

Gladstone and John Stuart Mill: an intellectual history of Mill's influence on Gladstone's political and economic philosophy.

In the course of my Ph.D. research on *Sound Finance: Gladstone and British Government Finance, 1880-1895* (LSE 2005) I had the opportunity to consult Gladstone's personal collection of books at St. Diniol's Library in Hawarden, Wales (endowed by Gladstone with his library). Although I knew from the Gladstone diaries that Gladstone had read Mill, I was delighted to discover just how extensive that reading was. It was to be expected that *Principles of Political Economy* and *On Liberty* would have influenced Gladstone, but I was surprised to find just how wide ranging and thorough was his reading of Mill, particularly the literary criticism. This was especially interesting in light of the well known reluctance of Gladstone to honour Mill's death, although in fact they had corresponded and communicated when Mill was in Parliament. It is my contention that Mill's influence upon Gladstone was much more significant than has generally been acknowledged, and never more important than when Gladstone was formulating his policies for Irish Home Rule in 1886 and 1892. David Bebbington's recent study *Gladstone's Mind* (2004) has demonstrated the importance of intellectual influences upon Gladstone's political policies and thought, but whereas Aristotle, Dante and Bishop Butler are fully recognized Mill is not. This is due in no small part I think to the devout Gladstone's awkward relationship with the profoundly secular Mill, the latter's thought was both morally and politically dangerous to the high Church politician. Yet Gladstone's respect for Mill's writing and intellect transcended these qualms, and in the end he paid Mill his highest acknowledgement by using his ideas for policy formulation and incorporating them into his own moral crusade for Irish Home Rule.

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