstly, in a reversal of what had largely been the standard view, he argued that before the church could succeed in raising the moral standards of the working classes, the state had to become involved in improving the housing of the metropolitan poor. Secondly, he established an explicit connection between the degrading material conditions in which the London poor lived and the immorality of their lives, a finding which, in effect, gave church and chapel permission to become involved in missions for social relief.<sup>25</sup> As Bebbington describes, the sexual exploitation of very young women and girls, and the occurrence of incest in single-family rooms were all signs of moral degradation.<sup>26</sup> In its promotion of Mearns's pamphlet, the *PMG* aimed to combine calls for spiritual renewal and social reform in a religious crusade underpinned by the increasingly accepted advantages of methodical investigation of material problems.<sup>27</sup> The promotion of *The Bitter Cry* coincided with Stead's having been appointed to the full editorship of the *PMG* which opened up new possibilities at the newspaper for his brand of campaigning journalism.

To assess Stead's contribution to the promotion of the *Bitter Cry* campaign, it is necessary to read, firstly, his articles from October 1883, and, secondly, the investigative series, 'Housing the Poor - Not the Slums', published from January to February the year after, alongside Mearns's inquiry. From the outset, Stead asserted that his motivation in promoting Mearns's pamphlet was not 'the generation of profitless emotion': his campaign had a higher purpose than mere commercial sensationalism.<sup>28</sup> He wanted to call on the Christian Churches to abandon trivial and obscure theological debate in order to focus on a united effort to rescue at least some of the neediest members of society. Religious mission was foregrounded: 'Where is the leader of men who will preach a new crusade against the crying evil of our time?'<sup>29</sup> Even as Stead asked the question, he had an answer in mind whereby he would be that leader, equipped with the power of the *PMG* and the ideas from *The Bitter Cry*.

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Preston regarding the surveying of housing conditions and the composing of the pamphlet respectively. *The Fin de Siècle: A Reader In Cultural History c.1880–1900*, ed. by Sally Ledger and Roger Luckhurst (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), Editors' note 1, p. 50. Parsons, p. 49.

<sup>25</sup> Lynd, p. 333.

<sup>26</sup> Bebbington, *The Nonconformist Conscience*, p. 42.

<sup>27</sup> 'Is It Not Time?', *PMG*, 16 October 1883, p. 1.

<sup>28</sup> 'Is It Not Time?', *PMG*, 16 October 1883, p. 1.

<sup>29</sup> 'Is It Not Time?', *PMG*, 16 October 1883, p. 1.

Stead's leadership ambitions formed a consistent part of his self-representation as a journalist. They find expression, for example, in his private notes, probably composed on 31 December 1880, in which he again formulated his religious mission for the *PMG*:

To help all good causes, to smite with the thunderbolt of God all baseness, falsehoods, devilishness, to be the hope of every good man or woman working in every good cause, to be the dread of every evildoer, to reproduce in a paper the ideal of a God [...] the fiery cloud by day, the cloudy pillar by night, the rescuer of the society of God, the director of the steps of His people.<sup>30</sup>

In the language of Christian evangelicalism, righteous morality, and Old Testament Mosaic identification, Stead portentously declared his resolve to use journalism as a religiously inspired vector for transformative social good. No doubt seized by high enthusiasm for the tasks ahead, Stead did, however, mistake night for day, inverting the source of God's guidance to the people of Israel as they wandered in the wilderness. Judging that 'God has called me and anointed me with this vision', Stead saw his appointment to the *PMG* as an opportunity to unite the journalistic and the political with an evangelising, messianic zeal.<sup>31</sup> Although this was ostensibly an entry in his private notes, Stead's words nonetheless resonate with sermonising emphasis as if destined both for himself and, at some stage, for a wider audience.

Stead's opening promotional article, 'Outcast London' - Where to Begin', appeared in the *PMG* towards the end of October 1883 and summarised public support for change.<sup>32</sup> He did not explicitly mention religion, but he allowed the language of religion to percolate throughout the piece. The housing problems are qualified as 'an evil', 'the evil is a growing one', 'so vast an evil', 'this tremendous evil', and subject to 'the evil influence of our system of building leases'.<sup>33</sup> The response required characteristics associated with evangelical endeavour: 'real sincerity', 'men of the highest zeal', and the 'organised zeal' of volunteers (*PMG*, 23 October 1883, p. 1). The emotional intensity created had to be on a scale commensurate with the enormity of the immorality if the campaign were to succeed.

In promoting Mearns's campaign, Stead also employed the sensationalist rhetoric of the extreme and of the incontrovertible: the defective housing stock is described as a 'wail of hopeless misery' within which '[t]he exceeding bitter cry of the disinherited' was audible

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<sup>30</sup> Robertson Scott, *The Life and Death of a Newspaper*, p. 120. The people of Israel wandered in the wilderness led by a pillar of cloud by day and a cloud of fire by night (*Exodus* 40:38).

<sup>31</sup> Robertson Scott, *The Life and Death of a Newspaper*, p. 121.

<sup>32</sup> 'Outcast London' - Where to Begin', *PMG*, 23 October 1883, p. 1.

<sup>33</sup> 'Outcast London' - Where to Begin', *PMG*, 23 October 1883, p. 1.

amongst ‘the miseries of miserable men’.<sup>34</sup> In representing the slums of the metropolis as foreign lands peopled by the untutored and the heathen, Stead asserted that ‘morality is impossible, and indeed has ceased to exist’ in such conditions.<sup>35</sup> Yet, these inhabitants were equally reckoned as exportable by the state to colonies abroad where they would be given the opportunity to be saved from the ‘horrible corruption’ in which they lived at home.<sup>36</sup> In the New Imperialism of the late nineteenth century, emigration for some represented a means of reducing the numbers of the urban poor and indeed was a policy that found favour with, amongst others, Stead and the Salvation Army.<sup>37</sup> The suggestion that a human being removed from the horrors of the slum would reap improvement in both their person and in their living conditions found an equivalent on the colonial stage.<sup>38</sup>

The publicity given to the atrocious living conditions endured by the abject poor and to the immoral and criminal conduct which they encouraged gave rise to accusations of sensationalism. This marker of New Journalism was often the reason given for the denigration of Stead’s work. The tendency was to emphasise the sensationalist content of his campaigns and to imply that his accounts were so laden with sensationalist rhetoric that they exaggerated the reality depicted. However, Stead’s approach to the *Bitter Cry* was better thought out than his critics allowed. He confined sensationalist rhetoric to leading articles and lead-in paragraphs creating a division between sensationalist editorial and more moderate discursive reporting. This prefigured Stead’s defence of sensationalism in ‘The Future of Journalism’ as a strategy by which newspaper coverage could attract the attention of the readership to an issue that could then be discursively examined in cogently argued articles.

Stead’s defence of sensationalism revealed a darker aspect to the strategy than the tone of gratuitous prurience usually advanced:

The mass of well-meaning indolent people should be made continually to see — not merely to realize in the abstract, but to have before them as a vivid haunting picture — the misery which goes on disregarded by them at their own back doors.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> ‘Is It Not Time?’, *PMG*, 16 October 1883, p. 1.

<sup>35</sup> ‘Is It Not Time?’, *PMG*, 16 October 1883, p. 1.

<sup>36</sup> Samuel Smith, ‘The Bitter Cry of Outcast London/A Work for the Municipalities’, *PMG*, 22 October 1883, p. 11.

<sup>37</sup> William Booth, *In Darkest England and the Way Out* (London: The Salvation Army, 1890). See, in particular, Part II, Chapter 4, ‘New Britain—the Colony Over Sea’, pp. 143–156. Stead helped Booth to write the text and shared his opinions. Eckley, pp. 187–188.

<sup>38</sup> Joseph McLaughlin, *Writing The Urban Jungle: Reading Empire in London from Doyle to Eliot* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000). See, in particular, Chapter 4, ‘Colonizing the Urban Jungle: General Booth’s *In Darkest England and the Way Out*’, pp. 79–103.

<sup>39</sup> ‘Outcast London.’— Where to Begin’, *PMG*, 23 October 1883, p. 1.

He focused on the wretchedness that for the apathetic but nonetheless well-disposed was out of sight and yet nearby. To bring the situation to their attention required an act of coercion. To bring the misery of the abject poor into clear sight needed not just fleeting imaginative representation but pictorial representation that had the vividness and the enduring horror of the reality.

Stead returned to the discussion of the effectiveness of sensationalism in a review of the *Bitter Cry* campaign published in the *PMG* on New Year's Day 1884:

We shall have to go back a long time to discover an agitation on any social question in England which has produced so prompt, so widespread, and, as we believe, so enduring an effect. The first excitement, indeed, is already passing over, and the cynics are pointing to the fact with exultation as evidence of the essential uselessness of all such agitation. But the truth is that, though the excitement naturally was ephemeral, its effects remain. The sensational exaggerations by which every deep stirring of the popular mind is necessarily accompanied soon die, and it is well that they should die. But the essential truths which underlie every agitation that has real life in it remain stamped more deeply than before upon the minds of men.<sup>40</sup>

The *Bitter Cry* agitation allowed Stead to examine the effect of sensationalism on his journalism. Overall, he justified such a journalistic strategy by drawing on the argument that the ends justified the means, an evaluation which he backed up by a personal judgement that the campaign had succeeded like no other for some period of time. Stead argued that the speed, reach, and impact of the campaign had all been positively affected by the sensationalist elements: theoretically, the attention of readers was hooked by emotive affect, and their understanding of the debated matter became, in consequence, firmly anchored in the memory. The guarantee of the justified use of sensationalism was that the subject matter had to deal with the real challenges of life.

Yet, Stead's use of sensationalism had changed markedly when the *PMG* returned to the subject of the housing of the poor on 31 January 1884 in an article entitled 'Under the Microscope'. The paper announced the publication of four reports based on an investigation

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<sup>40</sup> 'The First Fruits of the "Bitter Cry"', *PMG*, 2 January 1884, p. 1.

carried out by the newspaper itself. Stead adopted and re-worked the rhetoric of empirical investigation lending a tone of impartiality to his reports while also knowingly pursuing the aim of righteously denouncing rapacious landlords and inactive public authorities. In declaring that 'The object was not sensation. What is wanted now is not more sensation but more light', Stead wrote of the light of Christian religious truth as well as of the illumination of the dark regions of human immorality.<sup>41</sup> The factual truth established by objective observation was to be complementary to the vagaries of subjective evaluation:

Our leading ideal was that the inquiry should be not pictorial, but, as far as possible, scientific. General and sketchy views of "Horrible London" or "Squalid Liverpool" need to be supplemented by minute careful study of the structure of the body of which these pictures present us only with the external semblance.<sup>42</sup>

However, Stead's later campaigns discussed here show that he did not choose between sensationalist pictorial representation and the more forensic accumulated detail of empirical investigation. In reality, he deployed both strategies.

Included in the *PMG's* résumé of *The Bitter Cry* was an acknowledgement of the pamphlet having been 'published presumably in the interest of an evangelistic scheme of one of the Nonconformist denominations'.<sup>43</sup> Stead was certainly disingenuous in claiming not to know that the Nonconformists involved were his very own Congregationalists, but such supposed ignorance served a strategic purpose. Stead was able to use Mearns's cause, sensationalist content, and openly religious engagement to gauge whether these three elements were acceptable to the *PMG* readership, advertisers, and owner. In this way, Stead kept himself at a relatively safe distance from any potential difficulties by reporting what *The Bitter Cry* was saying rather than saying it himself. He became more visibly and personally involved in January 1884 when he began publishing his own investigation into the housing of the poor.

Stead's investigation differed from that undertaken by Mearns in a number of significant ways. While the latter had inquired into the conditions of the 'abject poor', Stead examined the housing occupied by the working poor in a single mail district, the Parish of St. James's, Westminster, which he described as 'an average working-class district', 'a corner of a prosperous

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<sup>41</sup> 'Under the Microscope', *PMG*, 31 January 1884, p. 1.

<sup>42</sup> 'Under The Microscope', *PMG*, 31 January 1884, p. 1. The investigation, entitled 'The Housing of London Workmen—Not in the Slums: An Inquiry by Our Special Commission', appeared in four parts, I, II, III, IV, on 31 January, 4 February, 5 February, and 11 February 1884, respectively.

<sup>43</sup> 'The Bitter Cry of Outcast London', *PMG*, 16 October 1883, p. 11.

central parish with which everybody is familiar'.<sup>44</sup> The stated intention of the investigation was to produce a series of articles which did not seek to play upon the readership's emotional understanding. Instead it aimed 'at exhaustiveness and accuracy, rather than at effect'. Indeed, the *PMG*'s readers were assured that 'There is nothing striking or sensational' about the outward appearance of the district under investigation.<sup>45</sup> Here, Stead's declaration of rhetorical restraint allowed him to pre-empt allegations that his account was merely the result of sensationalist reporting.

The articles of January and February 1884 are indeed largely devoid of sensationalist language, presenting instead argued discussion of the difficulties to be faced, and, in their detail and length, aim to persuade through an appeal to rational understanding. However, it seems that by the paper's next campaign Stead had, in turn, been persuaded that, for certain matters, the absence of evangelical fiery rhetoric would diminish the power of a campaign and, as a result, when he came to write up the 'Maiden Tribute' crusade he chose a narrative form influenced by Mearns and *The Bitter Cry* with its powerful combination of religious rhetoric, sensationalist detail, and balanced reporting.

The promotion of *The Bitter Cry* represents a singular moment in Stead's journalistic development. Significantly, Stead appears generally to disavow sensationalist rhetoric and promotes the value of forms of 'objective' inquiry as advanced by other investigators of social conditions. In some respects, the *Bitter Cry* campaign succeeded because it did not claim to be sensationalist, nor did it purport to be a heavily loaded religious intervention. The religious call to action was balanced by criticism levelled at the lack of concern shown for the material world by the Christian denominations while the campaign's sensationalism lay in the discovery of the brute actuality of the life of the impoverished and of the working poor. In a second article, Mearns emphasised that the London slums were not a new problem to be overcome and highlighted the strong likelihood of worsening conditions in the shape of what he termed 'embryo slums' and an ever-growing population.<sup>46</sup> He nevertheless believed that the 'filth, overcrowding, and vice' could be managed by the effective administration and enforcement of the current legislation.<sup>47</sup> Religion, however, remained a central theme: 'The law of the land might accomplish something—the law of Christian helpfulness something more' (p. 931). The overall campaign was a success and contributed to the establishment of a Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes in 1884 and the passing of the Housing of the Working

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<sup>44</sup> 'The Housing of London Workmen—Not in the Slums—I: An Inquiry by Our Special Commission', *PMG*, 31 January 1884, p. 11.

<sup>45</sup> 'The Housing of London Workmen—Not in the Slums—I', p. 11.

<sup>46</sup> Andrew Mearns, 'The Outcast Poor II. — Outcast London', *Contemporary Review*, 44 (1883), 924–933 (p. 924).

<sup>47</sup> Mearns, 'II. — Outcast London', p. 927.

Classes Act in 1890. By 1885, Stead was ready to ally more emphatically sensationalism and religious engagement to his investigative reporting when he undertook his most famous newspaper enquiry, 'The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon'. As I discuss in the next section, the sensational nature of the content, its combination of issues concerning sexual conduct, female oppression, and class antagonism gave Stead the opportunity to deploy the full panoply of rhetorical weaponry at his disposal.

### The 'Maiden Tribute of Babylon' Crusade

Journalism gave Stead a powerful means by which to promote religious and social betterment and an opportunity for him to be at the forefront of national campaigns for change. The experiences of R. W. Dale and Joseph Chamberlain, in the Birmingham of the 1860s and 1870s, had already shown how Christian teachings could energise the successful implementation of policies designed to produce social progress. To bring this crusading spirit to the public, Stead employed his evolving and innovative press strategies including the deployment of what he termed 'justifiable' sensationalism.<sup>48</sup> As Mussell has argued, Stead soon became known at the *PMG* for his campaigning journalism in which sensational exposés proved to be not only an effective press strategy but also grounds for public condemnation.<sup>49</sup>

The 'Maiden Tribute to Modern Babylon' campaign stands as the archetypal press agitation of the New Journalism of the late-Victorian period.<sup>50</sup> More particularly, the 'Maiden Tribute' represents the successful contribution by a secular newspaper run by a crusading Christian editor to the movement that sought to change sexual *mores* and to halt criminal behaviour. The *PMG* furnished the public with an account, published from 6 July to 10 July 1885, of the ways in which members of power elites — including royalty, government, nobility, the Law, and the Church — committed criminal and licentious acts upon young women and girls and did so with impunity. The methods of procurement, the perpetrators involved, and the dehumanising acts to which these young vulnerable women and girls were subjected, were detailed in the report of the paper's Special Commission led by Stead as director.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> 'Government by Journalism', p. 671.

<sup>49</sup> James Mussell, "'Characters of Blood and Flame": Stead and the Tabloid Campaign', in *Newspaper Revolutionary*, ed. by Brake and others, pp. 22–36 (p. 22). Mussell examines sensationalism and press scandal campaigns in the *PMG* including the exposure of Colonel Francis Charles Hughes-Hallett's alleged affair with his stepdaughter, Beatrice Selwyn, September 1887, the campaign against jobbery at the Metropolitan Board of Works, 1886–1889, and the 'Maiden Tribute', July 1885.

<sup>50</sup> Robertson Scott, *The Life and Death of a Newspaper*, p. 125. In 'Stead, William Thomas (1849–1912)', *ODNB* <doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/36258>, Baylen describes the 'Maiden Tribute' campaign as 'the high point of Stead's career in daily journalism'.

<sup>51</sup> Mearns's *The Bitter Cry* was drawn up by a 'Committee' which gave to the project a sense of official and significant mission. *The Bitter Cry*, pp. 16–18. In the 'Maiden Tribute', Stead used the term 'Committee'

The 'Maiden Tribute' was undertaken principally in alliance with General William and Mrs Catherine Booth of the Salvation Army, their son and daughter-in-law, Bramwell and Florence Booth, and with Catherine Booth's friend, Josephine Butler, the feminist and social-purity campaigner who was a leading figure in the campaign to repeal the Contagious Diseases Acts.<sup>52</sup> Women already played a prominent role in campaigning for an end to sexual violence with, for example, London middle-class women beginning to speak publicly in the 1880s about both sexual passion and sexual danger.<sup>53</sup> In 1885, as M. J. D. Roberts has argued, women outside the metropolis also campaigned against sexual exploitation, helping to force the passing of the Criminal Law Amendment Bill (CLAB) 'on the wave-crest of provincial evangelical indignation whipped up by W. T. Stead's 'Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon' revelation in the *Pall Mall Gazette*'.<sup>54</sup> The powerful alliance of provincial reaction, evangelical fervour, and extra-parliamentary agitation had already manifested itself in the 1870s when newspapers had increased in numbers and gained in influence. By the end of that decade, Stead had come to understand how effective such campaigning could be.

Academic writing on the 'Maiden Tribute' noticeably reiterates the tone and language of contemporary protests that condemned the publication of sensationalist, seemingly obscene material, without, I suggest, imposing sufficient critical distance. Published in 1992, Judith Walkowitz's *City of Dreadful Delight* provides the most extensive critique of the campaign to date, with Walkowitz describing the crusade as 'one of the most successful pieces of scandal journalism of the nineteenth century'.<sup>55</sup> In views supported by Gowan Dawson, who also notes the 'lurid exposé' of sexual criminality, Walkowitz declares that the Commission's findings were 'documented in lurid detail' and that 'the series had an electrifying effect'.<sup>56</sup> Lee recognises the importance of Nonconformist morality to the campaign but highlights a voyeuristic tonality by asserting that the *PMG* had adopted 'an indisputably sensational and often prurient manner'. Rachel Matthews supports Lee's evaluation while Kevin Williams has noted the opprobrium that content and style garnered in equal measure from an alienated readership.<sup>57</sup> Sydney Robinson, in his biography of Stead, published in the centenary year of the latter's drowning aboard the *Titanic* in 1912, has tendentiously described his subject as a 'strict Puritan' who produced a

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as well as 'Commission'. The implication was that this was a democratised form of a 'Royal Commission' inquiry.

<sup>52</sup> Walker, *Pulling the Devil's Kingdom Down*, pp. 138, 163. The CD Acts were suspended in 1883 and repealed in 1886.

<sup>53</sup> Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, pp. 8–9.

<sup>54</sup> M. J. D. Roberts, 'Feminism and the State in Later Victorian England', *Historical Journal*, 38:1 (1995), 85–110 (p. 99).

<sup>55</sup> Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, p. 81

<sup>56</sup> Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, p. 81; Gowan Dawson, *DN CJ*, p. 598.

<sup>57</sup> Lee, p. 125; Rachel Matthews, *The History of the Provincial Press in England* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), p. 94; Kevin Williams, p. 121.

'Puritanical melodrama'.<sup>58</sup> Rick Allen has written that 'This famous piece of exposé journalism [...] blends salacious sensationalism with moralistic realism', and, in selected extracts from the *PMG*'s reporting, he identifies the galvanising role that the paper's 'histrionics' played in Stead's account.<sup>59</sup> William Cohen sees in Stead's journalism an example of sanctimonious scandalmongering and in the pursuit of increased circulation figures a prioritising objective for his newspaper.<sup>60</sup> While it is the case that representation of scandalous conduct became scandalous in itself, the failure to bring such conduct into the light of publicity was equally so. Cohen suggests that Stead justified his sensationalist 'Maiden Tribute' campaign by allying 'an attitude of self-righteous reporting' with a sense of duty towards the public good.<sup>61</sup> All of these opinions place Stead firmly in the traces of a moral mission demanding legislation to end the criminal abuse of young women but they misrecognise the overall tonality of the material by overemphasising and misinterpreting sensationalist elements that were thought by some to be inappropriate for public consumption.

Stead deployed sensationalism to draw the attention of the *PMG*'s readership to the urgent need to suppress criminal vice in London. Further, the campaign needed to shatter the protective silence that habitually gathered around the self-interest of power elites shielding them from public scrutiny. However, I make the case for an alternative view that highlights the unsensational nature of much of the reporting and which emphasises the evangelical, religious-revivalist contribution to the social purity movement. As the *Salisbury and Winchester Journal* recognised in 1885, the campaign included both the effectiveness of measured plain-speaking as well as the alienating impact of crude 'headings and sub-headings of a grossly sensational character'.<sup>62</sup> As the next section demonstrates, much of the overt sensationalism was lodged in the paragraph headings of the otherwise unsensational daily reporting of Stead's secret commission.

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<sup>58</sup> Sydney Robinson, pp. 84, 87. Sydney Robinson's biography is unconvincing in its decision to present Stead as a 'muckraker' living in personally and socially 'scandalous' times as it includes evidence and interpretations open to debate as to their viability. See, for example, footnotes 109, p. 72; 110, p. 72. The former is given to indicate a passage relating to Stead's intimate relations with his wife. Instead, it refers to pages in which Stead discusses with Yates Thompson the future direction of the *PMG* after the 'Maiden Tribute' campaign. The second footnote refers to 'Stead's diary', to be located amongst the Stead papers, regarding his 'crazy appetite' for sex. There is no Stead diary amongst the Stead papers in the official archive at Churchill College, Cambridge (see the Introduction to this thesis) and no relevant evidence amongst Stead's dated extracts reproduced by Robertson Scott in his book, *The Life and Death of a Newspaper*.

<sup>59</sup> Rick Allen, *The Moving Pageant: A Literary Source Book on London Street-Life, 1700–1914* (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 169–170.

<sup>60</sup> William A. Cohen, *Sex Scandal: The Private Parts of Victorian Fiction* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996), p. 11.

<sup>61</sup> Cohen, p. 11.

<sup>62</sup> 'Protection of Young Girls', *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 18 July 1885, p. 3 with an extract republished in 'The Press on "The Maiden Tribute"', *PMG*, 20 July 1885, p. 11.

### 'Justifiable' Sensationalism

The principal shaping feature of the 'Maiden Tribute' campaign was the use of a calibrated 'justifiable' sensationalism which proved to be a central element of Stead's New Journalism and a powerful vector for evangelical Christian revivalism. The Salvation Army's Chief of Staff, Bramwell Booth, wrote in his private papers that the death of Mr Justice Williams in a brothel was the catalytic event which led to what became known as the 'Maiden Tribute'.<sup>63</sup> Bramwell Booth recorded his revulsion at the emerging story:

I said that this was such an abominable thing that it ought to be seen to — Mrs Bramwell [Bramwell's wife, Florence] also turned up some awful things from her rescue work in Whitechapel, horrors &c. [and] I got to be quite sure that there was a great deal going on that the general public knew nothing about.<sup>64</sup>

Having assured himself that there was indeed something to investigate, Bramwell '[t]hen went to Stead & talked to him. [M]ade him use language of the strongest description'.<sup>65</sup> The decision to use sensationalist strategies for the campaign was not, therefore, Stead's alone as Bramwell also considered it necessary to use such an approach: 'Stead & I made arrangements. We were convinced that the only thing to be done was to rouse the public & that could only be accomplished by the testimony of witnesses'.<sup>66</sup> When reported in what passed, at least, for the words of a third person, such testimony conveyed immediacy and authenticity. Oral testimony drew on the familiarity of various contexts, including those formed by platform speeches, law court depositions, and, as seen in the work of the Salvation Army, conversion narratives. Stead's use of material that was both personal and sensational deployed what became clear markers of late-nineteenth-century New Journalism.

Josephine Butler considered Stead to be 'a pure-minded man, nurtured in the most refined and sternly Christian home' and recognised the respectable intentions of both the individual and the campaign in which the sensational content was present for good reason.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Bramwell Booth, 'The Armstrong Case', PBB/3/2/260, Salvation Army Archives, International Heritage Centre.

<sup>64</sup> Bramwell Booth, 'The Armstrong Case', PBB/3/2/260, Salvation Army Archives, International Heritage Centre.

<sup>65</sup> Bramwell Booth, 'The Armstrong Case', PBB/3/2/261, Salvation Army Archives, International Heritage Centre.

<sup>66</sup> Bramwell Booth, 'The Armstrong Case', PBB/3/2/261, Salvation Army Archives, International Heritage Centre.

<sup>67</sup> Josephine E. Butler, *Rebecca Jarrett* (London: Morgan and Scott, [n.d.]), p. 18.

Stead's overall strategy was to deploy a populist approach to an investigative narrative designed to provoke both a rational understanding and an emotional appreciation of the issues discussed. However, as I have suggested, while critical debate has employed terms such as 'lurid', 'prurient', 'sensational', and 'pornographic', echoing the views of contemporary detractors, the report of the Secret Commission into the 'Maiden Tribute' largely avoids sensationalism. While the cross-heads are sensationalist, in being so they exemplify the rationale for sensationalism put forward by Stead in his 1886 article 'Government by Journalism'.<sup>68</sup> The avowedly sensationalist cross-heads — 'The Forcing of Unwilling Maids'/'I Order Five Virgins'/'The Virgins Certified' — were designed to capture the attention of the readers whose interest was then channelled towards an in-depth consideration of the various elements of the 'Maiden Tribute' question.<sup>69</sup> As such, these features qualified for Stead's categorisation of 'justifiable' sensationalism and were not intended primarily to increase circulation and maximise profits by exploiting matters that outraged public decency.

The most controversial aspect of an already highly controversial campaign was the decision to demonstrate, rather than just report, that young girls could be easily and cheaply procured. Stead had decided to initiate and to complete such a transaction, representing himself as the trusted public observer of the events for which he was also technically the originator. As Walkowitz has argued, Stead's adoption of multiple narrative identities later made him a ready target for moral rebuke and accusations of illegality.<sup>70</sup> For Stead had not foreseen the dangers of assigning to himself the roles of both perpetrator and prosecutor, according to himself an ambiguity which it became difficult to dissolve.<sup>71</sup> He not only found himself caught in the very light of publicity that was essential for the campaign to have any impact but also condemned for putting before the public subject matter that some considered inappropriate for the readership of a 'respectable' newspaper. Ultimately, Stead reaped outcomes that recognised the dual role he had played but which failed to manage sufficiently well the ambiguity, however well-meaning, of his position. Whilst legislative reform rewarded the substance of the campaign, a prison sentence punished the technical illegality committed.

The *PMG's* moral crusade challenged public ignorance and apathy in the fight against the social and commercial forces underpinning sexual immorality. The opening leader of the 'Maiden Tribute', with Stead's appeal to the 'heart' and 'conscience' of the newspaper's

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<sup>68</sup> See Chapter 2 of this thesis for a discussion of Sensationalism in Stead's *New Journalism*, and 'Government by Journalism', p. 671.

<sup>69</sup> 'The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon.—II. The Report of Our Secret Commission.', *PMG*, 7 July 1885, p. 5.

<sup>70</sup> Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, especially chapters 3 and 4.

<sup>71</sup> This reading of Stead's initiation and representation of his different roles in the 'Maiden Tribute' case is indebted to Judith Walkowitz's work in *City of Dreadful Delight*.

readership, sought to rouse public indignation through sensationalist rhetoric.<sup>72</sup> This included elements drawn from New-Testament epistolary phraseology, biblical prophecy, gothic horror, and somatic thrill, resounding within the crusade's initial editorial in which references to the objects of other high-profile nineteenth-century national campaigns are imbricated. These concerned the abolition of slavery, which had taken on a renewed vigour during the American Civil War (1861–1865), and the nationwide agitation during the 'Bulgarian Atrocities' (1876): the intention was to give to the issue of female sexual exploitation the same level of public scrutiny.<sup>73</sup>

The 'Maiden Tribute' campaign was publicised beyond the confines of the *PMG* and its readership by commentary that appeared in a wide range of other newspapers, dailies and weeklies, provincial and local metropolitan, religious and secular, but not in the leading London daily papers. The *Gloucester Journal*, for example, represented newspapers which took what they believed to be a principled stand against rhetorical indecency purveyed for profit.<sup>74</sup> The *Sheffield Independent*, on the other hand, was unconvinced by Catherine Booth's high-minded judgements and recommended that she pay more attention to preventative action.<sup>75</sup> The populist publication, *Reynold's Newspaper*, was highly supportive of the campaign, writing of 'the detestable villains', crimes that the *PMG* 'only dared to hint at', of 'rich debauchees' and of 'the evils upon which such a lurid light had been shed', although the lurid element was more properly a reflected characteristic of the crimes themselves.<sup>76</sup> The impassivity of the authorities, including of religious leaders — 'the Church as a Church is silent as the grave' — led *Reynold's Newspaper* to conclude, along with the *PMG*, that 'the matter's being hushed up'.<sup>77</sup> These discordant factors of class antagonisms, Church inadequacy, and official collusion with the attempts to suppress some highly unpalatable truths connected two disparate papers. In an act of journalistic subversion that has not been recognised as such, Stead had succeeded in aligning *Reynold's Newspaper* with the *PMG* and therefore gaining the support of a widely circulated, popular radical newspaper, for the campaign of what was still a clubland publication.

Other newspapers emphasised the need for right to triumph even when the means employed challenged social conventions. The weekly *Catholic Times* (1870– ), albeit in a tone of

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<sup>72</sup> "'We Bid You Be of Hope'", *PMG*, 6 July 1885, p. 1.

<sup>73</sup> 'Maiden Tribute', *PMG*, 6 July 1885, p. 1. For a discussion of Stead's contribution to the 'Bulgarian Atrocities' campaign, see Chapter 3: The *Northern Echo* Years 1871–1880.

<sup>74</sup> *Gloucester Journal*, 18 July 1885, p. 5 with an extract republished in 'The Press on the Crimes of Modern Babylon', *PMG*, 22 July 1885, p. 12.

<sup>75</sup> 'Summary of News', *Sheffield Independent*, 17 July 1885, p. 2 with an extract republished in 'The Press on the Crimes of Modern Babylon', *PMG*, 20 July 1885, p. 11.

<sup>76</sup> 'Modern Babylon', *Reynold's Newspaper*, 19 July 1885, p. 4 with an extract republished in 'The Press on the Crimes of Modern Babylon', *PMG*, 22 July 1885, p. 12.

<sup>77</sup> *Reynold's Newspaper*, 19 July 1885, p. 4.

conditionality, declared that ‘If this social cancer exists, why should its presence be ignored’. The high-Anglican weekly the *Church Times* (1863–) declared that ‘we earnestly trust that the end will be found to excuse the means’.<sup>78</sup> Emphasising that sensationalism with a purpose other than that of supplying gratuitous salaciousness could remain respectable, the *Bristol Mercury* estimated that the good reputation of the *PMG* ‘hinges entirely upon the truth or otherwise of the disclosures’.<sup>79</sup> It was with such observations in mind that Stead set up the review committee composed of individuals of the highest integrity to look into the truth of the *PMG*’s investigative material. Stead ensured that the members were publicly respected, predominantly religious individuals, including Edward Benson, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Congregational Liberal Member of Parliament, Samuel Morley.<sup>80</sup> Although Morley was by no means eager to accept the role, he did so as a matter of duty and with an open mind. He was subsequently able to tell a hostile House of Commons that the evidence shown to the committee regarding ‘the facts stated in the newspaper in question, notwithstanding their terrible character, yet concealed half the extent of the horrors with which they dwelt’.<sup>81</sup> A seemingly incredulous House of Commons had been forced to hear that the reports in the *PMG* were not only true but that, even for all the supposed sensationalism, they did not convey the full extent of the problem.

The Salvation Army played a substantial and leading part in the ‘Maiden Tribute’ campaign. Its newspaper, the *War Cry*, first reported on the campaign on 22 July 1885, with an account of the recent meeting held in the Prince’s Hall, addressed by Catherine Booth and Josephine Butler, and chaired by the MP Samuel Morley. The report demonstrated that the *War Cry* had adopted formal aspects of what became known as the New Journalism.<sup>82</sup> A relatively open-look page contained multiple headlines, entitled paragraphs, crossheads, and accounts of the principal speeches from first- and third-person narrative positions. The more direct, present-historic quality of the first-person report was reserved for what we might, in other circumstances, qualify as the ‘keynote address’, the speech by Mrs Catherine Booth. The *War Cry*’s account promised in its expansive stack headlines a transparent and detailed revelation but what the readership received was rather a contradictory combination of both openness and self-censorship. As the *War Cry* reported, Samuel Morley declared that the MPs ‘were hanging on the breath of the ministry as to whether a certain Bill was to have a certain paragraph in it or

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<sup>78</sup> ‘The Press On “The Maiden Tribute”’, *PMG*, 18 July 1885, p. 12.

<sup>79</sup> ‘The Press On “The Maiden Tribute”’, *PMG*, 18 July 1885, p. 12.

<sup>80</sup> Other members of the committee were Frederick Temple, the Bishop of London, and Cardinal Manning. ‘True’, *PMG*, 30 July 1885, p. 1.

<sup>81</sup> Edwin Hodder, *The Life of Samuel Morley*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1887), pp. 465–466. For an account of Morley’s commitment to Congregationalism, see pp. 26–31.

<sup>82</sup> ‘Modern Babylon’, *War Cry*, 22 July 1885, p. 1.

not'.<sup>83</sup> The twice-used 'certain' veiled over the precise knowledge that the readers needed to possess for them to make sense of the reporting and showed that the *War Cry* was sensitive to indelicate language and content yet openly and loudly determined in its agitation for reform. The Salvation Army was not alone in promoting the campaign and was part of a whole range of Christian denominations representing Church and chapel.

Christian faith groups, from the Church of England and Roman Catholicism to the Nonconformist Protestant congregations, readily offered their encouragement to the 'Maiden Tribute' crusade. Evangelical engagement infused the calls for action from other newspapers that echoed Stead's commitment to a religiously inspired morality. The evangelical Anglican newspaper, the *Record*, argued that 'it behoves men and women who profess to follow Christ to be in the forefront of such a movement' reflecting Stead's own privately expressed ambition of striving 'to be ever in the van'.<sup>84</sup> Stead had succeeded in mounting more than a campaign as his agitation had come to take on the nature of a crusade against criminality and immorality, but his religiously inspired activism was also politically populist.

However, amongst the Christian denominations, one group was noticeable for its silence. The perceived prurience of the 'Maiden Tribute' articles and the fact of Stead's imprisonment explain to some extent why the Congregationalists were slow to express much, if any, public support for the editor of the *PMG*. In December 1885, at the half-yearly meeting of the London Congregational Union, the chairman, the Rev. G. D. Macgregor, declared that 'the Congregationalists held the not very honourable distinction of being the only religious body who had been up to the present silent'.<sup>85</sup> While putting forward a successful resolution expressing clear sympathy for Stead in his imprisonment and appealing for his immediate release, the Rev. Macgregor nonetheless expressed his strong disapproval of some of Stead's actions. The motion spoke of Stead's 'crusade against criminal vice', of 'the purity of his motives and the nobleness of his aim', of the success of the campaign in 'awakening the public conscience', and of the Union's wish that the public authorities pursue 'real offenders against public morality'.<sup>86</sup> An insistent tone of measured understanding pervades this after-the-fact evaluation when the legal, material, and rhetorical issues had already been extensively debated over the previous six months. The lack of in-train support for the campaign and the belated, qualified, motion of approval suggest that an overall absence of trust existed on the part of the Congregational Union. Although the Reverend Fleming William's belief that 'Stead's action would do more for the purification of London life than had been done by all of them through all their Christian

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<sup>83</sup> 'Modern Babylon', *War Cry*, 22 July 1885, p. 1.

<sup>84</sup> 'The Press On 'The Maiden Tribute'', *PMG*, 18 July 1885, p. 12.

<sup>85</sup> 'London Congregational Union And Mr. Stead', *PMG*, 9 December 1885, p. 10.

<sup>86</sup> 'London Congregational Union And Mr. Stead', *PMG*, 9 December 1885, p. 10.

agencies for many years' demonstrated staunch, unconditional, support, his intervention was far from being unanimously shared (*PMG*, 9 December 1885, p. 10). It is open to question whether or not the reticence of the Congregationalists in their support for Stead and his crusade had an adverse effect upon his religious allegiance to the Independents.

The absence of Congregational support for Stead's crusade reflected in microcosm the refusal of leading London morning dailies to publicise the 'Maiden Tribute'. The wish to close down discussion of subject matter that dealt with sexual immorality and criminality aligned the journalistic representation of the conduct with the behaviour itself. In similar vein, where newspapers did publicise Stead's investigations, the rhetoric was muted in comparison with the soaring claims made for the spirit of his investigation. In the next section, I discuss how Stead made the moral case for justifiably publishing sensational content that the leading London daily newspapers chose to pass over in an ambiguous silence that respected social conventions while also shielding perpetrators of immoral and criminal conduct.

### **The 'Maiden Tribute' Campaign: Breaching the Wall of Silence**

The 'Maiden Tribute' showed how damaging euphemism, displacement, and outright silence could be for an agitation of its type. As a consequence, Stead's campaign also aimed to breach the wall of silence constituted by the London daily morning newspapers that kept the 'Maiden Tribute' story restricted to limited accounts of the campaign or fully out of the metropolitan public eye. Two years later, in the *PMG's* account of the Langworthy case, Stead set out some of his thoughts on the role of the press in society in which he declared that twelve men in particular were 'entrusted with the most responsible of all duties in a Democratic State': these twelve men were the editors of London's twelve daily newspapers who represented a form of jury in the metropolis.<sup>87</sup> Stead represented this jury as not so much interested in coming to the truth than in suppressing the debates by which any such truthfulness could emerge.

The silence that served as a means of stifling public challenge to immoral and criminal behaviour was often presented as a means of protecting the public from indecent material. Stead argued that a series of religious and societal failures had led to a tacit overlooking of sexual criminality. In his opinion, core social institutions — 'The Home, the School, the Church, the Press' — had become almost 'paralysed' in their continuing inability to end the silence over female sexual exploitation.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> The 'Langworthy trial' concerned the prosecution of Edward Langworthy for breach of promise to marry and refusal to pay alimony brought by his wife, Mildred.

<sup>88</sup> 'We Bid You Be of Hope', *PMG*, 6 July 1885, p. 1.

Stead's strongest criticism was reserved for religious organisations.<sup>89</sup> The Churches, he contended, along with the other institutions, had failed by remaining silent in the face of immorality and criminal behaviour. In their place, newspapers were ready to announce an end to the 'conspiracy of silence' that veiled over the issue of female sexual exploitation. Stead accordingly pledged to place the matter 'under the ruthless compulsion of publicity' in a crusade that was also shaped by the standard Nonconformist response to moral questions.<sup>90</sup> Although his aim was the 'repression of crime' by the forces of law and order, he considered the question of sexual immorality, when engaged in consensually by adults and with no harm caused to public decency, to be properly the concern of the teacher and not the policeman (*PMG*, 6 July 1885, p. 2).

Within a few days, the *PMG* began publishing a range of newspaper comment both favourable and disapproving from which emerge several focal themes. In doing so, the *PMG* employed the standard journalistic practice of collation and republication of articles from other newspapers for the promotion and further canvassing of opinion. The interests of High Anglicanism and of leading metropolitan daily newspapers coincided in their hostility to the support offered to Stead by newspapers associated with the Low Church, Roman Catholicism, and Nonconformity. The clamour for the maintenance of high-cultural values and the resolute opposition to the publication of sordid details had become allied to stifle discussion.<sup>91</sup> For this reason, it was important that Stead continue to publish as much external opinion about the 'Maiden Tribute' as possible to maintain and promote debate.

With the *PMG*'s stance robustly advanced, Stead challenged other newspapers to make their views equally transparent. The publication of extracts from other newspapers also served to mediate the 'Maiden Tribute' reporting for the *PMG*'s own readers, providing alternative evaluative focal points from which to assess the material. Given that the major London morning daily newspapers generally ignored or deliberately diminished the impact of the 'Maiden Tribute' campaign, Stead was obliged to look further afield and, in so doing, was in some measure able to undermine the dominance of the capital's daily press by indicating how widespread interest was.<sup>92</sup> His decision to publish a substantial number of paragraphs from other newspapers enabled him not only to communicate the impression of a national press crusade

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<sup>89</sup> 'We Bid You Be of Hope', *PMG*, 6 July 1885, p. 1.

<sup>90</sup> 'We Bid You Be of Hope', *PMG*, 6 July 1885, p. 1.

<sup>91</sup> Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, p. 82; 'Mustard and Cress', *Referee*, 26 July 1885, p. 7; 'House of Commons./"Obscene Matter"', *Globe*, 27 July 1885, p. 5; 'The *Pall Mall Gazette*', *Morning Post*, 31 July 1885, p. 3. By 1885, the *Globe* was a Tory, evening newspaper; the *Morning Post* was a conservative and imperialist morning daily.

<sup>92</sup> My reading, in their unedited context, as published by their original newspaper titles, of the extracts which Stead republished in the *PMG*, shows that he was a very fair editor of the wide range of opinions which he included, be they favourable or unfavourable to his point of view. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, p. 82.

in motion but also to convey the awakening of significant national interest in the agitation. This also encouraged the readership to wonder why the London daily newspapers maintained such a muted hostility to what was appearing.

The silence of conservative journalism was not prompted solely by questions of public taste but also represented the closing of ranks amongst members of power elites quietly suspected or directly accused of criminal immorality. For the *PMG* reported that although the provincial press, the minor London newspapers, and the metropolitan weeklies were prepared to speak out on the matter of the 'Maiden Tribute', the leading London morning papers generally remained resolutely silent. For the campaign to succeed, Stead had to show that a justifiable use of sensationalism was fully in accordance with the best aims of a religiously informed agitation. The outcome sought was to be the passing of the Criminal Law Amendment Bill, but, in the meantime, through the republication of other press comment, the *PMG* was able to demonstrate that Stead's crusading ambitions were not his alone and were indeed shared by many throughout the country.

While the London morning newspapers persisted in ignoring 'one of the most remarkable national movements of our time', the *PMG* continued to urge the public to support its campaign, stating that 'continuous popular pressure' was needed.<sup>93</sup> More calls for increased democratisation also featured amongst the extracts republished by the *PMG*, some of which verged on predictions of revolution. Opposition to the *PMG*'s publishing of the 'Maiden Tribute' translated into the prohibiting by the City of London authorities of the sale of the newspaper by boy vendors.<sup>94</sup> W. H. Smith, the War Minister in Gladstone's government, and son of the founder of one of the principal nineteenth-century wholesalers, distributors, and retailers of newspapers, periodicals, and books also banned the sale of the *PMG* from his company's railway bookstalls.<sup>95</sup> In like measure, the weekly *Primitive Methodist* (1868–1905), saw the duty of the churches as the keepers of both civil order and the promoters of moral regeneration, announcing that 'We may rest assured of this, if the churches do not act the democracy will, and violence and revolution may follow'.<sup>96</sup> If there were to be no reaction from the public authorities the *PMG* feared that 'resentment, which might be appeased by reform, may hereafter be the virus of a social revolution. It is the one explosive which is strong enough to wreck the Throne'.<sup>97</sup> It is entirely possible now to underestimate the power of such newspaper activism in a matter of public morality but the 'Maiden Tribute' crusade undoubtedly represented a significant

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<sup>93</sup> 'The New Crusade', *PMG*, 27 July 1885, p. 11.

<sup>94</sup> Eckley, p. 60.

<sup>95</sup> Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, p. 81; Eckley, p. 58; Stephen Colclough, 'W. H. Smith & Son (1790s–)', *DNCJ*, pp. 654–655.

<sup>96</sup> 'The Press On 'The Maiden Tribute'', *PMG*, 18 July 1885, p. 12.

<sup>97</sup> 'The Maiden Tribute Of Modern Babylon.—I', *PMG*, 6 July 1885, p. 2.

transformative undertaking on the part of the press that went beyond rhetorical effect and helped bring about important legislative and social change.

At the conclusion of the 'Eliza Armstrong' trial, Stead was sentenced to three month's imprisonment.<sup>98</sup> Although there were some who rejoiced in Stead's discomfort, Millicent Garrett Fawcett recalls that 'The jury [...] on pronouncing their verdict, added that they recommended [Stead] to mercy, as they wished to put on record their high appreciation of the services he had rendered the nation'.<sup>99</sup> The *PMG* had crusaded against sexual danger, criminality, and the perceived lack of state interest for intervention. In so doing, the newspaper had opened up further the interstices of gender and class contestation and had helped to lay down the challenge for a national moral revival.

Brutalised by the exertions and consequences of the 'Maiden Tribute', Stead also had to face the ire of Yates Thompson, the owner of the *PMG*, who wanted to halt any more similar campaigns in his newspaper. Indeed, in the view of the social reformer, women's activist and Christian feminist, Josephine Butler, Stead had found the investigation for the crusade almost more than he could bear as 'those who saw him were sometimes almost afraid for his reason'.<sup>100</sup> Stead's ambition for leadership in a moral crusade may have been realised but at a cost suggesting that he had over-reached himself personally and professionally.

While incarcerated in Holloway gaol, and beset with anxieties regarding the consequences of the campaign for his future personal life and professional ambitions, Stead committed some of his religious uncertainties and resolutions to paper. He accepted the emphasis then being placed upon the building of God's Kingdom in the temporal here-and-now. He also vowed to take the lead in the evangelical mission to raise humanity to the level of perfection reached by Christ. Every indicator of human suffering was to be taken as a further need for increased efforts to improve humankind's condition.<sup>101</sup> This did not signal, however, that the editor of the *PMG* had abandoned either social activism or the tackling of contentious issues although he had notably resolved to avoid further campaigns of the nature of the 'Maiden Tribute' investigation.<sup>102</sup>

In 1887, the year after his release from Holloway, Stead took up the case of Mildred Long and her four-year legal battle against Edward Martin Langworthy for breach of promise to marry and the non-payment of alimony and child maintenance. In the 'Maiden Tribute' crusade

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<sup>98</sup> Robertson Scott, *The Life and Death of a Newspaper*, pp. 132, 136, 143.

<sup>99</sup> *Morning Post*, 11 November 1885, p. 4; 'The Armstrong Case', *North London News*, 14 November 1885, p. 6; 'The Armstrong Abductive Case', *West London Observer*, 14 November 1885, p. 2. Millicent Garrett Fawcett, *What I Remember*, (London: Fisher Unwin, 1924), p. 130.

<sup>100</sup> Butler, p. 18. 'Butler, [née Grey] Josephine Elizabeth (1828–1906)', *ODNB* <doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/32214>.

<sup>101</sup> Robertson Scott, *The Life and Death of a Newspaper*, p. 117.

<sup>102</sup> Robertson Scott, *The Life and Death of a Newspaper*, p. 144.

the borders between Stead the investigative reporter and Stead the active agent in what was happening had become blurred: in the Langworthy divorce case, Stead kept a narrative distance between himself and the events he reported. In this instance, as I discuss in the next section, he protected his position principally by ensuring that his role was tightly scripted as Mildred's faithful supporter and staunch defender thus becoming primarily a recorder, sounding board, and interpreter of events. More practically, the *PMG* editor had also taken steps to have his newspaper copy passed by legal counsel's opinion before publication took place.<sup>103</sup> On this occasion, Stead hoped that unforeseen circumstances would not undermine the force and effect of the moral message that he hoped to promote.

### The 'Langworthy Case'

Gregory Jackson has described how in the late-1880s, the Reverend Charles Sheldon, minister of the Central Church of Topeka, Kansas, delivered weekly 'sermon stories' to his congregation. These homiletic tales portrayed characters encountering difficulties that Sheldon's parishioners might realistically meet in their daily lives 'as they struggled to maintain their religious values amid dramatic social, political, and economic changes'.<sup>104</sup> In a period of religious faith destabilised by the social pressures of industry, mechanisation, and scientific advancement, the stories helped Christian readers discover how best to lead their lives by asking the emblematic central question: 'What would Jesus do?'<sup>105</sup> The encounter between Sheldon's readers and the fictional characters of his sermonic tales created a space in which individuals developed their capacity for private devotion, moral independence, and social engagement, and, importantly, were encouraged to do so through roundtable discussions.<sup>106</sup> Sheldon's novels were notable in attracting readerships for a religious pedagogical publishing venture that respected the hebdomadal periodicity of the sermon as well as appearing in book form and included *Richard Bruce, or the Life That Now Is* (1892), *The Crucifixion of Philip Strong* (1894), and *In His Steps: "What Would Jesus Do?"* (1897).

Amongst other American homiletic novelists cited by Jackson figure the journalist Florence Converse (1871–1967), author of *The Children of Light* (1912), the Unitarian minister, Edward Everett Hale (1822–1909), who wrote *In His Name* (1874), and the spiritualist and social reformer, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps (1844–1911), whose *Hedged In* was published in 1870.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Eckley, p. 113.

<sup>104</sup> Jackson, "'What Would Jesus Do?'" , p. 641.

<sup>105</sup> Jackson, p. 642.

<sup>106</sup> Jackson, p. 644.

<sup>107</sup> Jackson, p. 641.

These novels became significant vectors for engagement in the Social Gospel movement whereby individual spiritual contemplation and the experience of religious conversion were transmuted into a collective focus upon the practicalities of living a socially moral and responsible life.<sup>108</sup> While the individual experience of spiritual salvation became integrated with social interventionism activism, these novels led to the creation of reform networks shaped by activist communities who were hearing, reading, and discussing the religious narratives as models for their own lives.<sup>109</sup> Jackson argues that Stead also contributed to this genre in *If Christ Came to Chicago!* (1894), where he brought into the glare of publicity the dangers represented by drink, prostitution, and political corruption (p. 646). This is also where Stead publicised and popularised the slogan, 'Be a Christ!', the importance of which for individuals and communities he had already acknowledged while imprisoned in Holloway Gaol following the Eliza Armstrong trial. 'Be a Christ!' represented Stead's realisation that it was not sufficient to venerate Christ; it was more important, as the homiletic novels suggested, that individuals demonstrate self-sacrifice worthy of Christ himself.

Stead's recounting of the story of the Langworthy case can profitably be read as a prototypical homiletic tale representing an earlier instantiation of the genre than *If Christ Came to Chicago!* Under the heading 'Strange True Stories of Today', Stead produced a romanced narrative in seventy-five discretely headed chapters recounting Mildred Langworthy's drawn-out hardships and final legal triumph. The source of Mildred Long's difficulties was Edward Martin Langworthy, a very wealthy English-born businessman resident in Argentina. Although the *PMG* announced that the Langworthy story would be the first of a series of such tales, it proved to be the only narrative of its kind published in the newspaper. This novelised reportage included gothic, melodramatic, and sensationalist elements evident in plot, characterisation, and register. The second major structural element is to be found in the leaders and followers Stead devoted to the trial and its consequences by which Stead ensured that the *PMG*, the sole London newspaper that gave unequivocal support to Mildred Langworthy, championed her cause.

New Journalism engaged with the homiletic novel in the 'Strange Story' of the Langworthy case. The sermonic periodicity of the weekly engagement between congregation and homiletic text became collapsed in the *PMG* into a daily encounter between newspaper and busy readership. Stead could not depend on readers' being familiar with the type of individuals and situations depicted but he could use the familiarity of schematically delineated gothic, melodramatic, and sensationalist characters. The cast included an evil mother-in-law (Mrs

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<sup>108</sup> Jackson, p. 653.

<sup>109</sup> Jackson, p. 644.

Elizabeth Langworthy), an unscrupulous wealthy seducer (Edward Martin Langworthy), a sometimes naïve but enthusiastic young woman (Mildred Long, later Mrs Edward Langworthy), likeable honest father and son solicitors (Lumley and Lumley), and the less sympathetic Langworthy legal representatives from Bircham's, the firm whose employee, the unfortunate Danby, was dubbed 'To-the-best-of-my-knowledge-and-belief' in reference to his habit of introducing a caveat when giving evidence. The repulsive Catholic priest who officiated at a mock marriage near Caen, in France, recalled the irreligious priests of gothic fiction and is balanced by a trustworthy American Baptist minister, and, in the background, Mildred Long's Anglican family in which father and brother were both clergymen. The narrative was shaped to reflect Mildred Langworthy's dilemmas, challenges, and decisions, and once the reader had caught up with past occurrences, Stead placed before them contemporaneous events, the dreary monotony of which are mirrored by the drawn-out narrative style. The reader shares also in the succession of disappointments encountered by Mildred as a consequence of each of Edward Langworthy's successful attempts to disrupt and prolong the trial through the legal but abusive use of false affidavits.

The 'Langworthy Case' has not received the same degree of critical exploration as the more well-known 'Maiden Tribute', meriting, for example, no more than a foot-noted and, in part, inaccurate comment in Robertson Scott's history of the *PMG*.<sup>110</sup> The case also only receives only passing mention in the 'Foreword' to a collection of papers devoted to the subject of the *PMG*'s editor and his journalism.<sup>111</sup> Yet, the sensational case of Mildred Long, seduced, abandoned, and on the verge of complete social ruin proved to be a campaigning success although it still attracted criticism from some quarters for the alleged vulgarity of some of the material.<sup>112</sup> I explore here in the reporting of the 'Langworthy Marriage' trial the essential elements of Stead's developed and re-considered New Journalistic technique: the deployment of a sensationalist rhetoric encompassing melodrama and the gothic novel; a combination of polemical provocation and rational argumentation; a determined campaigning spirit for right over wrong; and, most significantly, in the context of my exploration of Stead's journalism, an explicitly religiously influenced social zeal and fervency.

The Langworthy case allowed Stead to campaign on an issue that he could present in a generally unexceptionable manner. Brake has suggested that one of the aims of Matthew Arnold's criticism was to separate Stead from the middle-class values with which he identified

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<sup>110</sup> Robertson Scott, *The Life and Death of a Newspaper*, footnote 1, p. 82. Mildred Long was not 'the daughter of an Irish landlord' but of an Irish clergyman, albeit one who had at one time possessed great wealth.

<sup>111</sup> Roy Greenslade, 'Why Stead Would Have Made The Right Call By Being A Phone Hacker', in *W. T. Stead*, ed. by Brake, pp. 1–5 (p. 4).

<sup>112</sup> L Curtis, *Jack the Ripper and the London Press* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2008), p. 71.

and to associate him disparagingly with the worst elements of the newspaper mass market.<sup>113</sup> The Langworthy case, however, gave Stead the opportunity to defend a member of the same middle class to which many of the *PMG*'s readers belonged and offered a persuasive retort to Arnold's manoeuvre.<sup>114</sup> Although Stead was dealing with a legal case, this did not signify, however, that he had abandoned the use of religious themes and rhetoric. The legal victory for Mildred Langworthy was a campaign triumph for the *PMG* and brought enormous public attention to a case that had up until then evoked scant consideration outside of legal circles and the lives of those intimately involved in the proceedings.

On 23 September 1887, the *PMG* carried on its back page an advertisement announcing the immediate availability at 3d (4d post-paid) of an in-house special publication: 'A Romance of the Law Courts: Mrs Langworthy's Trials and Triumph'. This 'new and enlarged sequel' to the *PMG*'s daily reporting of the case contained details of the final legal settlement made by Edward Martin Langworthy and of the in-court apologies that had been required of him.<sup>115</sup> Such a publication was not an innovation as the *PMG* had already very successfully produced such a 'special' for the 'Maiden Tribute' crusade two years earlier. As 60 000 copies of the original 6d Extra had already been sold and it was now out of print, the newspaper had reason to expect a significant demand for the updated story. Carrying with it the moral force of a religious tract, the 'Extra' took the form of a stand-alone pamphlet carrying a strong moral message. A number of New Journalistic markers are clearly present in the layout of the advertisement: the sensationalist vigour of the sequel's title, printed in large font upper case; the promotion of a romanced story whose truth and authenticity were, nonetheless, fundamental to the integrity of the reporting; the publicity accorded to the essentially private nature of divorce proceedings; and, in the overwhelming judicial victory of the reportedly harshly treated and now legally acknowledged wife, the capacity of the press to campaign determinedly for legal redress on behalf of an individual for whom public and institutional support had been lacking.

The *PMG*'s reporting included elements fundamental to the New Journalism that Stead had employed during the 'Maiden Tribute' crusade. The readership's interest in the general narrative and specific episodes of a relatively complex and lengthy account was sustained by both the deployment of a sensationalist rhetoric and a sermonising intensity that invested the overall campaigning spirit with high moral expectations. In a 'Notice', the *PMG* had set out its intentions very early on:

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<sup>113</sup> Laurel Brake, 'Journalism and Modernism, Continued: The Case of W. T. Stead', in *Transatlantic Print Culture, 1880–1940: Emerging Media, Emerging Modernisms*, ed. by Ann Ardis and Patrick Collier (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 149–166 (p. 153).

<sup>114</sup> Sydney Robinson, p. 133.

<sup>115</sup> 'Advertisements & Notices', *PMG*, 23 September 1887, p. 16.

The publication of a series of Strange True Stories of To-day was begun in the *Pall Mall Gazette* on Monday, April 18, and is continued to-day. [...] The heroes and heroines will not only be real living men and women of to-day, but they will be named and described with the same simplicity and directness that would be used if the whole story were being told in court by counsel. The first of the series *The Langworthy Marriage*, will be continued day after day until the narrative is complete.<sup>116</sup>

This 'Notice' established certain ethical parameters within which the *PMG* aimed to work. The story, although employing novelistic techniques, was fundamentally a 'true' account and a story of 'real' human interest; the main actors in the case would not be hidden behind a veil of anonymity; the facts represented would be robust enough to satisfy legal scrutiny; and the newspaper would not cease publication until a successful outcome had been achieved in Mildred Langworthy's favour. Further, Stead notified the *PMG* readership that he would prevent the occurrence of the kind of difficulties which had marred the overall impact of the 'Maiden Tribute' campaign.<sup>117</sup>

At the end of the novelised narrative, the *PMG* evaluated the importance of the case in a paragraph packed with diverse referents:

Our "Strange True Story" is ended to-day, and the public is at last in possession of the facts of the Langworthy marriage. We have never printed any narrative concerning any individual which has excited so deep an interest and commanded so sustained an attention. It is simply a small segment hewn out of the palpitating, quivering body politic, and exhibited to the view of all men under the microscope of the press. It is a bit of the realism of reality, instinct with the deep human interest that pertains to every struggle which the individual makes against an apparently inexorable destiny. Whatever else it may have failed to do, it has at least served the purpose of all true tragedy, and purified the soul by rousing into keener vitality the emotions of pity and awe.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> 'Notice', *PMG*, 4 May 1887, p. 8.

<sup>117</sup> Eckley, p. 113, notes that Stead retained Sir George Lewis to check the material before publication.

<sup>118</sup> 'How To Help Mrs. Langworthy', *PMG*, 11 May 1887, p. 1.

Sensationalist narrative, melodrama, realism, tragedy, and the language of investigative science appealed to both an emotional and a rational understanding of the events, consequences, and effects of the legal suit as narrated. By introducing a significant range of rhetorical positions from which to campaign, Stead had succeeded in creating a multi-faceted narrative likely to be proof against most attacks on the reporting.

In the 'Langworthy Marriage' case, Stead's use of the sensational 'human interest' story evoked readership responses ranging from the voyeuristic to the empathetic although the editorial preference was very much for the latter and condemnatory of the former. The *PMG* employed readers' familiarity with the sensationalist novels of Mary Braddon and Wilkie Collins in order to create an explicitly romanced narrative through which potentially disturbing material could be communicated in familiar narrative form. In gesturing towards the melodramatic representation that underpins the coverage of the *PMG*, the Liberal *York Herald* highlighted the romanced form and chilling content of the newspaper accounts in its assertion that 'few women out of Miss Braddon's novels' are asked to submit to the kind of grave difficulties that Mrs Langworthy had had to endure.<sup>119</sup> According to the *Morning Advertiser* and the *Evening Standard*, Mrs Langworthy, the 'heroine' and 'a blameless character' had become, following a 'remarkable series of adventures', the victim of 'the base betrayer of a too trustful girl'.<sup>120</sup> According to other newspapers, Mildred Long/Langworthy was 'a virtuous and high-minded woman', had been quite simply transformed into the victim of a 'cruel seducer', of 'an infamous scoundrel', 'a worthless specimen of manhood', and of, in short, a 'monster'. Stead was to be thanked 'for the courageous and persistent manner' in which he had pursued the case, the *PMG* itself being personified as a chivalrous defender who had 'championed a helpless woman's cause'.<sup>121</sup>

An inverted 'suspension of disbelief' is established by which 'a bit of the realism of reality' has enough of the fictional for the sense of invasive, prurient, readerly interest in the private lives of others to be attenuated. Stead hoped that the reporting of the 'Langworthy Marriage' might succeed in cleansing the spirit but he also sought to arouse the strong emotions of 'pity and awe' not only for a cathartic dissipation but also for the forging of restitutive acts. In this way, he managed to bring in a tone of revivalist Christian morality in the guise of a sensationalist narrative. The readers of the 'respectable' *PMG* were not in principle consumers of Sunday newspaper scandal stories but were rather a morally invigorated audience capable of channelling emotional vitality towards a given objective. This was sensationalism with a

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<sup>119</sup> 'The Press On Mrs. Langworthy's Triumph', *PMG*, 15 August 1887, p. 11.

<sup>120</sup> 'The Press On Mrs. Langworthy's Triumph', *PMG*, 15 August 1887, p. 11.

<sup>121</sup> 'The Press On Mrs. Langworthy's Triumph', *PMG*, 15 August 1887, p. 11.

purpose: affective energy enlisted for a moral crusade which itself was a religiously inspired moral lesson in the form of a sensational story.

Stead's campaigning sensationalism once again set the *PMG* apart although other newspapers occasionally included sensationalist elements in their own accounts. For example, *The Times* reported upon the case primarily from a legal perspective and, therefore, supplied accounts of discussions and judgements, sometimes verbatim. Yet elements of Stead's New Journalistic telling of the sensational story are still present in *The Times's* account itself. In *The Times*, we read of the claim for restitution of conjugal rights, of an 'alleged' marriage, the birth of a child, possibly out of wedlock, of a young woman forced to abandon her husband at his own insistence, and of Langworthy's secretive flight abroad in a vain attempt to escape paying the legal costs ordered against him. Even the serial nature of the *PMG's* account, designed to create suspense and an excited appetite for more, is mirrored in *The Times* where its reports appear according to the unrolling and unpredictable schedule of the judicial process.<sup>122</sup> In one short paragraph, *Reynold's Newspaper* captures the excitement of a key and supposedly private hearing at which Edward Langworthy's mother is expected to be present. We become the accomplices of the reporter's gleaning of leaked details as we learn how Mrs Langworthy senior, a mysterious, influential, but largely invisible character in the story, has failed to appear supposedly on account of ill health, occasioning the judge's barely disguised anger and the immediate issuing of 'a peremptory order for her attendance'.<sup>123</sup>

In May 1887, the *PMG* published an interim selection of press views concerning both the case and the newspaper's style of reporting.<sup>124</sup> As we have already seen in the discussion of New Journalism and of the 'Maiden Tribute' crusade, such collection, collation, and republication was firmly established in journalism as a fundamental means by which to encourage and maintain debate. Stead again ensured that he included a representative selection of newspaper extracts. He drew from at least thirty-nine sources; twenty-seven religious and non-religious London and provincial papers were joined by four from Ireland and five from Scotland.<sup>125</sup> Comment from the press acknowledged not only the emotional charge of the story and the significance of the legal repercussions but also highlighted the religious motivation of the campaign. While stating that its approval was dependent upon no other recourse being available, the *Eastern Morning News* considered the campaign to be 'a bold, but also a necessary

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<sup>122</sup> 'Queen's Bench Division', *The Times*, 24 March 1887, p. 3. 'Supreme Court of Judicature', *The Times*, 2 April 1887, p. 4.

<sup>123</sup> 'Yesterday's Law, Police, Etc./Court of Bankruptcy', *Reynold's Newspaper*, 15 May 1887, p. 8.

<sup>124</sup> 'The Press On The Langworthy Case', *PMG*, 17 May 1887, p. 2.

<sup>125</sup> 'The Press On Mrs. Langworthy's Triumph', *PMG*, 15 August 1887, p. 11.

<sup>125</sup> 'The Press On Mrs. Langworthy's Triumph', *PMG*, 17 August 1887, p. 11.

and a righteous thing'.<sup>126</sup> The *PMG* ensured that comment was included from the religious press which saluted the general social benefit to be obtained from the publicity given to this individual case. In hoping for more such newspaper reporting, the *Christian Commonwealth* applauded the 'good' that the publication of the Langworthy trial had created while the *Christian* in similar vein expressed its 'sense of the public service rendered by that courageous journal'.<sup>127</sup> Secular newspapers were just as sensitive to the moral implications of the narrative with the *Hull Daily News* recognising that the story had 'stirred to profound depths the feelings of every reader' and affirming that 'this narration of real life [...] reveals a depth of human infamy which is almost incredible'.<sup>128</sup> The *PMG* strongly believed that the Langworthy case exhibited,

in an extreme form many of the evils which are eating into the heart of our modern civilisation. There is the employment of wealth as a weapon to crush instead of a lever to raise; there is the prostitution of the forms of the law in order to defeat the ends of justice; there is, above all, Selfishness, that Anti-Christ of all time, exalted into the Supreme law of life with its hideous concomitant of human sacrifice. It is the heathenism of our day made manifest, a horrible apocalypse of the vulgar pride, of brutal lust and of ruthless avarice.<sup>129</sup>

Stead's religious motivations are manifest in the *PMG*'s elevation of 'Selfishness' to the status of 'Anti-Christ' thus ranking it in the manner of Dissenting Protestantism alongside Satan and the Pope. The rhetoric is of overturned religion, 'human sacrifice' serving as the means to another's progress rather than representative of the atoning act of Jesus with the final listing of three of the seven capital sins — pride, lust, avarice, — providing the culpable causes of a perceived cataclysmic moral decline in society. The language is nothing if not hyperbolic, conceived as if declaimed from the pulpit in a fiery arousal of righteous moral indignation.

Stead's New Journalism demonstrated a readiness to take up and publicise the private difficulty of individuals and re-delineated the character of the campaigning press. Newspapers were entitled to speak to a mass audience and to endorse or dispute the opinions held by representatives of constitutional power without their being considered seditious, subversive, or revolutionary. Of course, approbation was not universal. The *Globe* was unimpressed by the

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<sup>126</sup> 'The Press On The Langworthy Case', *PMG*, 17 May 1887, p. 2.

<sup>127</sup> 'The Press On The Langworthy Case', *PMG*, 17 May 1887, p. 2.

<sup>128</sup> 'The Langworthy Marriage', *PMG*, 18 May 1887, p.2.

<sup>129</sup> 'The Lady, The Lawyers, And The Public', *PMG*, 24 May 1887, p.1.

*PMG* and declared, taking up the title of Stead's 1886 article in the *Contemporary Review*, that 'Government by Journalism' was bad enough but that the prospect of 'Justice by Journalism' was even worse.<sup>130</sup>

Some newspaper commentary praised the *PMG* in terms that explicitly recognised and incorporated the electrifying timbre and populist high-mindedness of New Journalism. The *Liverpool Echo* observed that a crucial element in Langworthy's defeat was the moment when 'the public became fully alive' to the trial, declaring, however, that 'The law ought not to have needed the electric shock of journalism' in order to accomplish its duty.<sup>131</sup> The ability of the *PMG* to electrify its readers, to jolt them out of cosy comfort, is imagined through the recent innovations in the use of electricity: sensational stories could provoke the physical sensation of shock and astonishment in New Journalism's readerships.<sup>132</sup> Others were less enamoured of the journalistic strategies employed. The *Banner* cast Stead in the role of 'Public Prosecutor' and while acknowledging the 'considerable' successes of the *PMG* judged the paper to be 'open to criticism on many points of taste and method'. Indeed, the *Globe*, no friend to the *PMG*, bemoaned the absence of 'dry facts' and the inclusion of 'far too much sentiment' in '[a] sham halo of romance' that was akin to a 'penny dreadful'.<sup>133</sup>

In reporting the Langworthy trial, the *PMG* exposed the manipulative legal practice of entering in court false affidavits. As the sole purpose of this was to delay proceedings and to exhaust the resources of the opposing parties, the legal establishment was at last obliged to act to halt such conduct. Religious newspapers moreover praised the work of the *PMG*. The Church of England weekly, the *Rock*, regarded the coverage of the Langworthy trial as a unique example of the power of the press and declared 'We pray that that growing power may ever be used in the cause of right and truth'.<sup>134</sup> The *Methodist Times* highlighted their Christian approval of frank expression and transformative action, acerbically stating: 'The 'New Journalism' may not suit Mr Matthew Arnold, but it fills plain, practical Christians with great delight'. Similarly, the weekly *Methodist Recorder* believed that Stead's newspaper had 'done a daring deed of journalistic knight errantry' and described the editor in no ironic form as 'a prince in sensationalism'. The secular *Worcestershire Echo* was equally positive, writing that the disclosures regarding Mrs Langworthy's husband must have been made in all good conscience since they had, after all, appeared in 'a respectable newspaper'.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> 'The Press On Mrs. Langworthy's Triumph', *PMG*, 15 August 1887, p. 11.

<sup>131</sup> 'The Press On Mrs. Langworthy's Triumph', *PMG*, 17 August 1887, p. 11.

<sup>132</sup> See, for example, Jason R. Rudy, *Electric Meters: Victorian Physiological Poetics* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2009).

<sup>133</sup> 'The Press on Mrs. Langworthy's Triumph', *PMG*, 15 August 1887, p. 11.

<sup>134</sup> Mark Knight, *DNCL*, p. 544. 'The Press On Mrs. Langworthy's Triumph', *PMG*, 15 August 1887, p. 11.

<sup>135</sup> 'Some Opinions On The Langworthy Case', *PMG*, 20 May 1887, p. 2.

In *The Bitter Cry* campaign, the question of sexual danger had been presented by Mearns and republished by Stead as a symptom of the slum conditions in which the poorer sections of society were forced to live. The 'Maiden Tribute' moved the debate on to more potentially politicised notions of class exploitation by focusing upon the class conflicted aspects of sexual exploitation and moving the material living conditions into the background. In the 'Langworthy Marriage' campaign, Stead replaced the overt religious rhetoric of the 'Maiden Tribute' with strategies that encouraged readers to engage with the events of the case through their understanding of religious values. This shift in focus represented the next stage in Stead's development of his religiously influenced New Journalism where he sought to draw upon a widening network of moral and ethical references to promote a re-moralised, re-Christianised society.

### **Faith and the Secular**

The role of the press in the Langworthy case raised ethical questions which both the religious and the non-religious newspapers sought to explore, and which Stead gathered together and republished in his dissemination by journalistic phonography of Christian morality. The *Christian* emphasised the ability of the press to protect the interests of the socially excluded, writing that

It manifests the power of the press to enable the weak, the oppressed, and the betrayed to appeal to the Public Conscience, to our common humanity, against the oppressor and the betrayer. And the power of the press involves its responsibility to do this; for it is a crime to have power to defend the right, and not to use the power.<sup>136</sup>

The *Christian* gave further impetus to the importance of publicity by asserting in declarations resonant with religious passion that bringing matters into the public domain was not only right but a moral imperative: 'In publicity there is a power on the side of righteousness, than which there is no greater force among men'. Direct scriptural reference would bear down upon the iniquity of suppressing the truth: 'Words more terrible to them were never spoken than those of Christ: "There is nothing covered up, that shall not be revealed; and hid that shall not be made known."' The *Primitive Methodist* praised the publication of the Langworthy special issue as a 'heroic public service [which] has thrown a flood of light upon the wickedness practised in high

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<sup>136</sup> 'Some Notes On The Langworthy Case', *PMG*, 8 June 1887, p. 11.

places'. The paper also exemplified the absorption of sensationalist rhetoric in its declaration that: 'No more thrilling story was ever penned'. The newspaper evoked an image of Stead in which his 'noble' soul was said to have been 'stirred by the narrative' thereby manifesting an intrinsic 'manly indignation [...] all aglow with righteous wrath'. In an evocation of popular supremacy, the *Christian* invested the people with temporal power above even that established in the House of Lords, a power which the press was to consider as supreme in its terrestrial manifestation. The *Hants Independent* emphasised that 'In aiding the weak against the powerful the press does no more than its duty, but those who are so ready to turn to newspapers for assistance little realise the danger incurred by espousing their cause'. *Wit and Wisdom*, although wondering how far an 'influential newspaper' should become involved in a matter of 'private hardship', nonetheless considered that the publicity surrounding the Langworthy case was justified. In a further observation from the *Hants Independent*, the Langworthy campaign was declared to stand as a model of new journalistic endeavour: 'This may be, and certainly is, high distinction for journalism and unmistakeable testimony to its power'.<sup>137</sup>

It was in the power of the press to decide the degree of importance that they would accord or deny to any particular story or person, an assertion that Stead presented metaphorically, as he had done before, in an image drawn from the investigative natural sciences: 'They have the power of the microscope to magnify, or, if it pleases them, to diminish to vanishing point the apparent importance of men and things'.<sup>138</sup> Although without any material transformative capacity, this optical, magnifying power did enable the close visioning of the selected object and permitted a transformative change in perception to be effected. Yet, a greater power lay in the relationship of the press to the people. As already highlighted in the extract drawn from the *Christian*, Stead further elaborated on the position of newspapers to hear appeals emanating from the people and to bring them to 'the ears of King Demos' as protector of the general population.<sup>139</sup>

Newspapers were thus empowered not only to mediate between individuals and the aggregated community but also to represent and speak on behalf of the people as a whole. In such a circulation of thought and feeling, the construction of public opinion became mediated and formed by the newspapers: 'Demos' heard popular petitions through the newspapers and the press spoke in its name. In an allied consideration, Stead intoned that, although the chivalric orders may have passed away, the spirit of chivalry remained eternal and in a perhaps tortuous association of the Knights Templar with the barristers of the Temple Inns of Court, Stead

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<sup>137</sup> 'Some Notes On The Langworthy Case', *PMG*, 8 June 1887, p. 11.

<sup>138</sup> 'Strange True Stories of To-day', *PMG*, 4 May 1887, p. 3.

<sup>139</sup> 'Strange True Stories of To-day', *PMG*, 4 May 1887, p. 3.

accorded to the lawyers the role of contemporary knights.<sup>140</sup> However, such a transmission of the chivalric code could not hide the fact that there were knights with the right to serve in the law courts whose ambitions were less than generous, beginning here perhaps with Edward Langworthy himself.

In referring to the Langworthy Defence Fund, Stead thought that many would wish to contribute to 'the means whereby Mrs Langworthy may baffle the machinations of her enemy and defy the malevolent iniquity which employs the safeguards of justice as the most efficient of all the engines of oppression'.<sup>141</sup> The role of the law was not to oppress but to protect against oppression, even more so when the vindictive forces were wealthy and the object of their interest without sufficient means to mount a tenable defence. In the same article, Stead commended Mildred's story 'to the attention of the country, and especially to those keepers of the ears of King Demos, the editors of our newspapers'.<sup>142</sup>

The three major newspaper campaigns which I investigate here represent significant staging posts in the *PMG*'s development of New Journalistic sensationalism. The conscription of the religious sensational element reached its clearest manifestation in the 'Maiden Tribute' crusade. However, the furore that accompanied and followed Stead's imprisonment reined in such campaigning and obliged him to construct other means of developing the democratising and governing potential of his press practice. His new undertaking took the form of a monthly review in which the content of a wide range of British and foreign journals was collected, collated, and circulated. This new project, the *Review of Reviews*, which I examine in the next, and final, chapter, became the clearest expression of his religious beliefs and the medium through which to promote his re-Christianising message.

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<sup>140</sup> 'Strange True Stories of To-day', *PMG*, 23 April 1887, p. 1.

<sup>141</sup> 'The Lady, The Lawyers, And The Public', *PMG*, 24 May 1887, p. 1.

<sup>142</sup> 'The Lady, The Lawyers, And The Public', *PMG*, 24 May 1887, p. 1.

## Chapter 5

### The *Review of Reviews* and the Role of Supplementary Publications

Declaring that ‘We believe in God, in England, and in Humanity!’, Stead launched, in January 1890, amidst a flurry of signed welcoming notices from prominent public figures, the *Review of Reviews (RoR)*, his last major New Journalistic enterprise.<sup>1</sup> The overarching values for this sixpenny monthly survey of journal articles and world events were religion, patriotism, and the progress of humankind. Central to the aims of the *RoR* featured the endowment of Christian values in socio-political engagement, the fulfilment of what was proclaimed as Britain’s divinely ordained imperial role, and the promotion of the reunion of Christianity. In recognition of this latter element, the *RoR*’s head office, ‘Mowbray House’, was named after W. T. Mowbray, the founder, in 1873, of the Home Reunion Society for the bringing together of the Christian Churches.

When Stead moved to London in 1880 to become assistant editor of the *PMG*, he introduced to the clubland newspaper the values of the Nonconformist Conscience, a popularising press aesthetic, and a democratising mission. None of these elements that became constitutive of New Journalism had an instinctual home at the *PMG*, which, from its launch in 1865, addressed an influential metropolitan readership. In 1890, the *RoR* took the New Journalistic project a step further into the relatively rarefied domain of literary reviews.

Through the *RoR*, Stead promoted cooperative endeavour, public instruction, religious values, and an imperialist outlook, which he further highlighted through the publication of complementary periodicals. In doing so, he built upon his work at the *PMG* where he had issued a number of ‘*Pall Mall Extras*’ which republished compilations of articles and reports concerning major issues covered by the newspaper.<sup>2</sup> As Mussell argues, the use of Extras in the *PMG* allowed Stead to vary the rhythm of his newspaper in order ‘to prolong a debate, usually by gathering together timely material and then setting it out at length’.<sup>3</sup> The daily rhythm of the

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<sup>1</sup> W. T. Stead, ‘To All English-Speaking Folk’, *RoR*, 1 (1890), pp. 15–20 (p. 17). ‘Some Autograph Introductions’, *RoR*, 1 (1890), pp. 3–13. It was not until the fifth number of the *RoR* that Stead announced that Mowbray House was to accommodate the new offices of the periodical. The building was situated in Norfolk Street, London, which ran between the Victoria Embankment and the Strand.

<sup>2</sup> Amongst the ‘Extras’ published as supplements, the *PMG* advertised the following: ‘England, Gordon, and the Soudan’, 7 February 1884, p. 16; ‘The Condition of the National Defences/The Truth About the Navy and Its Coaling Stations’, 5 March 1885, p. 11; ‘Too Late!/This new *PMG* “Extra” gives a clear and succinct statement of facts [...] dealing with [...] the controversy concerning the late mission of General Gordon’, 5 March 1885, p. 11; ‘“*Pall Mall Gazette* Extra,” The Popular Guide to the New House of Commons’, 7 December 1885, p. 13.

<sup>3</sup> James Mussell, ‘“Of the making of magazines there is no end”: W. T. Stead, Newness, and the Archival Imagination’, *English Studies in Canada (ESC)*, 41:1 (2015), 69–91 (p. 70)

*PMG* meant pressure could be maintained from number to number, while the Extras could make the case for a specific issue at greater length than would be the case in a daily newspaper.<sup>4</sup>

In this chapter, I discuss how Stead amplified his democratising and re-Christianising mission at the *RoR* through the syndicated weekly column ‘The Church and the World’ (April 1890–June 1891), his proposal for a Civic Church and the launch of the monthly journal *Help* (Feb. 1891–Dec. 1892), a campaign of opposition to the Second Boer War (1899–1902), during which he published the weekly journal *War Against War in South Africa (War Against War)* (Oct. 1899–Jan. 1900), and, in a further development of the democratisation of religious beliefs, the publicising of spiritualist tenets and the establishment of the specialist quarterly journal *Borderland* (July 1893–Oct. 1897).

In their survey of Victorian supplements, Marysa Demoor and Kate Macdonald have identified a number of organising features common to these journals.<sup>5</sup> While most periodicals published a supplement at some time in their existence, the reasons for their launch were diverse. Some were published to exploit an abundance of useful material that would otherwise not have made it into print (*Help*), others covered important topical issues in greater detail (*War Against War*), while still more targeted a readership that may or may not have included subscribers to the parent periodical (*Borderland*).<sup>6</sup> As was the case with the three journals that I examine, those that required payment of a separate cover price could contribute to the revenues of the main journal. As a syndicated newspaper column for which participating publications were expected to pay, ‘The Church and the World’ represented a different mode of supplementary publication.

While relinquishing the demands of daily journalism for those of a monthly review, Stead nevertheless remained faithful to the New Journalistic aims of an educative and uplifting press, but this time brought them to bear on a project that concerned the ‘higher’ journalism of the reviews.<sup>7</sup> In a mission both Arnoldian in cultural aspiration and democratising in ambition, Stead declared that the lessons of ‘human experience’, ‘the best and ripest thoughts of the foremost thinkers of our time’, were to be made intelligible to all and affordable by all.<sup>8</sup> Where Arnold had promoted the civilising values of a cultural elitism — ‘culture being a pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know, on all the matters which most concern us, the best

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<sup>4</sup> Mussell, ‘“Of the making of magazines there is no end”’, p. 76.

<sup>5</sup> Marysa Demoor and Kate Macdonald, ‘Finding and Defining the Victorian Supplement’, *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 43:2 (2010), 97–110.

<sup>6</sup> Demoor and Macdonald, pp. 97, 98, 99.

<sup>7</sup> These periodicals appeared throughout the nineteenth century, quarterly, monthly, and weekly, reviewing a wide range of publications concerning literature, history, philosophy, political economy, theology, and science. Joanne Shattock, ‘Reviews’, *DNCJ*, pp. 538–539.

<sup>8</sup> ‘To All English-Speaking Folk’, p. 15.

which has been thought and said in the world<sup>9</sup> — Stead offered a compendium of the best articles selected from the vast array of English-language and foreign journals that he reviewed. The mission was for a hegemonic cultural patrimony to be superseded by a seemingly boundless offering of knowledge, commentary, and reporting targeted at the relatively time-poor, busy reader.

Stead's practice of summarising articles for the *RoR* raised deep concerns amongst periodical editors who feared losing paying readers for their own publications.<sup>10</sup> At times, Stead did infringe copyright laws, but concern was also raised over the practice of article selection and summary, which, it was felt, could not guarantee the accurate representation of the original author's ideas. This could be the outcome if, for example, a summary was prepared by a writer who did not fully understand the original article or by someone who sought to give a tendentious reading of the piece.<sup>11</sup> The problem was also made more acute by the quick turnaround needed for some periodicals between their reception at the *RoR* and the summarising and publication of the selected articles, and also by the fact that Stead had little inclination for proof-reading (pp. 178—179). Difficulties arising from the summarising of complex original pieces were also highlighted when rendering scientific and technical material accessible to a wider reading public although this did not prevent Stead from pursuing his democratising project (pp. 182—183).

Arnold's elitist proclamation had already been subverted by George Newnes's weekly *Tit-Bits* which had announced that the newspaper's conductors aimed to survey the vast array of print material available in order 'to find out from this immense field of literature the best things that have been said or written, and weekly to place them before the public for one penny.'<sup>12</sup> The *RoR* was to be a democratised version of higher review journalism, and a review version of Newnes's weekly publication.

In a second introductory article to the *RoR*, entitled 'To All English-Speaking Folk', Stead reconfirmed the New Journalistic Christianising mission which had previously found expression in the *NE* and the *PMG* through promotion of the values of the Nonconformist Conscience.<sup>13</sup> Stead pledged that the items to appear in the review would be selected 'on a religious principle', that of their capacity to elevate the moral and spiritual qualities of its readers.<sup>14</sup> He also referred explicitly to the prophetic role that his projected New Journalism would accord to the work of the editor-journalist in that the individual able to interpret these articles to the general reader

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<sup>9</sup> *Culture and Anarchy*, p. 5.

<sup>10</sup> Gowan Dawson, 'The *Review of Reviews* and the new journalism in late-Victorian Britain', in *Science in the Nineteenth-Century Periodical* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 172—195 (p. 176).

<sup>11</sup> Dawson, 'The *Review of Reviews* and the new journalism in late-Victorian Britain', p. 177.

<sup>12</sup> *Tit-Bits*, 1, 1 (October 1881), p. 1. Quoted in Kate Jackson, *George Newnes and the New Journalism in Britain, 1880—1910: Culture and Profit* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), p. 58.

<sup>13</sup> 'To All English-Speaking Folk', p. 15.

<sup>14</sup> 'To All English-Speaking Folk', p. 15.

would become the 'true prophet' of the period: in the context of the *RoR*, and in Stead's mind, that prophet was to be himself.<sup>15</sup>

Of central importance to Stead's conception of the ethical conduct of secular affairs was his continuing promotion of the need for a close relationship between Christian values and political matters. He maintained support for the ideas of the Municipal Gospel, as espoused by the Birmingham town councillors and Nonconformist ministers of the 1860s and 1870s, and of the Social Gospel, as promoted by the Methodist Forward Movement in the 1880s and 1890s.<sup>16</sup> In elaborating upon the reasons for adopting a Christian but non-partisan political platform in the *RoR*, Stead declared:

Neither party has at this moment any distinctive *body of doctrine*, any well-conceived *system of faith* which would justify me in labelling this new monthly with a party badge. *Creeds* are at this moment in a state of flux [...] Neither party has any *creed* beyond the *fundamental dogma* [...] that it is wrong to do anything which would risk the loss of the next general election. Beyond that no party lifts its eyes.<sup>17</sup>

The religious rhetoric stood as an implicit criticism of the principal political parties and their perceived lack of spiritual mission and as an indicator of what would, however, be found in a positive form within the pages of the *RoR*. The deployment of religious markers to highlight the narrowness of party-political ambition led Stead further to declare:

What is wanted is a revival of civic faith, a quickening of spiritual life in the political sphere, the inspiring of men and women with the conception of what may be done towards the salvation of the world, if they will but bring to bear upon public affairs the same spirit of self-sacrificing labour that so many thousands manifest in the ordinary drudgery of parochial and evangelistic work.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> 'Government by Journalism', p. 664; 'To All English-Speaking Folk', p. 15.

<sup>16</sup> Parsons, 'From Dissenters to Free Churchmen', pp. 67–116 (p. 93); McLeod, pp. 136–137.

<sup>17</sup> 'To All English-Speaking Folk', p. 15. My italics.

<sup>18</sup> 'To All English-Speaking Folk', p. 18.

This declaration of millennial, revivalist, aspiration emphasised the importance of uniting Christian enthusiasm and political engagement. This was a general call to readers of the *RoR* to 'Be a Christ!' through a modern instantiation of messianic self-sacrifice: the giving of time and effort for the betterment of the world.<sup>19</sup> It was an appeal to realise the revelation that Stead believed he had received while in Holloway prison after the 'Eliza Armstrong' case: worshipping Christ meant nothing if there were no deeds to show that His message was being followed.<sup>20</sup>

Stead's war cry of belief 'in God, in England, and in Humanity!' found further expression in the journal's stated ideals concerning Britain's international position. Writing of 'the upward trend of human progress, and our position in the existing economy of the world', Stead asserted a common view that the English-speaking peoples represented the most powerful agency for the moulding of the future of humankind.<sup>21</sup> However, these declarations of progress and national dominance were strongly contested at the time. Other prominent voices declared that Britain was in a state of degeneracy, morally and physically, while the rise of the United States and Germany as leading economic powers challenged the belief that Britain held an uncontested position on the international stage.<sup>22</sup>

At the *RoR*, Stead faced a series of fresh challenges shaped by a different material format, an unfamiliar periodicity of publication, and a new readership. Judging that a daily newspaper lost its impact after twenty-four hours, and that a weekly journal was still insufficient to disseminate ideas throughout the world, Stead had decided on monthly publication for the *RoR* as the best way to ensure a London journal's viability in an international market. This change from daily to monthly journalism affected the campaign possibilities of the *RoR*. In his investigations at the *PMG*, Stead had successfully exploited the positioning of the front-page leader article, with its emphasis on conciseness of editorial copy and force of reader impact, and the capacity to return each day with new revelations, on-going analysis, and fresh appeals to the readership for their further attention. While the monthly-review pattern did not exclude campaigns for reform, such ventures often had to take a much longer view of problems and their possible solutions. Where, for example, in the summer of 1885, it had been vital for the *PMG* to move quickly to urge the passing of the Criminal Law Amendment Bill before Parliament was dissolved, the development of networks of voluntary social-welfare organisations by the *RoR* benefited from a process of slower cultivation and nurturing.<sup>23</sup> These considerations explain, in

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<sup>19</sup> Robertson Scott, *The Life and Death of a Newspaper*, p. 140.

<sup>20</sup> Robertson Scott, *The Life and Death of a Newspaper*, pp. 139–140.

<sup>21</sup> 'To All English-Speaking Folk', p. 15.

<sup>22</sup> Cannadine, p. 393.

<sup>23</sup> See Chapter 4.

part, Stead's decision to launch campaigns through supplemental print material and to vary the periodicity of publication accordingly.

The three stand-alone journals and the newspaper column I examine represented opportunities for Stead to return to the campaigning journalism of which he had shown that he was a formidable exponent. His experience at the *PMG* had confirmed in him an important lesson: the need to separate his more controversial views from the principal source of the publication's revenue. He had learnt that to launch a zealously ethical campaign that publicised inflammatory material risked imperilling a publication's financial position by offending the sensitivities of its subscribers, advertisers, and owners. The more concentrated supplementary promotion of his idea of a Civic Church, opposition to the Boer War, and the veiled significance of the spirit world, sought to protect the parent publication from accusations of spreading extreme views.

The syndicated letters, co-authored with the former Methodist missionary Henry Lunn, appeared once a week and broadcast a regular message in support of the ideas of the social gospel at a regularity sufficient to maintain interest. Like its parent periodical, the supplement *Help* appeared every month as the official journal of Stead's reforming Association of Helpers. According to his own reasoning, monthly issues gave *Help* the capacity to reach the targeted readership of volunteer association members at home and abroad. The weekly *War Against War* responded to the urgent topicality of the Boer War and answered the need for greater intensity of publication than that offered by the monthly appearance of the *RoR*. Moreover, the journal was time-limited in advance as it was planned that *War Against War* should cease by the time that the British troops sent to Southern Africa were either stood down or had begun hostilities.

Like the prestigious quarterly reviews, the eighteen-pence *Borderland* appeared every three months, and the readers, therefore, had enough time to engage with a new sphere of esoteric interest, to follow up the suggested reading, and to undertake the scientific investigations proposed by the journal. As Graeme Gooday has noted, the three-monthly publication interval for such reviews allowed contributors to compose more meditative articles which readers were more likely to retain than would be the case for material from monthlies such as the *RoR*.<sup>24</sup> It was Stead's development of indexing as a central feature of the *RoR* which meant that this New Journalistic project could serve in the future as a consultable resource whilst keeping in operation its modernising rationale.

In the next section, I discuss the contribution of the 'Stead-Lunn' letters and of the journal *Help* to Stead's efforts to establish a cooperative, non-sectarian, politically non-partisan, organisation for the relief of social distress, and which he named a Civic Church.

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<sup>24</sup> Graeme Gooday, 'Profit and prophecy: electricity in the late-Victorian periodical', in *Science in the Nineteenth-Century Periodical* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 238–254 (p. 241)

### 'The Church and the World': The Stead-Lunn Letters

The social inequalities besetting the British nation at the end of the nineteenth century were profound and complex eliciting a range of philosophical, political, religious, and social-scientific responses in consequence. Earlier in the century, Auguste Comte, the French philosopher and social theorist, brought together the interconnected concepts of positivism and altruism, and, as opposed to Christianity's then emphasis upon humankind's innate sinfulness, promoted the idea of an individual's natural propensity to contribute to a collective good.<sup>25</sup> His main ideas had been disseminated in Britain by, amongst others, Frederic Harrison.<sup>26</sup> In another positivist movement, George Holyoake propounded a Secularism which, in common with the Liberation Society, founded in 1844 by the Congregationalist Edward Miall, sought the constitutional separation of Church and State.<sup>27</sup> Major endeavours to improve the lives of the working classes were also rooted in socialist political thought, which, by the 1880s, had begun to develop influence in Britain. The revolutionary Marxist Social Democratic Federation (founded in 1884), the aesthetic Socialist League (1884), the highly principled social scientist Fabians (1884), and the influence of humanistic altruism, with its later accretion of a Religion of Humanity, all aimed to bring relief and change to the working population.<sup>28</sup> The roll call of ways and means of effecting social betterment, variously nuanced and permutated, was lengthy. What the agencies had in common, however, was the desire to exercise substantive influence over social reform through political power.

In a maelstrom of thought at the beginning of his time at the *RoR*, Stead committed himself to multiple sites of transformational possibility which included Congregational Independency, the moral values of the Nonconformist Conscience, voluntarism, the need for national schemes of material improvement, and the promotion of the Social Gospel through the

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<sup>25</sup> 'Altruism' was coined by Comte. See Thomas Dixon, *The Invention of Altruism: Making Moral Meanings in Victorian Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>26</sup> Martha S. Vogeler, 'Harrison, Frederic (1831–1923)', *ODNB* <doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/33732>.

<sup>27</sup> Dixon, p. 91, reiterates the commonly held belief that Holyoake coined the term 'Secularism'. My research using newspaper databases shows that the term existed before Holyoake's first use. My own initial reasoning suggested to me that scholars were ignoring or did not have access to databases that held more democratised forms of print material such as newspapers. In 'To be or not to be ... original', David McInnis has highlighted similar cases in respect of first uses ordinarily attributed to William Shakespeare. He proposes that the reason lies with the tendency of academics to rely upon the *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)* for evidence of first usage. The *OED* uses literary texts for such illustrative material and by ignoring usage in the press has missed earlier instantiations.

See David McInnis, 'To be or not to be ... original', in 'Pursuit', 2 September 2016, <<https://pursuit.unimelb.edu.au/articles/to-be-or-not-to-be-original>> [accessed 14 January 2017]. The Liberation Society was originally called the British Anti-State Church Association (1844) and changed its name in 1853 to the Society for the Liberation of Religion from State Patronage and Control, commonly shortened to the Liberation Society.

<sup>28</sup> Paul Adelman, *The Rise of the Labour Party 1880–1945*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn (London: Longman, 1996), pp. 10, 19, 21.

newspaper column 'The Church and the World'. As far as I can discover, this latter project has received no discussion in academic literature on Stead's work, and, therefore, represents an opportunity to explore an obscured new venture which sheds further light on the influence of Nonconformity on Stead's journalism.

'The Church and the World' appeared from 5 April 1890 to 26 June 1891 in a syndicate of up to twenty newspapers that paid £1,000 to receive the weekly contributions. The Letters embodied what were by the 1890s recognisably New Journalistic elements: they were short, being restricted to no more than two newspaper columns in length, personal in style, and, in some of the subject matter, personal in substance, and formed of brief paragraphs with introductory cross-heads.<sup>29</sup> Stead co-wrote the contributions with Henry Lunn, the secretary to the International Reunion Society, who had been on the staff of Hugh Price Hughes's *Methodist Times* (founded 1885) until a dispute over criticisms made of Methodist missionary work in India had required him to resign.<sup>30</sup> Both signed the vast majority of the Letters, and, where observations concerned one of the two contributors in particular, the absence of one or other of the signatures identified the fact.

Eclectic, reporting on the inter-reaction of the churches and the affairs of the world, these Letters bore the strong imprint of Stead's ideas and highlighted the values of Christian cooperative commonality. Indeed, the first letter emphasised 'our common comradeship', 'one common cause', and of making the world a better place through work 'sustained, we hope and believe, by the active cooperation and practical help of our readers'.<sup>31</sup> The Letters succeeded in promoting in a concentrated fashion the core concerns that particularly shaped the *RoR* during the years that Stead worked to advance his concept of a Civic Church, representing a nationwide scheme for the involvement of religious and philanthropic agencies in the socio-political life of the country.

The correspondence promoted Christian reunion and the re-Christianisation of society in a manner that suggested that both could be achieved without any emphasis on particular

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<sup>29</sup> 'Mr W. T. Stead and Dr Lunn's Letter/Towards the City of God', *Leeds Times*, 5 April 1890, p. 4. For details of New Journalistic formal characteristics, see Chapter 1.

<sup>30</sup> W. T. Mowbray founded the Home Reunion Society in 1873. Lunn had criticised Methodist missionaries because they had diverted energies from evangelistic work to promotion of higher educational attainments amongst the privileged Brahmins, suggesting too great a gulf in social advantage between themselves and the poorer people they were supposed to be serving. Realising that his resignation would become inevitable, he wrote to Stead, who, 'with that boundless generosity which he always manifested towards anyone who was fighting the battle he cared for', suggested that they write a joint letter which they would syndicate. Lunn was to manage the business side of the venture and write the material when Stead was unavailable or when he was unwilling to deal with an urgent question. Stella Wood, 'Lunn, Sir Henry Simpson (1859–1939)', <[doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/34633](https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/34633)>. Lunn was a staunch Liberal and free trader, who supported the need for educational provision and the causes of freedom and progress. Whyte, II, pp. 57–58.

<sup>31</sup> 'Towards the City of God', *Leeds Times*, 5 April 1890, p. 4.

creeds and rituals, with no dedicated ecclesiastical buildings, no formal constitution of congregations, and no seeking of mass conversion of those unaligned with any of the Christian denominations.<sup>32</sup> In effect, Stead advertised the simplest means of uniting individuals in collective, practical, schemes for the improvement of the living and working conditions of the poorer members of the population. The call to 'Be a Christ!', to help the deprived, to engage in common projects for a universal good appeared to represent the simplest means of realising the Kingdom of God on Earth.<sup>33</sup>

The Letters exemplified the democratising influence of new Journalism. Through the amplificatory capacity of syndication, news about the Salvation Army's new project and the Methodist inspired Forward Movement was transmitted, and re-transmitted, via the sounding boards of the participating newspapers. An important promotional aspect of the Salvation Army's new scheme was its link to the work of other existing or future social agencies. The Salvation Army scheme was not intended to be an isolated, idiosyncratic, panacea but a model scheme: *In Darkest England* was meant to create interest in the realisation of other, similar, schemes as well as to raise funds for the project itself.<sup>34</sup> In the light of this, Stead's promotion of a Civic Church set out to create from existing agencies a consciously realised network of like-minded organisations energised by Booth's declaration that fundamentally nobody should think that another person was doing what everybody else was leaving undone.<sup>35</sup>

Hugh Price Hughes launched the Forward Movement as an agency of the Social Gospel. The Letters reported that the more orthodox, politically non-partisan, *Methodist Recorder*, 'official' Wesleyanism, in the shape of the Methodist Conference, and previously aloof or disapproving ministers, had come to accept the work and spirit of the movement.<sup>36</sup> The influence of the Methodists encouraged the work of other Nonconformists. From being criticised for having paid too little attention to the social problems of the day, the Baptist Union was soon reported, under the cross head 'The Baptist Forward Movement', as having established a food and shelter depot in East London.<sup>37</sup> These instances of heterodox influences breaking down the dominance of established positions was indicative of the pluralising effect of New Journalism itself.

A notable exception to such projects, however, appeared to be Stead's own Congregational denomination. The specific nature of Congregational Independency represented, however, a particular obstacle to this being realised. Unlike the Baptist Union and

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<sup>32</sup> 'The Church and the World', *Leeds Times*, 5 April 1890, p. 4.

<sup>33</sup> 'The Church and the World', *Leeds Times*, 5 April 1890, p. 4.

<sup>34</sup> 'The Church and the World', *Leeds Times*, 8 November 1890, p. 4.

<sup>35</sup> 'The Church and the World', *Leeds Times*, 8 November 1890, p. 4.

<sup>36</sup> 'The Church and the World', *Leeds Times*, 19 April 1890, p. 4, 8 November 1890, p. 4; Altholz, p. 81.

<sup>37</sup> 'The Church and the World', *Leeds Times*, 15 November 1890, p. 4.

the Methodist Conference, the Congregational Union had no hierarchical role to play amongst the affiliated congregations which were, by their constitution, independent Christian communities. When Parker declared that a Forward Movement could not be formed by committee, he was not referring to any apathy characteristic of the denomination but to the denomination's determination to avoid embedded rigid coordination. Parker's suggestion did, however, indicate a solution. If the Congregationalists wanted a Forward Movement, 'they must find a forward man. There must be a great personality leading, inspiring, and directing a competent co-operation'.<sup>38</sup> This call was heard and answered by Stead in his concept of the Civic Church.

While the Letters emphasised cooperation and communal good, they also highlighted instances when the wider scheme of bringing Christianity and secular affairs together met obstruction. The Church of England remained an object of contention because of its established status in the nation's constitution. Highlighted impediments included the Church of England Purity Society and its consideration of reintroducing the CD Acts, the Church of England Temperance Society's support for publican compensation proposals, the appointment of the orthodox Bishop Magee to the See of York, and the lack of sympathy amongst vicars for the work of the Church Army.<sup>39</sup>

In an albeit limited way, the Stead-Lunn Letters were an example of the work of church reunion as well as being a promotional vehicle for the reunion project itself. Stead, the lay Congregationalist, had collaborated with Lunn, a Methodist minister, on a journalistic project that linked Old and New Dissent and highlighted the willingness of some members of a previously politically conservative Methodism to champion social causes in ways that had been thought unlikely. The Letters ceased publication at the end of June 1891 and the co-authors went on to develop their own projects whilst remaining good friends. Later in the same year, Lunn established an interdenominational periodical, the *Review of the Churches*, the initial success of which led to his decision to organise a series of Christian reunion conferences at Grindelwald in Switzerland (1892–1896).<sup>40</sup> Stead continued his work at the *RoR* and with the supplement *Help*, both of which supported his scheme for the realisation of a Civic Church.

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<sup>38</sup> 'The Church and the World', *Leeds Times*, 29 November 1890, p. 4.

<sup>39</sup> 'The Church and the World', *Leeds Times*, 7 June 1890, p. 4, 'The Church and the World', *Bradford Daily Telegraph*, 16 January 1891, p. 4, 'The Church and the World', *Bradford Daily Telegraph*, 6 February 1891, p. 4.

<sup>40</sup> Watts, III, p. 216.

## Helpers and Help

When Stead established the *RoR*, he intended that it should serve as the journal for his voluntarist Association of Helpers, the organisation he planned for social reform and the re-Christianisation of society. Launched in the first issue of the *RoR*, in January 1890, the Association quickly became a focus for humanitarian work and a founding element of Stead's project for the establishment of a Civic Church. This religious-secular entity, a community rather than a basilica, had a three-fold, political, municipal, and social mission, aimed at forging the efforts of individuals and single agencies into a collaborative undertaking. In religious terms, the Association of Helpers and the Civic Church represented the means for creating the Kingdom of God on Earth with an emphasis on Incarnationalism and the belief that to help the least fortunate individual meant helping Christ himself.

While Brake associates the beginning of Stead's detailed development of his concept of a Civic Church with his 1894 analysis of the social-reform needs of Chicago, and, more generally, with the problems of city-life in America, I place his proposals for the launch of a Civic Church earlier and within the context of Britain's social challenges.<sup>41</sup> Stead was part of the second wave of Nonconformist promoters of political engagement in secular affairs who echoed and reenergised the message of the Municipal Gospel from the Birmingham of the 1850s and 1860s. Further significant influences on the Civic Church included the Social Gospel, as prominently propagated in the 1880s and 1890s by the leading Methodist Hugh Price Hughes, the work in the 1890s of the social-wing of the Salvation Army, and, as Stewart J. Brown has noted, the North Atlantic 'Kingdom movement' of the same decade.<sup>42</sup> As Stead asserted, the close link between religious service and civic duty needed to be better understood:

The religious aspect of civic duty is so much ignored that there are hundreds of thousands to whom it seems a strange thing to say, that the right filling in of a ballot paper is as really a religious duty as praying in a prayer meeting and teaching in a Sunday-school.<sup>43</sup>

Stead's Civic Church professed a strong ethical basis and pragmatic approach which sought to inculcate in individuals Christian conduct and the values of an uplifted citizenry.

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<sup>41</sup> Brake, 'Who is "We"?', in *Marketing the Author*, ed. by Demoor, pp. 60–61, 63–64.

<sup>42</sup> Brown, 'W. T. Stead and the Civic Church, 1886–1895', pp. 321–322.

<sup>43</sup> 'The National Social Union/Statement of its Aims, Methods, and Organisation', *RoR*, 10 (1894), p. 288.

Even at the risk of incurring hostility from the more orthodox wings of the various Christian denominations, Stead offered his own interpretations of terms even so hallowed as 'Christ', 'Christian', and 'Gospel'. The Association of Helpers exhorted its members to be a Christ, rather than a follower of Christ, thereby sharing in Jesus's self-sacrifice through, in contemporary terms, 'giving up time and trouble and life to save people'.<sup>44</sup> Stead took his definition of 'Christian' to a democratising limit: Christians gave of themselves, whether they believed in Christ or not, while an 'atheist' was someone who did not make selfless sacrifices for others. In Stead's version, a Christian could be an atheist and an atheist a Christian: the central point was that without self-sacrificial action there could be no Christianity. Christian reunion took on, therefore, the meaning not only of pan-Christian unity but also of the bringing together of all agencies, secular and religious, dedicated to social betterment for the good of all humankind.

The project for a Civic Church began in an elementary fashion, grouping together those 'willing to help' through announcements made in the *RoR*.<sup>45</sup> When it became apparent that the *RoR* could no longer accommodate all of the material that could be published regarding the Association and the Civic Church, Stead produced, from February 1891 to December 1892, a new monthly journal which he called *Help*.

*Help* was a supplementary publication that relieved the parent periodical of its excess of material dedicated to the work of the Association of Helpers, and, at a cover price of a penny, had the advantage of bringing in extra revenue. This journal was intended to represent 'a great depository of the latest information as to the best way of doing everything that is best worth doing in the Service of Man'.<sup>46</sup> This element echoed Arnold's aim of enlisting for moral and spiritual uplift the best that had been thought and said, and reiterated the similar pledge which had been made for the *RoR* itself. However, Stead transformed this project into something which Arnold tended to decry, a practical plan, intended for solving the 'Social Problem' for which it would be necessary to enlist 'the best men and women in the community'.<sup>47</sup>

The Civic Church project of federating diverse organisations 'formed for the purpose of altruistic endeavour' responded both to ideas of Christian church reunion at home and to plans that brought religion into collective schemes.<sup>48</sup> The promotion of federative undertakings had further significance in its link to the theory of Christian Socialism: Stead was seeking ways in which to highlight efforts for collective improvement that could confront and challenge the

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<sup>44</sup> 'The Next Step Towards The Civic Church', *Help*, 2 November 1891, p. 190.

<sup>45</sup> 'A Word to Those Who Are Willing to Help', *RoR*, 1 (1890), p. 53.

<sup>46</sup> 'To Our Readers', *Help*, 2 February 1891, p. 2.

<sup>47</sup> 'To Our Readers', *Help*, 2 February 1891, p. 3.

<sup>48</sup> 'To Our Readers', *Help*, 2 February 1891, p. 2.

atheistic collectivism of political Socialism. Stead had placed the willingness for individuals to work collaboratively in the best interests of the community at the heart of the Civic Church and of the Association of Helpers: the 'catholic element, the universal element that lies done up in packages in cells of different Sects and Orders and Denominations, must be disentangled from the perilous matter that divides, so that all the Churches may be able to recognise each other as different members of one body' (p. 2). Here, the concept of cellular division, drawn from the biological sciences, suggested not multiplication and growth but divisive homeostasis. The solution Stead gave would prove to be transformative in his thinking:

[The Universal Christian Church] will do this, so far as lies within its power, by preaching the Gospel of the Citizen Christ, and by endeavouring to extend, strengthen, and energise the Association of those who are willing to work together for the attainment of those great secular-ethical aims which are common to all the Churches, and which no doubt, thanks largely to the Churches, have come to be part of the common inheritance of all men born in Christendom.<sup>49</sup>

Stead packed into this declaration the principal elements of his overall mission which were represented by the Social Gospel, his Association of Helpers, cooperation, the moral within the secular, commonality of values, and the suggestion that whether people were Christian or not, everyone was able to benefit from the advances made under the aegis of the various churches.

Stead's ambition for *Help* was not so much to be 'original', 'to invent new things' or 'to attempt to direct the movement of Christian activity'.<sup>50</sup> The intention, rather, was 'to observe and to chronicle, to record what has actually been accomplished, and to note for the guidance of all what direction is being taken by the leaders of the van of progress in every direction' (p. 2). This objective suggested that others might take up activities already begun by another denominational group, and, in so doing, they would lose nothing of their personal dignity, but gain in opportunity to contribute effectively. The cataloguing and indexing of review articles underpinned the advertised intention of the *RoR* as a bibliographical resource supporting the dissemination of useful information.<sup>51</sup> The historical record was contained in the 'Progress of

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<sup>49</sup> 'To Our Readers', *Help*, 2 February 1891, p. 2.

<sup>50</sup> 'To Our Readers', *Help*, 2 February 1891, p. 2.

<sup>51</sup> Brake, 'Stead Alone: Journalist, Proprietor, and Publisher 1890–1903', in *W. T. Stead*, ed. by Brake, p. 83. See this essay for an important discussion of the subject of indexing in the *RoR*.

the World' accounts that opened each issue of the *RoR*, the 'Character' sketches of prominent individuals, and in the monthly 'Calendar of Events' feature.

Declaring that there was a new Church to be realised by 'the reunion of Christendom on the basis of practical service to humanity', Stead sought to weave diverse conceptual and ideological threads into his project.<sup>52</sup> Apart from advocating greater co-operation between chapels and churches and between secular associations, he promoted the blending of both 'on the common ground of common work'.<sup>53</sup> Within this representation of reunion of the similar but disparate there persistently redounded the reality of sectarian differences impeding the realisation of such an ideal unity.

Stead had initially stated that it was not his intention to separate the Association of Helpers from the *RoR*, although, with the publication of *Help*, that did become the case.<sup>54</sup> By December 1892, however, it was decided to halt the publication of the supplement because the parent periodical's readership had not been inclined to buy the supplement in sufficient numbers.<sup>55</sup> Stead's rationalisation of this decision was somewhat disingenuous: he asserted that the supplement had deprived the readers of the *RoR* of some of the most useful material provided but with which they would now be united. In reality, this was a reunion that bore witness to the need for supplements to be financially viable as well as useful if they were to survive.

The loss of *Help* did not signify the abandonment of the Civic Church project. In January 1893, the *RoR* reported that Anglicans and Nonconformists had come to understand that, for a community to exist, individuals needed to cooperate to influence social developments. While Stead concluded that 'This means that the churches are coming into politics, and it is high time that they did', this declaration of 'high time' sounded out of date as prominent religious figures had already been involved throughout the nineteenth century in political undertakings.<sup>56</sup> By August 1893, Stead defined the Civic Church in terms of functioning as the conscience of society:

This spiritual counterpart of the Town Council, which will endeavour constantly to realise ideals not as yet sufficiently recognised as to be embodied in Acts of Parliament and

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<sup>52</sup> 'Towards the Civic Church', *RoR*, 7 (1893), p. 111.

<sup>53</sup> 'Churches and Sects: The Civic Church — What It Was, And What It May Be', *RoR*, 6 (1892), p. 157; 'Towards the Civic Church', *RoR*, 7 (1893), p. 111.

<sup>54</sup> 'Notice to Helpers', *RoR*, 3 (1891), p. 158.

<sup>55</sup> 'Help Reviewed', *RoR*, 6 (1892), p. 525.

<sup>56</sup> 'The Growth of Civic Ideals', *RoR*, 7 (1893), p. 111.

entrusted to the administration of the secular authorities, I call the Civic Church.<sup>57</sup>

In this formulation, there remain traces of the Nonconformist principle that certain social evils, such as gambling, sexual impropriety, and overconsumption of alcohol, could not be legislated for, except that here there was acceptance that eventually Acts of Parliament might be appropriate when drawn up in accordance with Christian values.

Stead's project met with a significant failure at the Grindelwald Church Reunion Conference of September 1892 when the term 'Civic Church' did not meet with agreement, principally because there were objections to the use of the word 'church'. This led in 1894 to a relaunch of the Civic Church with a new name, but with fundamentally the same principles and also a diminished momentum. Once again, the aim, 'To improve the material, moral, and social condition of the people', was promoted through the rhetoric of communality, practicality, and consensus, speaking of a 'common denominator', a 'practical basis for the co-operation of all who love their fellow-men', and of a 'general agreement'.<sup>58</sup> Civic duty was to be inculcated in the form of 'the sense of citizenship', 'the feeling of corporate responsibility', and an understanding of 'social obligations'.<sup>59</sup> Stead came to write of a 'National Social Union and Civic Centre', where the local centres of concertation represented both the coordinating assemblies and the buildings in which they gathered. Now, the 'Civic Centre' had a metaphorical role as an organising trope, whereby the committees formed would represent 'a nucleus or centre of intercommunication'.<sup>60</sup> Fundamental concepts included 'cooperation' and a diffused bringing together of a comprehensive wish to support 'a general aim common to all associations' and the provision of 'collective strength'.<sup>61</sup> Stead continued to demonstrate a wide-ranging interest in many political, religious, and social issues as well as cultural phenomena. In the light of impending Parish Council elections, he looked for a body to broadcast 'the supreme word of brotherhood and social peace. To fill that vacant niche in our social and moral organisation the National Social Union should be formed' (p. 288). In this declaration, he enlisted the concept of altruism and introduced an image that drew upon technological innovation and Stead's interest in the transmission of the human voice:

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<sup>57</sup> 'The Chronicles of the Civic Church', *RoR*, 8 (1893), p. 187.

<sup>58</sup> 'The Chronicles of the Civic Church/The National Social Union/Dudley Christian Union', *RoR*, 10 (1894), p. 78.

<sup>59</sup> 'The Chronicles of the Civic Church/The National Social Union/Dudley Christian Union', *RoR*, 10 (1894), p. 79.

<sup>60</sup> 'The National Social Union/Statement of its Aims, Methods, and Organisation', *RoR*, 10 (1894), p. 286.

<sup>61</sup> 'The National Social Union/Statement of its Aims, Methods, and Organisation', *RoR*, 10 (1894), p. 286.

The National Social Union aims at being something like a telephone exchange between all sections of altruistic workers, and seeks not to add another organisation to those already existing so much as to form a clearing house for their ideas and their experience, and so to minimise the friction of the machinery and multiply its effective force.<sup>62</sup>

The advent of telephone exchanges provided a further means for individuals to intercommunicate rapidly. They also provided an image to represent the National Social Union as a facilitator of intercommunication between organisations seeking to join in a union of shared aims for social reform and religious revival. At the same time, the telephone highlighted the possibility of transmitting the spoken word live between individuals out of eye- and earshot of each other. This advance would later play a significant role in Stead's exploration of the world of spiritualism which I explore in the final section of this chapter.

The Letters and the supplement *Help* exemplified the potential of New Journalism to construct networks of readers from different newspapers in which the same material appeared and secondary networks of readers who purchased supplements associated with particular parental publications. In imagining the National Social Union as a telephone exchange, Stead represented the way in which individuals and entities could share knowledge and engage in similar social projects. New Journalism acted as an engine for the democratisation of knowledge, created the conduits for the dissemination of this knowledge, and helped shape the networks through which social groupings could interconnect.

The various Civic Church schemes which Stead outlined during the first five years of the *RoR* testified to his ambition to create a network of contacts formed of individuals and the representatives of collective entities. Ultimately, such a network was expected to generate its own power for the communication and practical realisation of the schemes involved. Stead wanted to progress from being a prime mover and chief organiser to creating a facilitating centre capable of coordinating the myriad expressions of interest that he received.

At its launch, Stead had declared that the *RoR* aimed to benefit readerships at home and abroad. The aims were interrelated. Home church reunion impacted on the wider prospect of global Christian reunion, while educative and social salvation schemes sought to raise the abilities and aspirations of the home nation as well as those going to live and work in English-speaking countries overseas. Stead's support for the interests of British imperialism and international Christian reunion further combined in advocacy of Britain's perceived providential

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<sup>62</sup> 'The National Social Union/Statement of its Aims, Methods, and Organisation', *RoR*, 10 (1894), p. 286.

role in the world. However, as I discuss in the following section, by the end of the 1890s, conflict in Southern Africa threatened his commitment to the idea of such a divinely endowed prospect for Britain in world affairs.

### **Anti-Jingoism and Pro-Peace: *War Against the War In South Africa***

The *RoR* had been established to serve as a journal for British homeland interests and those of re-Christianising imperialism. As part of the British, religious-revivalist project, Stead had launched the Civic Church to help raise British society both morally and materially. As the Mearns report (1883) had influentially suggested, moral degradation was believed to be a major consequence of poverty and overcrowding and had concluded that a minimum of material comfort was needed for the least well-off to concern themselves with spiritual salvation. This homeland project became closely linked to the imperial mission because the opportunity to emigrate represented one solution for those who were unemployed and socially deprived. A significant proportion of those who had already left Britain and Ireland consisted, however, of fortune hunters whose self-interests were achieved at the expense of the indigenous peoples. The domestic project for the improvement of moral and material standards was designed, therefore, to assist in raising the level of those who intended to settle in the colonies.

Stead further joined the debate over empire by examining the principles that were used to justify its existence and its evolution. His project for home re-Christianisation and social reform was balanced by a mission to shape British imperialism by giving it an explicitly Christian, anti-Jingoistic, anti-war character. The *RoR* embraced metropole and empire, promoted evangelical activism, and advocated the federation of the English-speaking peoples. For Stead, this represented a religious duty, sustained by the conviction that the English-speaking peoples had been given the divinely inspired mission to bring salvation to the world.

These views were born of those already influentially in circulation, shaped by ideas that had increasingly gained currency during the nineteenth century. Sir Charles Dilke's *Greater Britain* (1868) and Sir John Seeley's collection of lectures, published under the title *The Expansion of England* (1883), represented major sources.<sup>63</sup> Dilke held republican views, believed that settlement colonies should disengage themselves from British imperialist control, and thought that it was America that represented the best opportunity for the English to become the moral leaders of the world.<sup>64</sup> Seeley, on the other hand, argued that a federal structure

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<sup>63</sup> Charles Wentworth Dilke, *Greater Britain: A Record of travel in English-Speaking Countries during 1866 and 1867* (London: Macmillan, 1868). J. R. Seeley was Regius Professor of Modern History at Cambridge University. J. R. Seeley, *The Expansion of England: Two Courses of Lectures* (London: Macmillan, 1883).

<sup>64</sup> Cannadine, p. 374; Roy Jenkins, 'Dilke, Sir Charles Wentworth, second baronet (1843–1911)', *ODNB* <doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/32824>.

encompassing white English-speaking communities could represent a powerful means of countering rival nations, such as America and Russia, economically and militarily.<sup>65</sup> Stead adopted many aspects of this new imperialist ideology that linked erroneous, social-Darwinist, racial theories to equally erroneous, religiously inspired beliefs in the global mission of the English-speaking nations. Whether Nonconformists held fast to ideas of imperial expansion and consolidation or not, they differed from many other imperialists in one crucial respect. Evangelicals shared the Enlightenment view that there was, in fact, no fundamental difference between the races and that the difference to be seen in achievement between white and black populations was to be put down to the degree of respect shown to the Bible. Evangelicals assumed that the ability of individuals to make their way in life depended upon religion and education and not upon matters of race and did not, therefore, subscribe to ideas associated with Social Darwinism.<sup>66</sup> Stead's attitude resonated more with evangelical thinking than with Darwinist racial theories as his observations regarding white settlers emphasised the need to commit to the divine mission of human perfectibility rather than to ideas of racial superiority.

Stead's contributions to the debate on empire developed within a context of late-Victorian new imperialist ideas. In the early 1880s, it was generally understood that the British Empire did not extend much beyond those colonies occupied by white settlers who shared a kinship with Britain. The interests of the English-speaking peoples and of the British empire seemed to be contiguous. However, within three years, Egypt had been occupied, the colonies in Southern Africa consolidated, and, in common with Belgium, France, Germany, and Portugal, Britain had become engaged in the seizure of territory in Africa.<sup>67</sup> In 1884, the Imperial Federation League was founded to promote the unity and identity of empire, the Colonial and India Exhibition was held in 1886, and a series of Colonial Conferences for imperial trade tariff preferences was begun in 1887, the year of Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee.<sup>68</sup> Popular feelings in support of the British Empire increased in 1895, in part the result of Joseph Chamberlain's appointment to the Colonial Office, where he urged 'an aggressive policy of imperial economic cooperation and federation'.<sup>69</sup> Such sentiments were given further impetus by the celebrations

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<sup>65</sup> Potter, pp. 117–118; Cannadine, pp. 413–414.

<sup>66</sup> D. W. Bebbington, *A History of Evangelicalism: The Dominance of Evangelicalism: The Age of Spurgeon and Moody* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2005), pp. 213–214.

<sup>67</sup> *The Fin de Siècle: A Reader in Cultural History*, ed. by Ledger and Luckhurst, p. 133; Cannadine, p. 414.

<sup>68</sup> Norman McCord, *British History: 1815–1906* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 425; Peter d'A Jones, *The Christian Socialist Revival 1877–1914: Religion, Class, and Social Conscience in Late-Victorian England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), pp. 198–199.

<sup>69</sup> d'A Jones, *The Christian Socialist Revival*, p. 198.

for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in 1897, twenty years after she had been proclaimed Empress of India at the Delhi Durbar.<sup>70</sup>

The association of imperialism and religious mission was well-established. British foreign missionaries had found that their work was made relatively easier in countries where Britain could offer protection through the exercise of power or influence. Nineteenth-century Nonconformists had more generally seen colonial expansion as proof that God was using imperialism for the spread of the Gospel. In the 1870s Nonconformists were generally strongly opposed to the further extension of empire, by the turn of the century, most were to be considered 'dedicated imperialists', primarily because of Turkish oppression of Christian minorities and the impact of the First and Second Boer Wars.<sup>71</sup> Opinion amongst the Congregationalists, Stead's own denomination, was divided between the foreign wing, which was as supportive of empire as were the Wesleyan Methodists, and the home-country Congregationalists, who continued to assert their opposition to the gospel message being disseminated through state assistance.<sup>72</sup> The move from a hesitant imperialism in the early 1880s to a union-jack waving imperial enthusiasm during the Second Boer War was, in part, motivated by changing attitudes to the Turkish mistreatment of Christian Armenians in the mid-1890s. Protests against such conduct became firm calls for intervention in what the Nonconformists saw as a cause of moral righteousness. When further Turkish action took place against Christians in Crete and Macedonia in 1897, the Nonconformists were finally persuaded that military intervention had to be demanded when necessary.<sup>73</sup>

Stead had not begun as a convinced imperialist and had previously opposed British involvement in the lives of the indigenous populations of colonised countries, opinions that he owed, in part, to William and Margaret Howitt, the well-known spiritualists.<sup>74</sup> However, he later became persuaded that given the established nature of the empire in Africa and Asia, Britain had to decide positively that it wanted to extend its authority and control over foreign lands in which white-settler excesses threatened the position of indigenous peoples. Stead supported the view that colonisation brought with it moral responsibilities that included ensuring that

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<sup>70</sup> The high regard in which Victoria held Disraeli was demonstrated in 1876 by the Queen's ennobling of her Prime Minister as Lord Beaconsfield. On 1 May 1876, Victoria was created Empress of India, through legislation championed by Disraeli, and proclaimed as such on 1 January 1877.

<sup>71</sup> Bebbington, *The Nonconformist Conscience*, p. 106.

<sup>72</sup> Bebbington, *The Nonconformist Conscience*, pp. 109, 113–114.

<sup>73</sup> Bebbington, *The Nonconformist Conscience*, pp. 109, 116, 117, 118.

<sup>74</sup> 'The Progress of the World', *RoR*, 19 (1899), p. 107. William Howitt was a Quaker radical politician and writer of popular literature who, in the 1860s, became one of the principal spiritualist journalists. See Peter Mandler, 'Howitt, William (1792–1879)', *ODNB* <[doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/13998](https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/13998)>. An advocate of women's rights, Mary Howitt was also interested in natural history and literature. Brought up as a Quaker, she had been drawn to Unitarianism and Spiritualism, before converting to Roman Catholicism. See Susan Drain, 'Howitt [*née* Botham], Mary (1799–1888)', *ODNB* <[doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/13995](https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/13995)>.

English-speaking colonists conduct themselves lawfully and respectfully.<sup>75</sup> He depicted those who did not as rapacious and unrestrained, representing 'the worst, the most lawless, the most licentious of our breed', as a 'pestilence' and a 'devastating scourge'. Under this assessment, Britain had to extend its imperial reach and to work on raising the moral character of future emigrants (p. 107).

Stead was an avowed anti-Jingoist, a position which represented the rebuttal of an imperialism 'which vaunteth itself and is puffed up by a consciousness of its great strength'.<sup>76</sup> 'Jingoism' was to be equated with 'drunken imperialism' or 'imperialism plus gin', a heady sense of addictive insolent pride that acted for nations as alcohol did for individuals.<sup>77</sup> He made the significant distinction between an imperialism invested with a sense of divinely ordained mission and the Jingoistic pursuit of material gain characterised by a rampant disregard for a country and its people. As he declared in his launch of the *RoR*:

Imperialism within limits defined by common-sense and the Ten Commandments is a very different thing from the blatant Jingoism which some years ago made the very name of Empire stink in the nostrils of all decent people. The sobering sense of the immense responsibilities of an Imperial position is the best prophylactic for the frenzies of Jingoism.<sup>78</sup>

It was fundamental for Stead that imperialism be invested with a Christian sense of duty that held in check any emerging excess of patriotic fervour. In Stead's instantiation of the colonial project, moral imperialism was to hold sway over aggressive Jingoism, and material rapaciousness was to be replaced by the God-given duty to administer colonies with Christian-inspired moral values of good personal and public conduct. In the *RoR*, Stead's New Journalism had evolved into the engine for his religiously invested imperialistic project. A sense of 'mission' and an 'ethic of 'service'' are encountered in Stead's declared plan for duty towards the English-speaking peoples generally and also towards the countries where indigenous peoples had been taken under British colonial control:<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> 'The Progress of the World', *RoR*, 19 (1899), p. 107.

<sup>76</sup> 'The Progress of the World', *RoR*, 19 (1899), p. 108.

<sup>77</sup> 'What is a Jingo?', *RoR*, 19 (1899), p. 112.

<sup>78</sup> 'To All English-Speaking Folk', p. 17.

<sup>79</sup> G. R. Searle, *A New England? Peace and War 1886–1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 32.

With regard to the dark-skinned races and the as yet unoccupied regions of the world, our duty depends upon our opportunities and our responsibilities. We have no business to breed rowdies and filibusters, and let them loose with firearms and firewater upon the half-civilised or wholly savage races on our borders. We must follow the rowdy by the policeman, and endeavour to secure that the dispassionate voice of impartial justice should be heard and obeyed on the frontiers of the Empire.<sup>80</sup>

Plans for colonial expansion had attracted the attention of imperialists such as Stead who recognised that an increase in territory would necessitate a proper examination of the ways in which the land and the people living there should be administered. Imperial authority meant the imposition of law and order and the protection of indigenous inhabitants from transborder incursions and the uncivilised and criminal behaviour of some of the English-speaking colonists.

When the prospect of war in Southern Africa focused these conflicting, yet mutually sustaining, views, Stead seized the opportunity to assert his strong anti-Jingoistic, pro-peace advocacy through another supplement. As Simon J. Potter has written, Stead adopted the supplement model as a means of protecting the *RoR*'s financial position from subscription cancellations from readers disaffected by his anti-governmental stance.<sup>81</sup>

Running from 20 October 1899 to 26 January 1900, *War Against War In South Africa*, the second stand-alone journal which I examine, was a weekly compendium of home and foreign news items, speeches, poetry, and articles penned by Stead with the exclusive aim of persuading public opinion, and, ultimately, the government, of the immoral nature of embarking on military hostilities.<sup>82</sup> The supplement was intended to run at least until 15 December 1899 which was the earliest date at which it was anticipated that General Buller, the Commander-in-Chief of the British forces in South Africa would be able to set out from Cape Colony to prosecute the war.<sup>83</sup> Nonetheless, Stead's opposition to the Second Boer War was to cost him dearly through a fall in sales of the *RoR*, which brought the journal to the point of bankruptcy.<sup>84</sup> When he was at the *PMG*, the unpopularity of the 'Maiden Tribute' amongst advertisers proved to be particularly expensive: at the *RoR*, the problem lay with the loss of readers' revenue. Nonetheless, this risk

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<sup>80</sup> 'To All English-Speaking Folk', p. 17.

<sup>81</sup> Potter, p. 127.

<sup>82</sup> Paula M. Krebs, *Gender, Race, and the Writing of Empire: Public Discourse and the Boer War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 84.

<sup>83</sup> Searle, pp. 277–278.

<sup>84</sup> Mutch, "'Are We Christians?'"', p. 142.

of financial loss did not deter Stead from pursuing a vigorous anti-war campaign and showed a balance between material gain and sustained morality.<sup>85</sup>

In the first issue, *War Against War* characterised armed intervention as an 'Imperial crime', and divided those supporting war into two categories. While he considered that some were honestly duped about the justice of the case, he believed that others knew that the war was unjust and, yet, wished to continue with the conflict simply because the government had committed the country to war.<sup>86</sup> As his intensifying triplet declared, 'That is not logical, it is not moral, it is even not possible', proclaiming that rationality, morality, and even reality were being challenged by the paradox of people supporting a war that they knew was unjust and which had been deceitfully declared.

Stead wanted the *War Against War* campaign to be Christian, anti-Jingoistic, and pro-peace, and enlisted New Journalistic practices for its prosecution. He foregrounded religious demands and values and presented this belief to his readership as the standard against which to judge the morality of the war. He asked, 'Is there an overriding Providence in this world, or is there not?', and followed by asking whether the world was out of kilter with Christian values or was 'there really a God, a living God, the living Hosts, the Holy One of Israel?'<sup>87</sup> Convinced that public pro-war fervour had been inflamed by an inflamed perverse press patriotism, he positioned the debate as a fight between 'right' and 'evil', and between the unequal forces of the as yet unquantified righteous and 'the multitude' in haste to do 'evil'.<sup>88</sup> New Journalism had been censured for its simplification of complex issues, but Stead's plain-spokenness, employing fiery evangelical rhetoric, emphasised his view that the war was iniquitous.<sup>89</sup> Stead's rhetorical strategies purposely placed undecided readers in a polarised binary position that effectively challenged them to be courageous enough to side against the instincts of what he portrayed as the mob.

The *War Against War* campaign employed strategies that were characteristic of New Journalism and which Stead had examined in his 1886 manifesto papers. Although he considered facts to be fundamental to the winning of an argument, he recognised that readers might not necessarily find them initially of interest, nor did readers necessarily arrive at what appeared to be a logical, fact-based, conclusion.<sup>90</sup> Speech-reflective rhetoric and sensationalist language represented strategies that print culture could exploit. In addition, as part of a public-opinion influencing action, and as a practical example of his future shape of journalism, Stead called for

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<sup>85</sup> Krebs, pp. 83–84; Potter, pp. 126–127.

<sup>86</sup> *War Against War*, 20 October 1899, p. 8.

<sup>87</sup> *War Against War*, 3 November 1899, p. 40.

<sup>88</sup> Potter, p. 126; *War Against War*, 10 November 1899, p. 56.

<sup>89</sup> Potter, p. 125.

<sup>90</sup> *War Against War*, 10 November 1899, p. 56.

at least one volunteer in each centre of population to be willing to bring home the required message 'to the hearts and consciences of the people', and to serve, in effect, as a pulpit speaker or platform orator.<sup>91</sup>

Stead recognised that it was not possible to base a moral campaign for peace on uniformly shared Church support. Most Anglican clergy and Wesleyan Methodists supported the war; the Congregationalists, Baptists, and Unitarians were less in harmony in their opinions; many leading Quakers 'unequivocally denounced war, pride of Empire, and narrow popular patriotism'; and Primitive Methodists were mostly united in their condemnation of events.<sup>92</sup> Such views were not as discordant as might have been expected with R. F. Horton declaring in September 1901 that Free Churchmen, as a body, were, in fact, in line with general national sentiment.<sup>93</sup> The Methodist Hugh Price Hughes was a strong supporter of the Boer War and his *Methodist Times* continued to be influential.<sup>94</sup> A typical Nonconformist view was that expressed by Alfred Rowland, the Congregational minister at Hornsey:

I believe it is for the world's welfare that we should rule. Has not the extending rule of Britain been for the advantage of the human race? Our Empire is no sordid monopoly; it is a sacred trust. And it is because I believe that the British ideal for South Africa is nobler than the Boer and more for the advantage of the world at large that, while I deeply deplore the war now being waged, I can and do pray for the success of British arms.<sup>95</sup>

Seeley's conception of Britain's 'sacred' mission reverberated in Rowland's observations which so powerfully combined notions of empire, nation, and racial superiority. Yet, however appealing these views seemed at the time, they were not guaranteed to exist without difficulty.

Opinion within Stead's own denomination, Congregationalism, was divided and potentially divisive. J. Carvell Williams, the Congregational Union Chairman for 1900, spoke at the autumn meeting in Newcastle of the sharpness of that division and the hurt caused within the denomination.<sup>96</sup> The result was the conflicted silence that could only give an illusion of unity and which would itself be broken intermittently and then permanently. Carvell Williams

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<sup>91</sup> *War Against War*, 10 November 1899, p. 56.

<sup>92</sup> Searle, p. 289.

<sup>93</sup> Bebbington, *The Nonconformist Conscience*, p. 126.

<sup>94</sup> Bebbington, *The Nonconformist Conscience*, pp. 121–122.

<sup>95</sup> *Christian World*, 1 March 1900, p. 7. Quoted in Bebbington, *The Nonconformist Conscience*, p. 122.

<sup>96</sup> J. Carvell Williams, 'Chairman's Autumnal Address/Present-Day Evils and Duties/The War in South Africa, 16 October 1900' (London: Congregational Union of England and Wales, 1901), pp. 40–56 (p. 42).

nonetheless spoke out against the war highlighting the intolerance and violence that denied freedom of speech to those who opposed events in South Africa. He further expressed ‘the callousness and the levity which have made the war in many places an occasion for amusement and revelry’.<sup>97</sup> He highlighted ‘national arrogance and boastfulness’ and the danger of the continuing expansion of the British Empire. The new generation, he declared, risked becoming infected with a ‘warlike spirit’ and ‘the curse of militarism’.<sup>98</sup> By April 1901, the new chairman of the Congregational Union, the Rev. Dr Joseph Parker, honoured those who had recently condemned the war, but he now wished to use the influence attached to his office to bring together Congregationalists of opposing views and one way of doing so was to suppress open debate.<sup>99</sup>

The conflation of Jingoism and New Journalism in commentary on the emergence of newspapers for a mass readership has obscured Stead’s attempts to hold them apart. In highlighting his objection to a Jingoistic journalism, he wrote that, at home, ‘The newspapers have fanned the flames of race hatred, they have fed the fire of revenge’, while the fear of a general uprising by the Cape Dutch was said to have been ‘so wickedly worked for by those who appear to control the Press of South Africa’.<sup>100</sup>

Paula Krebs has described how ‘Mafeking Night’, the cross-class celebration of the lifting of the siege on that town on 18 May 1900, represented ‘the powerful beginning of the New Journalism’ which she sees, along with the New Imperialism, as the entity which transformed the character of the jingoistic street mob from working-class violent vulgarity into middle-class respectability.<sup>101</sup> This reading of the history of New Journalism represents a departure from the Stead-Arnold cultural explanations that have tended to dominate academic writing on this aspect of the history of the press.<sup>102</sup> However, my account suggests that Krebs’s approach, though powerful in many respects, gives unnuanced emphasis to the association of jingoism, war-mongering, and sensationalist reporting that mutes the religious history that I am attempting to restore to the account of Steadian New Journalism. This New Journalism emerged from a combination of Nonconformist crusading and the articulated aim of a responsible use of sensationalism within a literate democracy. Krebs’s version is a later application of sensationalist

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<sup>97</sup> Carvell Williams, p. 43.

<sup>98</sup> Carvell Williams, p. 43.

<sup>99</sup> Joseph Parker, ‘Chairman’s Spring Address/The South African War, 25 April 1901’ (*Congregational Yearbook 1902* (London: Congregational Union, 1902), pp. 17–34 (pp. 18–19).

<sup>100</sup> *War Against War*, 8 December 1899, p. 120. Quoted in Krebs, p. 95, although the endnote (7, p. 185) inaccurately gives January 1900 as the date of issue: it should be, *War Against War*, 15 December 1899, p. 136.

<sup>101</sup> Krebs, pp. 29, 22.

<sup>102</sup> See Chapter 1.

campaigning to issues of secular national identity and unquestioning patriotic backing for national assertiveness.

Public concern for the Second Boer War was marked. Krebs has noted the reason: 'The key factor in igniting public interest in this imperial conflict was the new popular press of the late 1890s, the cheap, sensation-oriented jingoist reporting and editing that was already known as the New Journalism'.<sup>103</sup> 'Jingo journalists' were a new kind engendered by the Second Boer War and the New Journalism. To complain about jingoism in the press had meant focusing upon those newspapers which, like the *Daily Mail*, were deemed to pander to the working classes. However, when *The Times* adopted sensationalist strategies in reporting the relief of Mafeking, the public then being addressed was middle class.<sup>104</sup> Stead had already associated sensationalist journalism with a middle-class readership when at the *PMG*, but he had attracted a mass constituency only during high-profile campaigns such as the 'Maiden Tribute'. In his daily journalism, on the other hand, T. P. O'Connor had succeeded in associating the New Journalism with a working-class readership and its democratic interests.

In response to the patriotic and bellicose tones of Jingoist journalism, in July 1901, in the early months of the Edwardian era, Stead issued a pamphlet, *Methods of Barbarism: The Case for Intervention*, the title of which borrowed from Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, the Leader of the Liberal Party in the House of Commons, who had asked rhetorically, 'When is a war not a war? When it is waged in South Africa by methods of barbarism'.<sup>105</sup> The publication protested against the barbaric military actions being undertaken with official sanction in South Africa, and was designed to create resentment in all those clamouring for yet more severity in the prosecution of the war.<sup>106</sup> As Stead declared in the preface to the pamphlet, these actions had, by international agreement, already been judged as unacceptable, and yet the British military authorities had nonetheless committed acts of war in ways that had been proscribed (p. 4). The substance of the pamphlet largely made its own moral case for the cessation and censure of the conduct of the military in South Africa through the accumulation of the devastatingly inhumane realities of the conflict. These included the perfunctory feeding of the prisoners of war, the deaths of women and children, held in concentration camps and subjected to a 'policy of systematic starvation', and the destruction of Boer farmsteads (pp. 8, 9, 32–36, 9, 47). Stead also included discussion of the Hague Rules of War to which Britain had failed to adhere, and of Emily Hobhouse's Report, which had been published on 19 June 1901 (16–31, 37–46).<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Krebs, p. 9.

<sup>104</sup> Krebs, pp. 10, 14.

<sup>105</sup> W. T. Stead, *Methods of Barbarism: The Case for Intervention* (London: Mowbray House, 1901); Potter, p. 128.

<sup>106</sup> Stead, *Methods of Barbarism*, p. 3.

<sup>107</sup> Elaine Harrison, 'Hobhouse, Emily (1860–1926)', *ODNB* <doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/38520>.

Stead used the pamphlet to highlight the importance of the role of the press in bringing to the attention of the public the controversial nature of the actions being carried out by the British:

It is this which differentiates the present war from all those which have preceded it. For today the nation at home witnesses every morning and evening, in the camera obscura of its daily press, the whole hellish panorama that is unrolled in South Africa. We see the smoke of the burning farmstead; we hear the cries of the terrified children.<sup>108</sup>

Stead rebuked the army, raised consciousness amongst the public of events in South Africa, and explained how the press could function as the voice of public conscience. For the pamphlet to be the voice of societal reproof and political agitation was very much a New Journalistic project to which the details of the war added what Stead represented as a responsible sensationalism. As he demonstrated and emphasised in the above passage, New Journalism could call upon the senses of its readers — sight, smell, audition — to evoke the conditions in which people were being deprived of their homes in South Africa.<sup>109</sup>

Stead also demonstrated his continuing disapproval of irresponsible, overwrought, journalism that sought to raise the ire of a readership in favour of what could readily be perceived as a dubious cause: ‘But, already, journalists of the baser sort, of whom we have too many examples in the daily press, are clamouring for great severity’ in the treatment of the Boers.<sup>110</sup> As Stead declared, the Jingo journalist was guilty of addictive sensationalism, too worked up to recognise the excessive nature of their demands on government for ever increasing shows of severity towards the Boer soldiers and general population:

As confirmed drunkards are said ever to increase the strength of their potations until at last they reach that pitch of delirium when they declare that the strongest brandy is as weak as water, so our Jingo journalists are not ashamed to declare that we are making war with rose-water in South Africa, and to clamour for measures of “salutary vigour”.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Stead, *Methods of Barbarism*, p. 3.

<sup>109</sup> Stead, *Methods of Barbarism*, p. 3.

<sup>110</sup> Stead, *Methods of Barbarism*, p. 6.

<sup>111</sup> Stead, *Methods of Barbarism*, p. 6.

The effects of an overloaded emotional journalism being represented as similar to those caused by alcoholic drink brought together text and tincture in a manner that had long stood as a warning against a sensationalist and irresponsible rhetoric. The use of such an important Nonconformist issue as alcohol as a comparator for the effects created by Jingoistic journalism demonstrated how seriously Stead considered the deployment of such press strategies.

By the beginning of December 1899, only two London newspapers were advancing the cause of the Boers, the *Morning Leader* and the *Star*. The support of the *Daily Chronicle* and the (London) *Echo* was short-lived, ending with the resignation of H. W. Massingham and W. H. Crook, the respective editors, and a veto by the papers' owners of any further expression of opposition to the war.<sup>112</sup> More enduring was the advocacy of the *Manchester Guardian*, edited by C. P. Scott, and the backing of the *Morning Star*, the *Daily News* (from 1901), and various socialist journals.<sup>113</sup>

Amongst the religious newspapers, the nondenominational *Christian World*, reported upon the tensions placed upon a seemingly self-supporting trio of ideas. The London preachers taking part in the annual contemplation of the relationship between religion and patriotism found their thoughts taxed by the outbreak of the Boer War in South Africa. The paper reported the dilemma that faced Nonconformists who heard 'the demands from the pulpit to put moral and spiritual interests before those of material wealth, and the needs of our suffering brethren before our own comfort'. Yet, even as congregations left their places of prayer and worship, the newsboys could be heard crying out 'Great Slaughter of Boers!' and 'Wounded Left at Dundee!'.<sup>114</sup> The *Christian World* opposed the war and the stirred-up patriotism that became part of the opinion of the public at home: 'But that the war should be regarded as an honour and glory, adding fresh lustre to the British flag, seems to us repugnant to common sense and right feeling'.<sup>115</sup> In another example of a denominational paper that opposed the war, the *Inquirer*, the Unitarian weekly newspaper, wrote of its gratitude to the *Manchester Guardian* for the stand that it had taken against the war.<sup>116</sup> In this, the *Inquirer* recognised the greater reach to public opinion possessed by a secular newspaper such as the *Guardian* but also its capacity to speak out where denominations felt unable to do so for fear of schism in their memberships.

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<sup>112</sup> Whyte, II, p. 171.

<sup>113</sup> Whyte, II, p. 171, argues that the *Manchester Guardian* was able to continue to support the pro-Boer cause because its commercial news service was essential to the cotton trade and therefore precluded any damaging boycott on the part of its readership.

<sup>114</sup> 'Two Patriotisms', *Christian World*, 2 November 1899.

<sup>115</sup> 'For Every Idle Word', *Christian World*, 7 December 1899, p. 8.

<sup>116</sup> 'The Disgrace of War', *Inquirer*, 7 October 1899, p. 642.

There was no benefit to be accrued from examining the failures of statesmanship and therefore 'it seems to us for the present better to bear the humiliation of this conflict in silence'.<sup>117</sup>

Supported by a significant minority of the general population, leading opponents of the war organised protest groups to agitate for unarmed intervention and recognition of independence for the Boer republics. Stead had returned energised from the 1899 Hague Peace Conference which he had actively promoted and from which he published the proceedings. In consequence, the outbreak of conflict in Southern Africa led to his making a major contribution to the founding of the 'Stop the War Committee'.<sup>118</sup> Inaugurated in January 1900, and prominent in agitating against military action, the 'Stop the War Committee' was chaired by the former Methodist minister Silas Hocking and included Keir Hardie, a member of the Independent Labour Party and first Labour party MP, and Ramsay MacDonald, the future British Labour Prime Minister. Most Radicals opposed the war by launching moral attacks on what they judged to be the 'unadulterated evil' taking place in Southern Africa but despite such a principled stance, their protests received little support from the churches.<sup>119</sup> Stead had adopted just such a moral view and expressed his anti-war position 'in a fiery pulpit style, with plenty of historical and Biblical allusions'.<sup>120</sup> However, more influential than this group was the South African Conciliation Committee which found support amongst high-minded Liberals such as John Morley, the former editor of the *PMG*. Radical Liberals, including the future Chancellor of the Exchequer and Liberal-party British Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, the liberal academic and journalist, J. A. Hobson, and C. P. Scott joined the League Against Aggression and Militarism.<sup>121</sup>

Stead brought to his *RoR* campaign clear expression of Christian values together with critical assessment of British government prosecution of the war. The *RoR* represented General Roberts as having set out to campaign according to the principles of international law, crusading mission, and Christian masculine chivalry.<sup>122</sup> Having set expectations for the clear demonstration of civilised values, even in warfare, Stead judged that Roberts had nonetheless 'succumbed to the savage colonial sentiment in the midst of which he is living'. In an account from September 1900, in reprisal for enemy disruption of the railways, thirty homesteads were set ablaze, non-neutral inhabitants were regarded as prisoners of war and transported, and it was declared that 'all buildings, structures, and farms where the enemy's scouts are harboured will be liable to be

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<sup>117</sup> 'Notes of the Week', *Inquirer*, 4 November 1899, p. 705.

<sup>118</sup> Baylen, 'Stead, William Thomas', *ODNB*.

<sup>119</sup> Searle, p. 289.

<sup>120</sup> Potter, p. 125.

<sup>121</sup> Searle, p. 287. Hobson offered a critique of the influence of capitalism upon the war in his work *Imperialism: A Study* (Allen & Unwin, 1902) having previously produced a less sophisticated, anti-Semitic interpretation in *The War in South Africa: Its Causes and Effects* (London: Nisbet, 1900).

<sup>122</sup> 'Progress of the World/Fire and Sword', *RoR*, 22 (1900), p. 213.

razed to the ground'.<sup>123</sup> The readership was now forced to confront a Britain that had instead sent out to South Africa 'violators of the humanities of the international code of warfare to which we were parties' (p. 214). If such commentary was considered sensationalist, it was not jingoistic demonstrating that jingoistic sensationalism was a part and not the whole of a more complex rhetorical instrument.

Stead showed how the three platforms for the dissemination of news and opinion which had been central to the cause of democracy during the nineteenth century could be used for brutal ends:

"Shall we let Hell loose in South Africa?" I asked last September, and the nation through its representatives in Parliament, Press and Pulpit cried out savagely, "Yes."<sup>124</sup>

He focused attention on the sufferings of the civil populations and highlighted the hypocrisy of judgments based upon racial prejudice: 'The sufferings of mere Boers do not appeal to the tender hearts of our Christian Jingoers'.<sup>125</sup> Stead also employed the devastating effect of graphic description to draw attention to the misery of British soldiers who lacked medical care. To this end, the *RoR* included extracts from the accounts of the MP William Burdett-Coutts of one of the field hospitals near Bloemfontein. Burdett-Coutts described how groups of ten typhoid patients were accommodated in bell-tents meant for between six and eight people and were to be found dying, convalescent, or in a state of disease-induced crisis: 'It was a sad and sickening spectacle this, which I describe exactly as my eyes saw it, and without exaggeration or excuse' (pp. 12-13). Stead presented himself as publishing what others did not dare to do in the face of criticism which accused him and opponents of the war like him of treacherous behaviour. He used pulpit-style rhetoric to create a picture of the nation's descent into inhumanity and irreligiousness:

Meanwhile, with all this devil's work going on unchecked, with the rules of war trampled cynically under-foot, there is no voice either of Christianity or humanity raised in all England to protest [...] Progress of the world indeed! There is a march of events, no doubt, but a march tending steadily to the nethermost Hell.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> 'Progress of the World/Fire and Sword/War on Women and Children', *RoR*, 22 (1900), p. 213.

<sup>124</sup> 'The Progress of the World/The Sufferings of Our Soldiers', *RoR*, 22 (1900), p. 12.

<sup>125</sup> 'The Progress of the World/The Sufferings of Our Soldiers', *RoR*, 22 (1900), p. 12.

<sup>126</sup> 'The Progress of the World/The Reversion to Savagery', *RoR*, 22 (1900), p. 425.

Stead had set out to use the *RoR* as the journal for the federation of the English-speaking peoples and the reunification of Christian churches but now, at the end of the century, both projects were proving to be unrealised even if he had not come to the conclusive judgement that they were unrealisable. At the *Northern Echo*, Stead had rebuked the Church of England for its lack of investment in the political life of the country. Now he was forced to take both the established Church of England and the Free Churches to task for a collective failure to advance the Christian values they were supposed to represent.

In campaigning for imperial peace and home moral advancement, Stead had sought to bring discordant voices into harmony for the greater good of humankind. In the next supplement that I examine, *Borderland*, Stead launched a monthly review that he hoped would serve as an initiatory, exploratory, and democratising official journal for Spiritualism. He aimed to interpret and to publicise the disparate voices calling from beyond the earthly realm and to create networks that cemented the capacity to realise such communications.

### **Spiritualism and the Journal *Borderland***

The *RoR*'s democratising moral mission became associated with the advocacy of home and international Christian reunion in a coming together of values capable of surpassing sectarian credal and ritualistic differences. At the *RoR*, Stead pursued this crossing of class, denominational, and geopolitical boundaries even further by publicising the world of spiritualism and the investigative opportunities that research into supernatural phenomena offered. The possibility of communication between the material and spirit worlds represented the subject of *Borderland* the third supplement published by Stead in association with the *RoR* that I examine in this chapter.

During the late-Victorian period, an interest in Spiritualism was shared by many across class, political, and religious divisions. From the late 1860s, Spiritualist societies had been forming local churches or 'lyceums', and included Sunday services, Sunday schools, rituals, and hymns as part of their practices.<sup>127</sup> The Spiritual Institute, for example, was founded in 1863; the Swedenborg Society moved to Bloomsbury Street in 1870; the British National Association of Spiritualists was set up in 1873, moved to Great Russell Street in 1878, and was reformed as the London Spiritual Alliance in 1883; and the Society for Psychical Research (SPR) was begun in 1882.<sup>128</sup> The members of this latter group understood that conclusions drawn from a scientific

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<sup>127</sup> Stewart J. Brown, 'W. T. Stead, the 'New Journalism' and the 'New Church'', p. 226.

<sup>128</sup> Roger Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse: The True History of a Dark Fantasy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 144–145.

examination of faith might prove to be highly disruptive to those for whom religious faith in a world of increasing uncertainty had become fragile. In attempting to show through empirical experimentation that the soul did exist, many members of the SPR found themselves in a state of agnostic limbo, unable to prove the immortality of the soul to the standard demanded of scientific enquiry and reluctant to abandon a faith to which they continued to hold fast.<sup>129</sup> In the same year, the Ghost Club was founded, as a dining fellowship for the telling of ghost stories. Those who joined or who were invited to dine there as guests were spared the glare of public scrutiny as proceedings were, by agreement, conducted in the strictest confidence (p. 46).

Stead's interest in the occult predated his joining the *Northern Echo* when, in 1869, he had his first experience of the supernatural during a night spent at the ruined Hermitage Castle in the Scottish borders.<sup>130</sup> He had further opportunities to explore spiritualism with Mark Fooks, the former editor of the *Darlington Telegraph*, who, having worked with Copleston, the founding editor of the *NE*, remained after Copleston's departure in April 1871 to work with Stead as his sub-editor.<sup>131</sup> Stead's status in the world of Spiritualism had a reach that was personal, denominational, national, and global: these beliefs were neither replacement for, nor adjunct to, his Christian faith, but, rather, a further expression of his commitment to Christianity.<sup>132</sup> Stead's interest in the supernatural was framed as part of the search for a degree of provable certainty for religious faith and formed the subject of the first two supplements to the *RoR*.

These publications were two collections of ghost stories both of which came with the advice that supernatural phenomena were to be treated seriously by those possessing the necessary nervous fortitude, and an invitation for the general public to engage sympathetically with such occurrences.<sup>133</sup> The first volume, *Real Ghost Stories: A Record of Authentic Apparitions*, formed the 1891 *RoR* Christmas Annual, while the second, *More Ghost Stories: A Sequel to Real Ghost Stories*, was published as a 'New Year's Extra Number' for 1892.<sup>134</sup> Stead's justification for publishing a sequel so soon after the Christmas Annual bears testament to Demoor and Macdonald's observations regarding the rationale for supplementary publications.<sup>135</sup> There was

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<sup>129</sup> Luckhurst, p. 45.

<sup>130</sup> Justin Sausman, 'The Democratisation of the Spook: W. T. Stead and the Invention of Public Occultism', in *W. T. Stead*, ed. by Brake and others, pp. 149–165 (p. 149).

<sup>131</sup> Mark Fooks came from Sherborne in Dorset and gained journalistic experience in Brighton. He was a convinced spiritualist and helped Stead in his conversion to the movement. Lloyd, pp. 23, 31, 51. 'Former North-Country Journalist', *Northern Echo*, 6 July 1917, p.6.

<sup>132</sup> J. O. Baylen, 'W. T. Stead's *Borderland: A Quarterly Review and Index of Psychic Phenomena, 1893-97*', *Victorian Periodicals Newsletter*, no. 4, 2:1 (April 1969), pp. 30–35 (p. 30); Watts, III, p. 39; Sausman, p. 150; Roger Luckhurst, 'The Sinking of the Titanic: Stead's Death (and Slight Return)', in *W. T. Stead*, ed. by Brake and others, pp. 181–196 (p. 183).

<sup>133</sup> Both annuals carried a note of 'Caution to the Reader'.

<sup>134</sup> *Real Ghost Stories: A Record of Authentic Apparitions*, ed. by W. T. Stead (London: *Review of Reviews*, 1891); *More Ghost Stories: A Sequel to Real Ghost Stories* (London: *Review of Reviews*, 1892).

<sup>135</sup> See p. 175.

more material than could have been accommodated in the Christmas Annual, the first collection had sold out before public demand had been satisfied, and, further, Stead wanted to bring the case for and against ghosts 'fairly before the public'.<sup>136</sup>

In *Real Ghost Stories*, Stead offered a collection of accounts from individuals who had experienced apparitions, with the aim of persuading his readership that such phenomena not only existed but could also serve as a means of understanding life and death.<sup>137</sup> He wished to publicise such esoteric knowledge so that the truth of occult occurrences was not left in the sole hands of expert scientific investigators such as those at the Psychical Research Society. With the publication of *More Ghost Stories*, Stead refined the terms of his democratising project. Despite his understanding that not everyone was personally or intellectually suited to undertaking investigations into supernatural phenomena, Stead insisted that the democratising values of such research would, nonetheless, be carried forward by the subject being 'openly discussed, freely handled, and the results of investigation made known to everyone'.<sup>138</sup>

Stead had spent the eighteen months before the publication of the first issue of *Borderland* on personal study of supernatural phenomena.<sup>139</sup> Noting that division in the occult sciences reflected schism in the Christian religion, Stead concluded that, as yet, no systematic scientific study had been carried out into the basis for spiritualist beliefs.<sup>140</sup> He sought to invest in his new supplement, as in the *RoR*, the democratising and popularising values of New Journalism, and to counteract the 'more or less doctrinaire and exclusive' ways of the leading figures in psychical research.<sup>141</sup> Through his investigation of spiritualism, Stead promoted his commitment to the democratising element of New Journalism and used his interest in technological developments to investigate whether paranormal occurrences could be examined and explained by scientific principles of testing, recording, and evaluation.

From the 1890s until the *Titanic* disaster in 1912, Stead became one of the leading exponents of the late-Victorian interest in spiritualism and its associated elements of ghosts, mediums, and other paranormal occurrences.<sup>142</sup> Dissenters had strong opinions on the subject of the occult. Watts has recognised Stead as being the leading example of a Dissenter who espoused Spiritualism while acknowledging that his enthusiasm was viewed by most other Dissenters as symptomatic of gullibility.<sup>143</sup> William Robertson Nicoll, editor of the *Nonconformist*

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<sup>136</sup> 'A Prefatory Word', *More Ghost Stories*, p. 7

<sup>137</sup> 'A Prefatory Word', *More Ghost Stories*, p. 8.

<sup>138</sup> 'A Prefatory Word', *More Ghost Stories*, p. 8.

<sup>139</sup> "'Borderland": A New Quarterly Review and Index', *RoR*, 7 (1893), p. 675.

<sup>140</sup> "'Borderland": A New Quarterly Review and Index', *RoR*, 7 (1893), p. 675.

<sup>141</sup> "'Borderland": A New Quarterly Review and Index', *RoR*, 7 (1893), p. 675. *Borderland*, 1 (July 1893), pp. 7–8.

<sup>142</sup> Sausman, p. 150.

<sup>143</sup> Watts, III, 39–40.

*British Weekly*, strongly opposed Spiritualism, and, in so doing, attracted Stead's censure that a Christian journalist was unwilling to consider the only proof available of central Christian truths such as the immortality of the soul.<sup>144</sup> John Jones, the Liverpool Congregational minister, and the indomitable, eminent, Baptist, C. H. Spurgeon, accepted the evidence of the supernatural gathered by spiritualists, but, far from seeing evidence of good, considered it to be evidence of supernatural forces of evil.<sup>145</sup> The Congregational ministers Newman Hall and Edward White took a similarly disapproving view and equated spiritualism with necromancy while the Unitarian physiologist William Carpenter carried on a sustained attack upon Spiritualism over a period of thirty years (p. 40).

Stead found firmer ground for making common cause with other spiritualist advocates in two of the more avant-garde figures in the movement, Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and Annie Besant. In 1875, in New York, Blavatsky co-founded the Theosophical Society with the American, Colonel Henry Steele Olcott. The intention was to bring together elements of Eastern mysticism, orthodox religion, and science.<sup>146</sup> The aims of the society spoke strongly to Stead's own beliefs and convictions in its intention to create the universal brotherhood of humanity free from power-appropriating discriminatory conventions. The Society advocated investigating the potential of mystical powers lying undiscovered in living matter and publicised the need for the betterment of the human condition through spiritual enrichment and the rejection of intellectualism, secularism, and materialism.<sup>147</sup> Annie Besant campaigned for a wide range of associations including the Fabian Society and the Marxist Social Democratic Federation. She supported Charles Bradlaugh's campaign to take his seat in Parliament by secular affirmation rather than swearing the oath upon the Bible.<sup>148</sup> In 1888, Besant became convinced of the existence of hidden powers that she was destined to uncover, a conviction which was accompanied by disillusionment with other ways of effecting betterment in people's lives. She had previously worked with Stead on a campaigning, although short-lived, journal *Link* and for a while shared a sense of contributing to a joint project for the Church of the Future.<sup>149</sup> Besant was to succeed Blavatsky as leader of the Theosophy movement and was confirmed as such in 1895.<sup>150</sup> Stead's connections to Blavatsky and Besant underlined his interest in more esoteric

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<sup>144</sup> Watts, III, 40.

<sup>145</sup> Watts, III, 40.

<sup>146</sup> Sausman, p. 150.

<sup>147</sup> Richard Davenport-Hines, 'Blavatsky, Helena Petrovna (1831–1891)', *ODNB* <doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/40930>.

<sup>148</sup> Anne Taylor, 'Besant [*née* Wood], Annie (1847–1933)', *ODNB* <doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/30735>.

<sup>149</sup> Stewart J. Brown, 'W. T. Stead and the Civic Church 1886–1895', p. 325.

<sup>150</sup> Davenport-Hines, 'Blavatsky, Helena Petrovna', *ODNB* <doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/40930>.

expressions of religious belief but he remained in harmony with his Christian faith and its Congregational inflection.

*Borderland* was intended to serve as the spiritualist version of the *RoR* by including a brief 'Chronique of Progress' in the understanding of psychical research over the previous three months, a 'Character Sketch', 'popularly written' articles on aspects of occultism, and accounts of important articles, corresponding to the section 'Leading Articles in the Reviews' of the *RoR*, and a bibliography of review articles and book titles was also provided.<sup>151</sup> Readers being introduced to this new area of experience would find reassuring familiarity within the pages of an innovative journal that resembled its parent publication in values and rubrics, and be further comforted by having purchased a quarterly review with the cachet of cultural respectability that this entailed. *Borderland* drew upon the shape and format of its sponsoring publication, making it a kind of spiritualistic double of the *RoR*.<sup>152</sup> Stead set out to popularise the values of spiritualism and the scientific examination of spiritualism.<sup>153</sup> His mission for the democratisation of psychical research sought to demonstrate empirically that the human hope for eternal life could be based on something other than faith. Prominent agnostics and atheists had contested religious authority throughout the nineteenth century using in part the increasing prominence of empirical truth as established by scientific experimentation. Now, Stead called for the verifiable, evidential truth of religious faith to be established. He expressed the wish to democratise the esoteric discipline of scientific research and to investigate the existence and reach of human capacities hinted at by hypnotism and dreams. Discussion included advice in the methodology for experimentation and a uniform method of noting down the phenomena observed. He offered 'Rules of Evidence' alongside 'Rules and Regulations' for the setting up of the membership circles of those taking part in the examination of psychic phenomena.<sup>154</sup>

Stead intended that the occult world should no longer be represented by the rarefied investigations of the SPR.<sup>155</sup> In *Borderland*, he invited the wider population to engage in data collection and to do so using the rigorous methods of trained scientific investigators. Roger Luckhurst has emphasised the dominance of the 'the middle-class elite of Christian spiritualism' amongst the Ghost Club membership in comparison with working-class communities where, especially in the north of England, the influence of 'the plebeian, dissenting and radical version' prevailed.<sup>156</sup> This split in Christian spiritualism along class and geographical lines was a further

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<sup>151</sup> "'*Borderland*": A New Quarterly Review and Index', *RoR*, 7 (1893), p. 675. *Borderland*, 1:1 (July 1893), pp. 7–8.

<sup>152</sup> Sausman, p. 154; Luckhurst, 'The Sinking of The Titanic', p. 184.

<sup>153</sup> *Borderland*, 1:1, (July 1893), pp. 3–5.

<sup>154</sup> *Borderland*, 1:2, (October 1893), pp. 284–285.

<sup>155</sup> *Borderland*, 1:1, p. 7.

<sup>156</sup> Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse*, p. 46.

exemplification of the metropolitan/provincial antagonism that manifested itself in the emergence of the New Journalistic phenomenon (p. 45). It was also evident in the dominance of a Cambridge-University educated elite in the SPR. Stead set out to make explicit his ambition to open up the field of spiritualism to the wider population and wrest it from the dominance of such elites.<sup>157</sup>

Stead's organising principles for *Borderland* emphasised community, communication, and exchange, with plans for 'circles of students' being formed and assigned to their chosen branch of occult study and furnished with names and addresses of fellow members. Stead, *Borderland*, and the *RoR*'s head office at Mowbray House acted as a 'common centre' for the interchange of knowledge. The *RoR* further developed Stead's visible emphasis on union and reunion. These emphases were demonstrated by support for home and international unification of Christianity, voluntary work, individually undertaken and within associative structures, for the common good.

In seeking the breakdown of borders towards a union of the disparate, Stead's publicising of Spiritualism represented the highlighting of the last domain to resist unifying projects. These principles were restatements of those which he consistently promulgated across his projects and publications. *Borderland* confirmed Stead's commitment to Christianity. Religious faith had been challenged by biblical criticism, archaeological discoveries, and an interpretive relativity reducing the rigour of punitive dogma: Stead hoped that a scientifically verifiable spiritualism could restore some of the certitude which had dissipated from religious belief.

Transcription of the voice concerned Stead intimately as he believed that he had the power of telepathy and the gift of automatic writing. In his promotion of telepathy, he gave a description of telephonic communication without handsets and cabling, effectively a wi-fi network under development. The telephone and the telephone exchange represented Stead's last nineteenth-century image of editorship for the transmission of speech – the electrical impulses recording the spoken word and returning them back to speech with scarcely an interval of interruption in the process. Stead gave to the press an important democratising and popularising role that was increasingly defined by concepts of interpretation, revelation, relaying, reflection, echo, voice, exchange, communication, and community. Stead's conceptualisation of the role of the newspaper had progressed from sounding board to phonograph, from auditor and relay to voice and representation of the voice- and vote-less. The priority accorded to the spoken word over print expression found diverse instantiation: from the Nonconformist privileging of extempore preaching over pulpit reading of a prepared written

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<sup>157</sup> Sausman, pp. 151, 154.

text, to ideas of print representing speech, the recording verbatim of speeches, the recording of details of speech delivery and speech reception, and the New Journalistic emphasis on the personal.

In bringing spiritualism to a wider audience, Stead gave greater emphasis to ideas he had already included in talking of editorship. He represented the editor as bringing the voice of complaint of the people to the notice of the conscience of humanity just as Sandalphon heard the voices of the oppressed and brought their petitions to the attention of God. A voice disparate and indistinct bearing intelligible messages captured by the editor and transmitted through the newspaper. Stead's spiritualist beliefs took this a stage further. The voices of the departed could also be heard and recorded: communication between the material and the spirit worlds could, it appeared, be established and rendered comprehensible this side of eternity.

Stead felt that his spiritualist gift lay particularly with automatic writing. In 1892, he announced that he had been receiving messages from the deceased American journalist Julia Ames and, on founding *Borderland*, he reported that he was being assisted by Miss X with whom, he declared, he communicated telepathically and whose messages were also produced by automatic writing.<sup>158</sup> The presence of Miss X as an integral part of the management of *Borderland* was representative of an association created between Stead's democratising journal and the elitist SPR of which Miss X, the pseudonym of Ada Goodrich Freer, was a member. In one major respect, Miss Freer was a curious choice of associate for a democratising project as she had been a member of the SPR since 1888 and believed that spiritualism was disadvantaged by the adherence of many working-class people.<sup>159</sup> Although the communications with Julia Ames and the later setting up of 'Julia's Bureau' in 1909 are relatively well-known, Freer's career deserves to be highlighted as she may very well have been the source of the temporary cessation of *Borderland* in 1897 and the subsequent damage to Stead's reputation.

In the opening number of *Borderland*, Stead announced that he would be assisted in his researches into the occult by Miss X, 'one of the most trustworthy, careful, and exact of all [...] inquirers'.<sup>160</sup> By the beginning of 1896, however, a rift appears to be signalled by a note that correspondence for Miss Freer could be sent directly to her rather than received at the

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<sup>158</sup> *Borderland*, 1:1, (July 1893), p. 6. Whyte, I, p. 327, gives an account of Stead having met Julia in London in 1890. Julia died sometime after. Stead later became acquainted with her great friend, an American he identifies as 'Miss E.', on a visit to Eastnor Castle, in Somerset, two years later. Miss E. revealed that Julia had appeared to her as they had promised each other would happen in the event of one of them passing away before the other. Miss E's request that Stead try and obtain a message from Julia was met with apparent success and led to the singular correspondence between Stead and Julia.

<sup>159</sup> Margaret Mills, *Wisdom of Two: The Spiritual and Literary Collaboration of George and W. B. Yeats* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 240.

<sup>160</sup> 'Seeking Counsel of the Wise. What Think Ye of the Study of *Borderland*?', *Borderland*, 1:7. Quoted in Baylen, 'W. T. Stead's *Borderland*', p. 31.

*Borderland* offices; if addressed personally, letters would be sent on to her. Nearly two years later, in October 1897, Stead wrote that *Borderland* was to cease publication for the immediate future: the journal was never restarted.<sup>161</sup> In 1897, from early February to mid-April, Freer had investigated the occurrence of paranormal happenings at Ballechin House in Perthshire in Scotland. Her positive findings were sharply contested in the correspondence columns of *The Times* as methodologically unsound and even fraudulent and she was disowned by the SPR itself which had recommended her for the role of investigator in the first instance.<sup>162</sup> Following this, *Borderland* closed, ostensibly only temporarily, although, in fact, for ever. Stead claimed that the reasons for the cessation of *Borderland* were 'varied' including many 'of a personal nature'. Fundamentally, he highlighted his wish to continue working on original investigative work rather than on the provision through the journal of a survey of work in the field.<sup>163</sup> In a demonstration of his continuing faith in spiritualism, a revised reprint of the *RoR*'s collections of real ghost stories from 1891 and 1892 was produced while in 1898 Stead published a volume of his communications with Julia Ames by means of automatic writing, under the title *Letters from Julia, or Light from the Borderland*.<sup>164</sup>

The psychic investigations promoted by *Borderland* were intended to allay some of the anxieties felt by late-Victorians in the face of declining religious certainties, and, even, of faith itself. Old religious certainties could not necessarily be re-established after supernatural explanations of Biblical events had been rendered unconvincing for some by scientific discoveries and empirical investigative methods. Stead had hoped to confirm through scientific enquiry some of the most important truths of the Christian religion. Although this did not prove to be possible, he continued to use his New Journalism in the service of world peace and global harmony. Where he succeeded was in infusing his journalistic practice with some new revitalising elements drawn from advances in the press and the best dictates of the Christian religion.

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<sup>161</sup> *Borderland*, 3:1; '1. — Halt! — For the Present.', *Borderland*, 4:4, pp. 339–342; 'Borderland', *RoR*, 16 (1897), p. 511.

<sup>162</sup> Hilary Grimes, *The Late Victorian Gothic: Mental Science, the Uncanny, and Sciences of Writing* (London: Routledge, 2016 (2011)), pp. 87–88. Although Grimes recognises that Freer was found to be duplicitous in her supernatural investigations, she places great emphasis on the repudiation of Freer by the SPR and the hostility of Campbell and Hall in their definitive account of the undoing of Freer regarding the Ballechin House investigation. A series of conceits leads Grimes to the opinion that Freer became the very ghostliness of the investigation carried out in her own regard. Given that Campbell and Hall were uncovering the dishonesty of Freer's actions, the ghostliness seems to be of Grimes's own making. See John L. Campbell and Trevor H. Hall, *Strange Things: The Story of Fr. Allan McDonald, Ada Goodrich Freer, and The Society for Psychical Research's Enquiry into Highland Second Sight* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968) and Grimes (2016), pp. 87–90.

<sup>163</sup> 'Halt', *Borderland*, 4:4, (October 1897), p. 339.

<sup>164</sup> W. T. Stead, *Real Ghost Stories: A Revised Reprint of the Christmas and New Year's Numbers of the Review of Reviews 1891—2* (London: Grant Richards, 1897). W. T. Stead, *Letters from Julia; or Light from the Borderland* (London: Grant Richards, 1898).

The Victorian period had come to end in 1901 and the Boer War reached a conclusion a year later. A new sovereign, a new year, and a new century suggested to Stead that it was now time for a 'new programme for the New Century'. This, he announced, was to be 'the Realisation of the International Ideal throughout the World' for which he worked until his death in 1912 aboard the *Titanic*.<sup>165</sup> That his body was not recovered led to speculation and belief that he had not just passed away but passed on into the spirit world from where he continued to communicate with the terrestrial world. Stead's belief in Spiritualism led him to investigate this divisive field in the interests of discovering evidence for some of Christianity's truths, and, in keeping with New Journalistic principles, he invited the public to contribute.

Stead never appropriated the role of originator of the New Journalism because he was not certain what the difference between it and the Old Journalism might be. Where he succeeded was in taking the Old Journalism, or just plainly Journalism, and infusing it with some new revitalising elements drawn from advances in the press and the best dictates of the Christian religion. In 1904, Stead tried once again to return to daily journalism with the launch of *The Daily Paper*, but the attempt proved extenuating and the paper closed soon after. His subsequent nervous breakdown was evidence of the strain brought on by the project and the disappointment at its lack of success. Stead was never again to be at the head of a successful daily newspaper or other new publication designed to bring the world into global unity and universal harmony.

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<sup>165</sup> 'Internationalism: An Ideal for the New Century', *RoR*, 23 (1901), pp. 35–42 (p. 42).

## Conclusion

During the last three decades of the nineteenth century, Stead edited a trio of publications that led to him becoming one of the leading liberal figures in the major socio-political debates of the period. He positioned the Darlington *Northern Echo* as an advocate for Gladstonian Liberalism before he moved to London and the *Pall Mall Gazette* which had just been reoriented from Whig-liberalism to Gladstonian radicalism. His final instantiation as an editor included ownership of the *Review of Reviews* which gave him the freedom to shape his last major publication as a promoter of re-Christianisation and British imperial interests.

Popular (mis)conceptions of Stead, recently reignited in the light of the centenary of his loss aboard the *Titanic* in 1912, have portrayed him as a religious bigot, a sexually obsessed censor of other people's private morals, a jingoistic imperialist, a newspaper man profiting from pornography, a self-publicising muckraking journalist, and a sensationalist who gave us the future tabloid press.<sup>1</sup> While each of these descriptions contains some facet of truth about him, they also overwhelmingly reflect a tendentious, unsympathetic, caricature which this thesis has sought, in part, to overturn.

This thesis has argued that the development of Stead's New Journalism was influenced by his Congregationalism. His journalism and his activism were shaped by his Christian beliefs, Nonconformist upbringing, and evangelical inflection. He may have been destined for the ministry in the Dissenting tradition, but he chose to enter journalism. Christianity underpinned and invested his worldview such that what he thought and wrote could not be envisioned separate from his religious convictions. Just as Dawson and Dale had taught in Birmingham, Stead believed that the secular and the sacred were inmixed to the extent that engagement in politics was to be considered a Christian duty.<sup>2</sup> His Nonconformity brought him into contact with new, radical, evangelical groupings, such as the Salvation Army; with an increasingly politically active new Dissent, in the shape of Wesleyan Methodism and the Forward Movement; and with the core ideas of an otherwise diverse conception of Christian Socialism. He became an increasingly vocal advocate for Christian reunion and for the federation of the English-speaking peoples.

Stead was a 'new journalist', in the sense that he introduced innovative practice in his editorial and journalistic practice, and he was a 'New Journalist' because, as I show in my first chapter, he brought into his newspapers those personal and sensational elements that Matthew Arnold, amongst others, highlighted and decried. His New Journalism allied liberating changes

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<sup>1</sup> Sydney Robinson, pp. xi, xii, xiii, 1, 2; Tristram Hunt, 'Preface' to *Muckraker*, p. ix.

<sup>2</sup> Watts, III, 232; 'The National Social Union/Statement of its Aims, Methods, and Organisation', *RoR*, 10 (1894), p. 288.

in typography, content, and writing style with a strong moral ethic. A democratising journalism and an evangelical activism combined as an engine for a Christianising, popularising, press. More specifically, New Journalism and evangelicalism joined together in the promotion of the Nonconformist Conscience, municipal and social gospels, Christian Socialism, concepts of God-ordained British imperialism, aspirations for the federation of English-speaking countries, and a determined commitment to the cause of world peace.

Stead's editorial persona became increasingly identified with the titles he directed.<sup>3</sup> He moved from the *NE* and a Nonconformist and Liberal-party supporting stronghold to the *PMG* and a capital-city bastion of Whig-liberalism and established Anglicanism. His editorship of the *PMG* represented a transitional moment between the regional and the global spheres of his journalistic activism. He invested the power of evangelical crusading in a secular newspaper where the methods of the more popular newspapers were deployed to engage the attention of a clubland readership. I show how Stead deployed sensationalist and homiletic forms of discourse to engage readers in difficult social problems that he hoped could be resolved on the basis of Christian morality.

Stead sought to develop the reforming activism of the *PMG* so that it could stand as an influential secular equivalent of the Salvation Army's *War Cry* and Hugh Price Hughes's *Methodist Times*. He did this in a newspaper that maintained its formal organisation, such as the open, bright, two-column page layout, while deploying plain-spokenness, a clearly expressed Christian morality, and an energised will to bring about effective change. Stead aimed to get into the conscience and the consciousness of his readers as well as under their skin: he visited on an entitled, Anglican, middle- and upper-class readership, a Nonconformist ethical code and a radical Liberal programme. The *RoR* gave Stead sufficient financial independence for him to concentrate on his mission to broadcast a democratising, re-Christianising, and imperialist message at home and abroad. The language of plain-spokenness became diffused in the democratisation of review articles carried out through editorial article selection and explanatory accompanying commentary.

Stead's reaching out to a greater readership involved an increasing democratisation of materials and readerships accompanied by an increasing eclecticism of Christian belief. This engaged editor and readership in investigating the credibility of modern prophetic capability, the search for scientific proof of religious belief, and the investigation of the porousness of frontiers between corporeal materiality and spiritual immanence. The power of language figured large in this project.

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<sup>3</sup> Schalck, p. 79.

The primacy of speech haunted Stead throughout his career in print media. This included the orality of sermons, political platform addresses, and the speech-imitative impact of leading articles in *New Journalism*. Stead's father had encouraged his children to listen carefully to his sermons so that they could later relate the content of his homilies.<sup>4</sup> At his death, and as was customary, the Reverend William Stead's papers were burnt, his words dissipated in the wind, but with his thoughts remaining most in the hearts and minds of family members and those amongst whom he worked.

Print culture offered a voice to those who had lost it or who had been denied the capacity to speak. The Congregationalist minister, John Campbell, pursued a career in journalism, having experienced a loss in power of his voice, which compelled him to relinquish his pulpit although he retained his pastoral responsibilities.<sup>5</sup> Robert Alfred Vaughan was forced to give up ministerial duties because of ill-health but was able to continue disseminating his religious ideas through articles for the *British Quarterly* and *Fraser's Magazine*.<sup>6</sup> Stead introduced an evangelical fashioning of secular journalism that captured the voice of ministerial preaching in the promotion of socio-political betterment.

A significant change in Stead's self-representation was signalled by his explicit self-depiction as the recipient and transmitter of messages sent by others. In the first instance, the receipt and publication of letters to the editor, the reporting of speeches, sermons, and interviews, and the republication of extracts from other newspapers represented this circulation and recycling of the ideas of others. In that tension between receipt and transmission, Stead allowed for reformulation as when a journalist moulded public opinion or spoke on behalf of the underprivileged and dispossessed.<sup>7</sup> This interpretive space allowed the shaping of the formless, plaints of those who suffered, and the bringing of the cries of the people to the conscience of humanity.

In these metaphorical instantiations of the editorial and journalistic role, Stead moved towards representing himself as an amanuensis, the transcriber of the thoughts of others, or a ghost writer. He gave expression to the words of the prostitutes that he interviewed for the 'Maiden Tribute', gave form and focus to Mildred Langworthy's story of abuse and abandonment, and presented to his readership the core importance of review articles, the length of which and cost of purchase precluded perusal and ownership except by the time- and means-rich.

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<sup>4</sup> W. T. Stead, *My Father* (For Private Circulation, 1884), p. 8. The article originally appeared in the *Jarrow Guardian*, 29 February 1884.

<sup>5</sup> Tudur Jones, 'Campbell, John', *ODNB*.

<sup>6</sup> Alexander Gordon, 'Vaughan, Robert Alfred', revised by Anne Stott, *ODNB*.

<sup>7</sup> 'Government by Journalism', p. 660; 'The Future of Journalism', p. 670.

When the authorship of General Booth's *In Darkest England* became a matter for debate, Stead initially described himself as being merely the author's amanuensis, although, afterwards, he accepted greater responsibility for the book and for his role as ghost-writer.<sup>8</sup> Later, he wrote that if he were to be remembered in a hundred years' time, if at all, it would be as Julia's amanuensis, as the writer of ghost-messages.<sup>9</sup> In 1897, *Letters from Julia, or Light from the Borderland, Received by Automatic Writing from One Who Has Gone Before* was published, and, during the years 1897–1909, it was reprinted seven times.<sup>10</sup> In 1909, Stead established Julia's Bureau, as an office for the receipt of communications from beyond the frontiers of the temporal and corporeal. Separately from the *RoR* and despite the closure of *Borderland*, Stead remained in private a spiritualist and continued the practice of automatic writing which he considered to be the sole supernatural capability over which he had some mastery.

Stead's collaboration with Cecil Rhodes leads us to the intersection of spiritualism with imperialism. In referencing two religious organisations, the Jesuits and the Salvation Army, Stead gestured to his own ambition of creating a similar entity that would harness the 'sacred fire of patriotic devotion'.<sup>11</sup> The Jesuits and the Salvation Army suggested themselves because 1890, the year of launch of the *RoR*, was the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Society of Jesus and the year in which the Salvation Army was to establish its social service wing.

The evocation of the Salvation Army's socio-religious mission suggested to Stead the creation of the Civic Church while the Jesuit 'Society of Jesus' gave expression not only to an international outlook but also to the creation of a putative secret society endowed with the power to influence the course of events abroad. This represented his contribution to the work of Cecil Rhodes whose ambitions and ideas influenced Stead's vision for a federated British empire of the English-speaking peoples.<sup>12</sup> In consequence, Stead temporarily became one of the executors and beneficiaries of Rhodes's oft-revised last Will and Testament.<sup>13</sup>

Rhodes's estate was largely used to establish scholarships at Oxford University for students from the United States, South Africa, Rhodesia (now Zambia and Zimbabwe), Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Jamaica, Bermuda, and, in the hope of strengthening so-called Teutonic ties, Germany.<sup>14</sup> Money was also left for specific political projects that included provision for the promotion of Britain's imperial interests.<sup>15</sup> Stead's condemnation of what he judged an

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<sup>8</sup> Eckley, pp. 187–188.

<sup>9</sup> Whyte, I, p. 324.

<sup>10</sup> Whyte, I, p. 325.

<sup>11</sup> 'To All English-Speaking Folk', *RoR*, 1 (1890), pp. 18, 19, 17.

<sup>12</sup> *The Last Will And Testament Of Cecil John Rhodes With Elucidatory Notes To Which Are Added Some Chapters Describing The Political And Religious Ideas Of The Testator*, ed. by W. T. Stead (London: *Review of Reviews*, 1902), pp. 99–102.

<sup>13</sup> *The Last Will And Testament Of Cecil John Rhodes*, ed. by Stead, p. 104. In Rhodes's fifth will.

<sup>14</sup> *The Last Will And Testament Of Cecil John Rhodes*, ed. by Stead, pp. 32, 34, 35.

<sup>15</sup> Marks and Trapido, 'Rhodes, Cecil John', *ODNB*.

unnecessary war placed him in opposition to Rhodes who, in consequence, removed Stead's name from his will. Any ambitions he had envisioned of determining Britain's wider imperial interests would have to be fulfilled outside of Rhodes's continuing circle of influence.<sup>16</sup>

Stead had often repeated that newspaper editors needed to know their facts, have access to everybody of influence, and know the opinion of the whole population on a wide range of subjects.<sup>17</sup> The obtention of information would come from public and private meetings and from reading a vast array of print materials. That an editor would become exhausted by such a role explains, in part, Stead's promotion of projects that he hoped would be self-energising and self-realising, even relegating himself to the role of enabling functionary rather than prominent activist. In becoming the facilitator of messages between the temporal and the eternal, he further envisioned himself as a telephone-exchange operator, connecting callers to their intended parties so that they could pursue communication without further need of his help. The Stead who had made such a noise while becoming involved in so many major debates of the late-nineteenth century was able to agitate on a more personal level without having to be the supposed or real leader of campaigns for change.

In the 1890s, Stead had more or less failed in each of his visionary, final-decade, projects for a Civic Church, a mainstream role for spiritualist beliefs, and promotion of Britain's federated, imperial, interests. Nevertheless, by the end of the nineteenth century, Stead had acquired, and consolidated, a major national and international reputation which his current relative obscurity belies. Beyond the nineteenth century, this thesis can only point to the Edwardian Stead, who continued to campaign, and to crusade, for improvement in the lives of the least well-off, world peace, and the tenets of the Social Gospel.

Stead made two connected attempts to return to daily newspaper journalism. In 1893, the November number of the *RoR* published the objectives of this new venture and the details of a novel business plan that aimed to raise finance through a debenture bond scheme.<sup>18</sup> Resembling the *RoR* in format, the forty-page *Daily Paper* intended to report not only on politics, finance, and social questions, but also to contribute to the religious lives of its readership by including reports on matters of church and chapel interest. The specimen paper carried an article on 'The Church Congress at Birmingham', asked 'Is Rural Dissent Doomed?', and introduced features entitled 'In Place of Morning Service' and 'The Saint of the Day'.<sup>19</sup> These latter two features were designed to compensate for a perceived decline in attendance at

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<sup>16</sup> *The Last Will And Testament Of Cecil John Rhodes*, ed. by Stead, p. 49. In a codicil dated January 1901.

<sup>17</sup> 'Government by Journalism', p. 668; 'The Future of Journalism', pp. 664, 668, 669.

<sup>18</sup> 'An Offer of £100,000 to My Readers', *RoR*, 8 (1893), 347—350; 'The Daily paper', *RoR*, 8 (1893), 461—462.

<sup>19</sup> 'The Church Congress at Birmingham' (p. 6), 'Is Rural Dissent Doomed?' (p. 7), 'In Place of Morning Service' (p. 12), 'The Saint of the Day' (p. 13), *Daily Paper*, 4 October 1893.

morning services, in the holding of daily family prayers, and in religious belief. To Stead's disappointment, however, the project failed to gain traction and it was left in abeyance.

Running from 4 January to 9 February 1904, and promoted by an extravagant advertising campaign featuring canvassers, circulars, placards, sandwich-board advertisers on parade, and the launching of pictures, cheques, postcards, and guncotton salutes from a balloon, a second *Daily Paper* was launched.<sup>20</sup> Aimed at the subscribing 'domestic reader' rather than the commuting worker, the twelve-page paper was to be delivered in the two hours before noon by a 'Messenger Brigade' which also had the responsibility of bringing back to the distribution centres any red envelopes used to carry 'messages, orders, letters to the editor, answers to puzzles, and advertisements'.<sup>21</sup> Such arrangements pointed to the ambition to create an interactive relationship between the paper's readership and its producers, and was further testament to the value that Stead placed on the building of associative undertakings and activist communities.

Amongst the aims of the 1904 *Daily Paper* was the pledge to be politically non-partisan, of equal interest to men, women, and children, and to be a standard-bearer for the values of the home in the shaping of 'municipalities, states, and Empires'.<sup>22</sup> The paper aimed to be resolutely optimistic, and in declaring that it 'will from day to day endeavour to do unto others as we wish others to do unto us', Stead shifted the declared emphasis from the previously frequently proclaimed ambition of building the Kingdom of God on Earth to Christ's message of turning the other cheek and returning kindness for malice.<sup>23</sup> However, this new daily newspaper venture proved too strenuous an undertaking and resulted in Stead's severe nervous collapse and an end to the project.<sup>24</sup>

After his loss aboard the *Titanic*, Stead's will stated that his papers and correspondence should be kept together:

I hand over for examination all my private papers, mss., letters to or for myself, automatic writing, diaries, and everything of an auto-biographical or private personal interest, to my eldest daughter Emma Wilson Stead, commonly called Estelle, to be dealt with by her at her sole discretion.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Eckley, pp. 283—284, 286.

<sup>21</sup> Eckley, p. 284.

<sup>22</sup> 'Aims', *Daily Paper*, 4 January 1904, p. 8.

<sup>23</sup> 'Aims', *Daily Paper*, 4 January 1904, p. 8.

<sup>24</sup> Whyte, II, p. 235

<sup>25</sup> Eckley, p. 374.

It would appear that there is sufficient material out there somewhere for a biography capable of doing justice to Stead's myriad contributions to social reform, political change, and democratising agitation.

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