

## John Bright, Lancashire and the American Civil War

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**John Bright, Lancashire and the American Civil War**

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Sheffield Hallam University  
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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of History by Research awarded by Sheffield Hallam University.

## Abstract

This thesis aims to bridge the gap between the American Civil War and John Bright biographical historiography. It will re-evaluate the role of Bright's transatlantic network and how it shaped his perspectives on the conflict, which has often been undermined by historiography. In doing this, it will reconsider Anglo-American relations and what issues were of considerable importance to Bright. Bright played a vital role in communicating with American citizens and has sometimes been overlooked by historians, with much emphasis being placed on Richard Cobden. The evidence used to demonstrate his significance in affairs was notably the collection MS 43391 from the British Library, as well as the *Rochdale Observer* and *Manchester Guardian* newspapers. This source from the British Library has been under-utilised by historians and therefore will offer a different approach into Anglo-American relations. Additionally, Bright's speeches from Rochdale, Birmingham and the House of Commons were used in order to connect Bright's private and public circles. Bright's oratory skills were exemplary, and these speeches are an excellent showcase of his opinions and talent. The themes that will be discussed in these letters include British attitudes towards the war, abolition, the 'Cotton Famine', Manchester's support for the Union, capital punishment and how the debates surrounding these topics evolved throughout the conflict. Britain's policy of neutrality remained controversial throughout the conflict, and in this thesis the reasons for its controversy will be addressed. Where other works on Anglo-American relations have focused heavily on the question of slavery, this research aims to re-evaluate the evolution of Bright's correspondence by shedding light on his interest in capital punishment, which is a lesser known aspect of his career. It contributes to our existing understanding of Anglo-American relations and the American Civil War more broadly but aims to centralise Bright's engagement in his transatlantic network.

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# John Bright, Lancashire and the American Civil War

## Introduction

John Bright is undoubtedly a significant figure in British political history for his support of enfranchisement in Britain, as well as his involvement in the Anti-Corn Law League and his encouragement of pacifism during the Crimean War. His advocacy for democracy was inspired by the American system and the ideals of liberty and equality that were stated in the United States Constitution. Bright is usually spoken about alongside Richard Cobden, M.P. for Rochdale and fellow free-trader. Yet, Cobden is often given greater recognition because he had visited America and introduced himself to those in this transatlantic network, and because of this his role was of greater significance to Americans.

However, Bright was similarly as active in the transatlantic networks and therefore deserves equal recognition to Cobden.<sup>1</sup> Bright played a vital role in maintaining lines of communication with prominent Americans during the American Civil War, and as a result was a highly regarded individual across the Atlantic. Positive relations with Britain were integral to Union survival as British intervention on the side of the Confederacy would have secured their victory. Bright was admired by Lincoln for the ‘courage and sagacity’ of his campaigning for the American cause in England ‘in the four tragic years of 1861-1864.’<sup>2</sup> Robert Walling was referring to the various national speeches that Bright held in support of the Union, however much of Bright’s campaigning was done privately, through letters, in his transatlantic network. This was

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<sup>1</sup> In Parliament and publicly they were both known for being advocates of the Union and American cause. So, in their eyes both Bright and Cobden appeared to be viewed as equally vocal on the American Question.

<sup>2</sup> R. A. J. Walling (ed.), *The Diaries of John Bright, with a foreword by Philip Bright* (New York, 1931), p. 252.

a network that consisted of a variety of American citizens, whose occupations ranged from State Governors, abolitionists, economists and journalists. It was a group of like-minded people that supported the Union and hoped to maintain peaceful Anglo-American relations.

Central to understanding the importance of these relationships is the notion of the “Atlantic world.” This incorporated a network of communication emphasised by some historians as being a place where ‘everyone living in it had values which if they were not shared around the Atlantic were certainly reshaped in some way by others living in different parts of the Atlantic basin, and where events in one small geographical area were likely to stimulate a reaction...thousands of miles away.’<sup>3</sup> It was not ‘a single Atlantic society’ but rather a ‘set of societies.’<sup>4</sup> Undoubtedly, this notion was of utmost importance to Lincoln’s understanding of foreign policy and America’s role internationally. Consequently, the receptiveness of the President to British attitudes, and vice-versa, at such a divisive point in American history has become a key focus among scholars. In keeping with such trends, this research will highlight the impact of the American Civil War on the relationship between the United States and Britain, whilst also readdressing the lacking historiographic attention paid to Bright’s role in maintaining such networks.

With this in mind, the primary aim of this thesis is to re-examine the role of John Bright’s transatlantic network in shaping his perspectives on British attitudes. It will pay particular attention to the opinions of Bright and those in the north-west regions of Rochdale and Manchester. This focus on regional opinion over more general responses

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<sup>3</sup> B. Bailyn, *Atlantic History: Concept and Contours*, (Harvard, 2005), p. 59

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p. 59.

brings together a personal interest in the relationship between the north-west of England, as the region depended heavily on cotton imports from America, and a desire to challenge the existing historical consensus, which marginalises the importance of these areas. By focusing on a different area, a state of regional comparison is produced, and the worker's opinions are acknowledged as opposed to the elite of the South.

John Bright, prior to the conflict, was heavily involved in British politics. He was a notable member of the Anti-Corn Law League, along with Richard Cobden, and together they had led the extra-parliamentary campaign for a free trade system in Britain. More importantly, he was MP for Birmingham and was central in campaigning for the extension of the franchise in Britain. His speeches regarding enfranchisement were highly influential due to his oratorical skills and were described by George Russell as 'the effective instruments by which great changes in human affairs were brought about.'<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, he embodied international pacificism through Quakerism, which was best demonstrated during the Crimean War and his vocal support for British neutrality. However, he believed in a defensive war and pacificism and although he was 'never an unequivocal pacifist...he is perhaps best remembered for the witness he bore against his country's participation in war.'<sup>6</sup> Bright believed that the principles he held stemmed from American democracy and 'was convinced that the United States substantially embodied the ideals he preached.'<sup>7</sup> One principle was abolition, which closely linked with the Quaker movement due to their preliminary involvement in denouncing slavery in both Britain and America. While Bright supported the abolition of slavery, he did

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<sup>5</sup> G. E. W. Russell, 'John Bright', *The North American Review*, 202:719 (October, 1915), p. 560.

<sup>6</sup> S. Holton, 'John Bright, Radical Politics, and the Ethos of Quakerism', *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, 34:4 (Winter, 2002), p. 597.

<sup>7</sup> K. Robbins, *John Bright* (London, 1979), p. 155.



not identify as abolitionist nor commit himself to the abolitionist movement. When defining an ‘abolitionist’, James McPherson believed it to be an individual ‘who before the Civil War had agitated for the immediate, unconditional and total abolition of slavery in the United States.’<sup>8</sup> Therefore as Bright prioritised policies such as the extension of the franchise, this explains why he did not identify as an abolitionist.

### **Literature Review**

The thesis intends to move beyond abolition and add to our existing understanding of British neutrality, the ‘Cotton Famine’, Manchester’s unwavering Union support and capital punishment in Britain, and what that meant for the Anglo-American relationship. The ‘Cotton Famine’ refers to the collapse of the cotton industry in Lancashire which was a result of the Union blockade on Confederate ports, which led to mass unemployment in the region. As a county it was vital during the war, not only for its cotton trade with the Confederacy but also its support of the Union. Whilst this thesis is concerned with a small area of Lancashire, the pattern of support on both sides is very different in dissimilar places. Liverpool were strongly supportive of the Confederacy from the outset, which was a result of their financial connections over the handling of cotton shipments. Blackburn held many meetings discussing the American Civil War, but at its outbreak were concerned with British intervention in order to help end the conflict before it could begin. At one meeting in Blackburn in 1862, when the suggestion was put forward as to why Lancashire’s workers should suffer in order to free ‘four million negroes’, William Aitkin of Ashton-under-Lyne was ‘greeted by

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<sup>8</sup> J. M. McPherson, *The Abolitionist Legacy: From Reconstruction to the NAACP* (New Jersey, 1976), p. 4.

hisses.’<sup>9</sup> Therefore it is clear that as a whole, Lancashire’s opinions on the conflict were divided and not coherent as a county.

However, Mary Ellison, *Support for Secession* (1972), stated that Lancashire’s support of the Union was a ‘myth’ formulated by Richard Cobden and John Bright.<sup>10</sup> Through the utilisation of statistics regarding the number of pro-Union and pro-Confederate meetings, she concluded that the claim of Lancashire being a loyal Union supporter was false. This largely came from a dislike of Lincoln as ‘to the majority Lincoln was no more than an obstacle to the independence of the South and the renewal of the cotton supply.’<sup>11</sup> It is true that opinions were divided here during the conflict, but this research will challenge her work and demonstrate that there was ample support for the Union.

Whilst Ellison relied on newspaper sources and outlets, this research will use relatively neglected sources, mainly the British Library volume of correspondence concerning Bright and American citizens. By using these letters, it will re-evaluate the transatlantic view of the conflict and how Americans perceived Lancashire’s support of the Union. Nonetheless, her work demonstrated that there was working-class support for the Confederacy in certain regions of Lancashire.<sup>12</sup> Although there is evidence to suggest that Lancashire was sympathetic towards the Confederacy, the workers strongly supported the abolition of slavery. Even Ellison highlighted this by referring to the small Ashton branch of the Union and Emancipation Society, which sent a letter to Lincoln in 1863 supporting the Emancipation Proclamation and abolition.<sup>13</sup> This

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<sup>9</sup> P. Foner, *British Labour and the American Civil War* (New York, 1981), p. 36.

<sup>10</sup> M. Ellison, *Support for Secession: Lancashire and the American Civil War* (Chicago, 1975), p. ix.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, p. 188.

<sup>12</sup> Judith Fenner Gentry (1973) also agreed with this after reviewing *Support for Secession*. Throughout she did not state whether she disagreed with Ellison’s argument, but rather highlighted the breakthrough of her argument and praised her for adopting this approach.

<sup>13</sup> Ellison, *Support for Secession*, p. 71.

reinforces the idea that when abolition became a factor in the Civil War in late 1862, areas of Lancashire united to devote their support to the Union.

The complicated and multi-faceted relationship between the American Civil War and British public opinion has been examined by Richard J. M. Blackett. In *Divided Hearts: Britain and the American Civil War* (2001), he offered an in-depth analysis on British attitudes and allowed his work to serve as a ‘reminder’ of the international consequences of the Civil War. Blackett acknowledged the early interpretations and how they reinforced the ambiguity within the British public over the War, which was a result of the differing principles that the Americans and British held.<sup>14</sup> On the one hand, the upper classes were ‘anxious to see the establishment of two republics’, whilst the middle class was ‘supportive of emancipation, but angered by your “foolish tariff.”’<sup>15</sup> These opinions led to public agitation and Blackett analysed how far this contributed to consolidating alliances.

Although his focus was on metropolitan Britain, Blackett acknowledged the strong correlation between Lancashire’s hardships in the ‘Cotton Famine’ and Union support. He critically questioned Ellison’s argument of the existence of widespread Confederate backing in Lancashire and concluded that the region was very supportive of the Union.<sup>16</sup> Blackett argued that the working-class in Britain supported the Union because ‘slavery was the antithesis of everything it stood for.’<sup>17</sup> For the working-class, slavery symbolised oppression and the authoritarian power of the aristocracy. Furthermore, Blackett acknowledged the shared interest that both Britain and America had in British abolition, which became more significant when emancipation entered transatlantic

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<sup>14</sup> R. J. M. Blackett, *Divided Hearts: Britain and the American Civil War* (Louisiana, 2001), p. 4.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, p. 124.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, p. 172.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, p. 4.

discussions. However, his focus is on the public debate which he did through his use of printed sources, and therefore overlooks the private conversations that occurred in transatlantic networks. This research will not only use printed newspaper sources as a means to contextualise Bright's speeches, but instead will also focus on the analysis of Bright's transatlantic network and the influence he had through the use of letters.

Similarly to Blackett, Duncan Andrew Campbell's re-examination of English attitudes towards the conflict in *English Public Opinion and the American Civil War* (2003) stated that British neutrality equally confused both the Union and Confederates, just as much as it did the English.<sup>18</sup> The traditional interpretation of Union support was that members of the working-class only supported the Union, and that the Union's desire for reunification and later the abolition of slavery resonated well with them. In comparison, most of the aristocracy were sympathetic towards the Confederacy as part of their concern lay with the future of the transatlantic cotton trade. He further argued that the above traditional interpretation of support was still acceptable, yet it did not mean that the working classes, for example, backed Union motives; many people were simply anti-slavery or against the Confederacy.<sup>19</sup> This is true to an extent, however MPs like Bright and Cobden were wealthier individuals, yet supported Lincoln, and the majority of Union supporters simply related to the North's moral principles. His attention on metropolitan newspapers explains why he examined 'English' as opposed to 'British' attitudes, which he explicitly stated was a result of his work focusing on the perspectives of those living in London, which therefore questions how far his work reflects British opinion.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> D. A. Campbell, *English Public Opinion and the American Civil War* (Suffolk, 2003), p. 1.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p. 5. See T. Keiser, 'The English Press and the American Civil War' (PhD, Reading, 1971). In this section Campbell disputes Keiser's conclusions.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, p. 15.

Moreover, this thesis adds to the recent scholarly trend of internationalising the Civil War.<sup>21</sup> It attempts to refine conclusions reached by previous biographers of Bright by demonstrating the influence he had in America. For many of these biographers, Bright was fundamental in British domestic campaigns to extend the franchise, free trade and for his beliefs in pacificism.<sup>22</sup> One of the few sources to hint at Bright's reputation in America was Miles Taylor's entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*: 'Bright's reputation soared in the United States: his portrait was hung in Lincoln's presidential offices, a tree was named after him in California, two small editions of his speeches were published in New York in 1862 and one in Boston in 1865, and countless invitations called on him to visit the country.'<sup>23</sup> This demonstrates the positive relationships that Bright maintained with America, which was largely a result of his transatlantic network.

Previous biographers such as Keith Robbins, *John Bright* (1979), argued that the outbreak of the Civil War symbolised a revival in Bright's career as he had previously experienced a period of low political activity and depression.<sup>24</sup> This was because his past campaigns in the Crimean War and electoral reform had quietened. The Civil War therefore acted as an opportunity for him to re-establish himself in the political sphere. Moreover, Robbins commented on Bright's initial thoughts on Lincoln winning the Republican presidential nomination, as William H. Seward was Bright's desired candidate.<sup>25</sup> Bright had already corresponded with Seward, and in doing so had

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<sup>21</sup> See D. Bellows, 'A Study of British Conservative Reaction to the American Civil War', *The Journal of Southern History*, 51:4 (November, 1995), pp. 505-526. See R. J. M. Blackett, *Divided Hearts: Britain and the American Civil War* (Louisiana, 2001). See D. A. Campbell, *English Public Opinion and the American Civil War* (Suffolk, 2001).

<sup>22</sup> Earlier historians such as Margaret E. Hirst, *John Bright: A Study* (1945), referred to these principles and how pivotal they were to Bright's career. She stated that these principles influenced Bright's opinions on the conflict, and how from its outset it was a war of emancipation.

<sup>23</sup> M. Taylor, 'John Bright 1811-1889', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.lcproxy.shu.ac.uk/view/article/3421?docPos=3> [02/10/2017]

<sup>24</sup> Robbins, *John Bright*, p. 155.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, p, 156.

established a relationship with him, explaining why he was initially preferred to Lincoln. Nonetheless, Robbins stated that overall Bright ‘rapidly became an American hero’ and had a significant impact on Anglo-American relations.<sup>26</sup> This thesis will demonstrate Bright’s popularity in America through the analysis of his transatlantic correspondence and will shed light on his interests that are often overlooked by historians. Robbins focused on Bright’s role in the Anti-Corn Law League and the extension of the franchise, and his interest in the American conflict. However, Bright’s interest in the abolition of capital punishment in some American states has gone unnoticed. Although Bright did not play a large role in the campaigns for its abolition in Britain, he publicly spoke about his opinion on public executions in the House of Commons in 1868.

Unlike the existing historiography, which aims to downplay the relationship between the significance of public opinion in the north-west, the United States’ response to this opinion, and the role of Bright as a mediator between the two nations, this thesis acts as a bridge between the American Civil War and Bright’s biographical history which it does through drawing together different strands of historiography. Nevertheless, it is not the aim of this research to reach conclusions similar to those of Bill Cash, who suggested that Bright enjoyed a “special friendship” with Lincoln. In *John Bright: Statesman, Orator, Agitator* (2012), Cash demonstrated the strength of these connections by stating that Lincoln’s inner circle saw ‘Bright’s reputation and commitment’ as ‘legendary.’<sup>27</sup> Bright’s support of the Union led to the idea of a

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid, p. 168.

<sup>27</sup> B. Cash, *John Bright: Statesman, Orator, Agitator* (London, 2012), p. 146.

“friendship” between Lincoln and Bright, despite little to no correspondence between them, which illustrates the ‘profound influence’ that Bright had on Lincoln.<sup>28</sup>

Similarly, Trevelyan’s *The Life of John Bright* (1913), has also suggested a more personal relationship between Bright and Lincoln. He did this through utilising a copy of the resolution that Lincoln sent to Bright regarding what should be adopted at public meetings in England, which suggests that their “friendship” was one based on admiration and mutual respect.<sup>29</sup> Additionally, Trevelyan paid attention to the emotive impact of Lincoln’s assassination, illustrated by Bright’s personal diary, which revealed his reluctance to write eulogies for the late President, believing that it was more important to have spoken about him when he was alive.<sup>30</sup> Although Cash discussed Bright’s relationship with Lincoln, other Bright biographers like Keith Robbins have had little to say about his reputation in America. Yet Cash’s treatment of this theme is deficient because Bright’s correspondence has demonstrated that he was involved in a wide variety of issues such as British neutrality, abolition and capital punishment in America. This thesis dismantles the idea of their “friendship” and when discussing Bright’s legacy and political career these are important aspects that cannot be overlooked when creating a fuller picture of Bright’s relations with America.

Despite this, Lincoln biographers have downplayed Bright’s importance in American affairs. Louise Stevenson, *Lincoln in the Atlantic World* (2015), argued that ‘to Americans of the present day, John Bright is an unknown figure of unknown historical importance.’<sup>31</sup> The presidency of Barack Obama has gone some way to restore some

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<sup>28</sup> B. Cash, ‘Abraham Lincoln and John Bright: A Special Relationship’, *NewStatesman*, <https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2013/03/abraham-lincoln-and-john-bright-special-relationship> [accessed 28/8/18]

<sup>29</sup> G. M. Trevelyan, *The Life of John Bright* (London, 1913), p. 303.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, p. 326.

<sup>31</sup> L. Stevenson, *Lincoln in the Atlantic World* (Cambridge, 2015), p. 128.

importance to Bright's name, but much more scholarly attention is needed.<sup>32</sup> His significance in Anglo-American relations was re-established through Obama's speech at Westminster Hall in 2011 where he quoted Bright's famous phrase 'the mother of Parliaments.'<sup>33</sup> Similarly to Stevenson, Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Team of Rivals* (2013), did not discuss the importance of John Bright's role in transatlantic correspondence, choosing to omit any mention of 'John Bright', 'Manchester', or 'Lancashire.' Goodwin instead focused on Lincoln's presidential nomination in 1860, and how his running mate William Seward was the desired candidate. She explains this by referring to Seward's correspondence with Britain and stressed the importance that this had on relations.<sup>34</sup> However this thesis will refer to Bright's letters with Charles Sumner, and the role that Sumner played in Bright's transatlantic network.

Alongside this, Stevenson examined how Africa and Europe helped Lincoln to develop his policies, and as a result of this he 'frequently placed the United States in a global context.'<sup>35</sup> Stevenson believed that Lincoln's legacy had been hindered by previous historians as they observed him within a national framework, and her work aimed to incorporate his relationships with other nations. She also stated that the Atlantic world influenced Lincoln's early life and knowledge of 'republican hopes', which later affected his foreign policy and speeches.<sup>36</sup> These 'republican hopes' contributed to Lincoln's views on a potential Anglo-American conflict as a result of British neutrality, which were that he 'had no intention of fighting two wars at once.'<sup>37</sup> Whilst understanding Lincoln's foreign policy is important for American historiography, this

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid, p. 128. Obama's speech in Westminster Hall in 2011 would have been important to Bright because it would have justified his campaign and support for the Union as Obama was the first African-American president of the United States.

<sup>33</sup> Cash, 'Abraham Lincoln and John Bright' [accessed 28/8/18]

<sup>34</sup> D. K. Goodwin, *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln* (London,2013), p. 364.

<sup>35</sup> Stevenson, *Lincoln in the Atlantic World*, p. 1.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, p. 4.

<sup>37</sup> Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*, p. 363.



research is more concerned with Anglo-American relations. Evidently there was an overlapping interest in the war, on both sides of the Atlantic.

### **Methodology**

This thesis is structured chronologically rather than thematically in order to demonstrate not only the clear evolution of the nature of Bright's correspondence, but also the unfolding of the Civil War itself. The main source used for this thesis was archival material, mostly letters from the British Library.<sup>38</sup> These were consulted in order to gain an insight into the topics of discussion, what Bright's interests were and undoubtedly how Bright was received by Americans. In the context of the Civil War, letters are important to analyse as it was a means of explaining attitudes towards Britain or America. During this period writing letters symbolised 'to some extent a break with the conventional Victorian pattern, which compromised either memoirs sinking under the weight of official documents, or lives and letters...'<sup>39</sup> For Sarah Pearsall, the writing of letters 'sought to convey honesty and authenticity' of people's opinions.<sup>40</sup> Due to the number of congratulatory letters that he received, it is evident that Bright was popular in American political circles. As well as this collection, letters between Bright and Charles Sumner, who was Republican Senator for Massachusetts, was significant because Sumner had a close friendship with Lincoln. Personal letters were vital for this research as they provided an in-depth insight into people's attitudes of the time.

However, in order to connect private and public circles, Bright's speeches from Rochdale, one in Birmingham regarding the cotton supply and those in the House of

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<sup>38</sup> The specific collection used was Add. MS. 43391, containing Bright's correspondence with citizens of the United States of America.

<sup>39</sup> A. Howe & S. Morgan (eds.) *The Letters of Richard Cobden. Volume IV: 1860-1865*, (Oxford, 2015), p. xxi.

<sup>40</sup> S. M. S. Pearsall, *Atlantic Families: Lives and Letters in the Later Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 2008), p. 240.

Commons were also examined. Bright was renowned for his oratorical abilities and has become ‘one of the most respected orators in parliamentary history.’<sup>41</sup> Therefore critically observing his speeches has assisted in highlighting his passion for the American cause and helps to illustrate where some of Bright’s ideas originated from, and how at times he contradicted the advice he received in his letters. In addition, this thesis will utilise contemporary newspaper reports in order to provide an understanding to the political backdrop of the period. The *Rochdale Observer* was examined at Touchstones Library, Rochdale, in conjunction with the *Manchester Guardian* and the *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser* because they provided up to date coverage on the Civil War whilst shedding light on public opinion in Lancashire through their liberal viewpoint. Particularly the *Rochdale Observer* and the *Manchester Courier* as sources have been overlooked by Bright biographical historians, which perhaps is due to their lack of original coverage of the conflict, and therefore using these sources re-evaluates opinions of the Civil War in Lancashire. This emphasises a move outside of metropolitan London and a concentration on the north-west of England.

Whilst analysing their reports the papers reprinted Bright’s speeches, which were either sent to Americans via his transatlantic network or their own newspapers reprinted them. Newspapers such as the *Daily Green Mountain Freeman* and the *New York Times* frequently provided coverage on Bright’s speeches and were often accompanied with pleasant words about his support for the Union, which created an increase in the number of letters that Bright received.<sup>42</sup> On the whole, newspapers were important for this thesis because they provided an insight into the opinions of the press during the conflict. Utilising them has also demonstrated the influence that Bright had in his own

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<sup>41</sup> Holton, ‘John Bright, Radical Politics, and the Ethos of Quakerism’, p. 602.

<sup>42</sup> The *Daily Green Mountain Freeman* was an anti-slavery newspaper from Montpelier, Vermont.

transatlantic network as the majority of his letters started with words of congratulations on his previous speeches that supported the Union.

### **Chapter Outline**

In order to analyse the evolution of the nature of Bright's correspondence from 1861 to 1865, this thesis has been divided into three chronological chapters, which focus on different themes within the archival material. Chapter one establishes Bright's place in the transatlantic network and assesses Anglo-American relations at the commencement of the War until 1862. Additionally, it examines the discussions in the letters and concludes that British neutrality appeared a greater issue in correspondence than abolition. Building on from this, chapter two demonstrates how similar discussions were present from the end of 1862 through to 1863. It aims to illustrate how although abolition was central to the conflict, British neutrality remained the pressing issue. The resilience of Manchester and Lancashire cotton workers following the 'Cotton Famine' was evidently recognised by Americans, as this chapter highlights, and therefore challenges Mary Ellison's argument that Union support in the North of England was a 'myth.'<sup>43</sup>

Finally, the closing chapter illustrates the final evolution of Bright's correspondence with America. It moves away from abolition and shows how issues like capital punishment in America appeared to be an interest of Bright's, even though it is often overlooked by historians. It was an important aspect of Bright's ideals which stemmed from his Quaker roots and demonstrates how his religious morals influenced his politics. Overall, this thesis re-evaluates the link between American and Bright

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<sup>43</sup> Ellison, *Support for Secession*, p. ix.

biographical history and centralises Bright's engagement in his transatlantic network. It attempts to move away from the conflict itself and instead focuses on his interests and discussions in his network through the use of correspondence.

## Chapter 1

### British Neutrality, the Trent Affair and Cotton

On January 22<sup>nd</sup> 1862, Anson Gleason wrote to John Bright asking ‘have you room in your noble philanthropic heart for a yankee stranger, who with his family has been recently very highly entertained and electrified by your late speech at the dinner in Rochdale...’<sup>1</sup> This is an effective illustration of the involvement that Bright had in Anglo-American affairs and of his transatlantic reach. Gleason was a Presbyterian minister who had served as the missionary for the Choctaw Indians. The dinner that he was referring to, held in December 1861, was in honour of Bright.<sup>2</sup> Bright used this opportunity as an attempt to explain the struggle not only to the people that were present, but to the tens of thousands of countrymen and Americans who ‘might see that there was yet one man in England who did not forget he was allied with them in language and blood.’<sup>3</sup> The alliance in ‘language and blood’ helps to explain why Bright was so active in his transatlantic network, where they discussed a wide range of issues including their electoral system, Britain’s policy of neutrality, and quite notably, slavery.

The early years of the conflict mirror the confusion in Bright’s correspondence, yet these letters proved to be influential in explaining concepts that would help Britain understand the nature of the conflict. Bright’s correspondence with Americans dated back to the 1850s, which will also be examined in this chapter in order to gain a wider understanding of his interest in America. This early correspondence demonstrated the

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<sup>1</sup> BL, Gleason-Bright MS, Add MS 43391, Gleason to Bright, 22. Jan. 1862, f. 96.

<sup>2</sup> It was attended by gentlemen from across the country, including Thomas H Dudley who served as the Consulate of Liverpool and Richard Cobden.

<sup>3</sup> ‘The Rochdale Observer’, *The Rochdale Observer*, 7. Dec. 1861, p. 4.

topics that were circulating across the Atlantic in a network that consisted of American political figures, abolitionists and Bright, whilst also illustrating the tensions between Britain and America. It further tells us how Bright undoubtedly took an interest in America due to their shared advocacy of principles such as liberty and democracy.

This chapter aims to establish the level of correspondence prior to and at the commencement of the American Civil War, and to demonstrate Bright's influence at this early stage. This will be done by dividing this chapter into sub sections based on the themes that were most frequently deliberated. On the whole the discussions correlated with the events of the Civil War, but the range of topics also broadened out to certain policies maintained by America and Britain towards one another. The themes that will be examined include the American electoral system, British neutrality, the *Trent Affair*, the Civil War, slavery and an alternative cotton supply.

First, the letters of recognition that Bright received will be discussed in order to gain an understanding of how influential he was amongst his transatlantic counterparts. The 'cult of Bright' that Patrick Joyce described is undeniable when analysing the number of letters that explicitly showered him with praise and congratulations on his defence of the Union in the 'American Question.'<sup>4</sup> The increased number of letters and cult that was created gave Bright a modern-day 'celebrity' status. In his analysis of the concept in this period, Simon Morgan has used Chris Rojek's definition of celebrity as 'the attribution of glamorous or notorious status to an individual within the public sphere.'<sup>5</sup> Morgan's work demonstrated the nature and scale of popularity, but this can be applied to this research. For Bright, it was his involvement in electoral reform and his

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<sup>4</sup> P. Joyce, *Democratic Subject: The Self and the Social in Nineteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 142.

<sup>5</sup> S. Morgan, 'Celebrity: Academic 'Pseudo-Event' or a Useful Concept for Historians?', *Celebrity, Cultural and Social History*, 8:1 (May, 2015), p. 96.

conversion to franchise extension that transformed him into a celebrity in Britain, at least since his Anti-Corn Law days. However, the letters of congratulations that Bright received help to demonstrate, by also using this definition, that his celebrity status could span across the Atlantic. His previous campaigns had wider implications and were recognised by Americans, and as a result transformed Bright into this celebrity figure.

Secondly, Bright was involved in discussing the American electoral system within his network because Bright campaigned for the extension of the franchise and admired the American system of ‘one man, one vote.’ As a result of his idolisation of American democracy Bright believed that Britain should adopt a similar system. Thirdly, Britain’s policy of neutrality was an issue that frequently appeared in Bright’s correspondence. Britain’s Proclamation of Neutrality issued in 1861 was largely contested in America which was made evident in these letters and was interpreted as support for the Confederacy. Neutrality was adopted not only to protect British interests and trade, but in order to not get involved in a foreign conflict. The issue of neutrality is important in this chapter as it helped demonstrate what caused the tensions in Anglo-American relations, which was the misinterpretation of Union motives by the public and Parliament, but Bright’s speeches in Rochdale attempted to explain the reasons for the struggle. The rise in tensions between Britain and America leads onto the next theme of correspondence, which, fourthly, is the *Trent Affair* and its impact on relations. A turbulent event such as this breached transatlantic code and potentially would have made it a transatlantic war; for the Union therefore, this would have been a war on two fronts. The British believed that this incident breached transatlantic code because of a nation’s right to freely travel the seas, but it was also perceived as an insult to the British flag. *Trent* is important to acknowledge due to the severe strain that it placed on Anglo-American relations. However, Bright’s correspondence with Charles

Sumner proved influential in attempting to ease these tensions in order to prevent a transatlantic war occurring.

Despite slavery being a vital aspect of the Civil War, Lincoln had not mentioned the abolition of slavery as an aim for the Federal side, but instead focused on the maintenance of the Union. However, Southern secession symbolised the protection of slavery as an institution and therefore it was unsurprising that it was mentioned as early as 1861. Bright corresponded with American abolitionists such as Lindley Murray Moore and Bright concluded that British neutrality was the more suitable policy, for British intervention would demonstrate support for slavery. Although Civil War historiography has emphasised slavery's centrality to the conflict, this research re-evaluates its significance to Bright and demonstrates how other discussions were of equal importance in this period. It is not to say that Bright was not influential in the debates on slavery, but that he had a greater impact in his discussions on British neutrality and the *Trent Affair*.

Finally, the idea of an alternate cotton supply occurred frequently in Bright's correspondence. This was a significant topic as it demonstrated to the British people that there were different countries that produced cotton that did not exploit free labour. Edward Atkinson was pivotal in the correspondence, and through his papers aimed to explain to Bright how nations like India and Egypt produce a high-quality standard cotton. In turn, this would reduce pressure on the British demand for Southern cotton, leading to the downturn of the Confederate economy and thus a faster Union victory. Collectively these themes in this chapter will lay the foundations for the nature of Bright's transatlantic correspondence, and how the debates would evolve throughout the Civil War.



## **I - Letters of Recognition**

Bright received many letters of acknowledgement and appreciation because of his early speeches on the American Question and the *Trent Affair* in November 1861. Through his work in British domestic reform, free trade and the repealing of the Corn Laws, Bright gained ‘an iconic status in the history of both Quakerism and of middle-class radical politics, as “the Tribune of the people.”’<sup>6</sup> However, in more recent Anglo-American and American studies, Bright’s image is one of less importance. Duncan Andrew Campbell disputed Bright’s influence and status by arguing that ‘the one individual who deserves no credit whatsoever for the fact that there was no breakdown between Britain and the Union is Bright.’<sup>7</sup> Despite this negativity, Bright received letters of support and praise for his efforts in bringing awareness to the Union cause.

In contrast to Campbell, Eugenio Biagini argued that Bright positively used the conflict to express his admiration for U.S. democracy and the Union. Biagini stated that Bright ‘seized on its universal dimension and linked it to the passions, hopes and fears of the British people; he was able, through the press, to turn popular excitement into political support for his platform.’<sup>8</sup> Despite Biagini suggesting that Bright was interested in the Civil War to further his own agenda, it came at a time of quietness in his career.

Nonetheless, Biagini’s argument links with that of Simon Morgan’s research on “celebrity”, and in turn this research, in that the platform that Bright had created gave him a form of celebrity status that operated on a transatlantic scale. Although Morgan placed a greater emphasis on Richard Cobden and his popular public image, Bright’s influence on the ‘American Question’ is undeniable. Morgan attempted to re-evaluate

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<sup>6</sup> Holton, ‘John Bright, Radical Politics, and the Ethos of Quakerism’, p. 584.

<sup>7</sup> Campbell, *English Public Opinion and the American Civil War*, p. 241.

<sup>8</sup> E. F. Biagini, *Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform: Popular Liberalism in the Age of Gladstone, 1860-1880* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 376.

the relationship between the idea of a ‘celebrity’ and modernity and argued that celebrities did exist in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>9</sup> He further described the time at which an individual became a celebrity, which was when ‘a sufficiently large audience is interested in their actions, image and personality to create a viable market for commodities carrying their likeness and for information about their lives and views.’<sup>10</sup> From Morgan’s research and the correspondence used it is evident that Bright had created excitement surrounding his speeches and actions about America as the opening vignette to this chapter illustrated. He was already well known in British politics for his campaigning on the extension of the franchise, but his advocacy for the Union brought him an element of international ‘fame.’

Bright’s speeches were published in British newspapers which ranged from discussing issues such as the cotton supply, understanding the Civil War and its relation to the British workingmen and slavery. While his speeches were almost controversial on British soil due to the divide in public opinion, on the whole they appeared to be well received in America. The *Daily Green Mountain Freeman*, an anti-slavery newspaper from Vermont, recognised Bright’s speech in Rochdale on 4<sup>th</sup> December 1861 and described how the speech ‘from first to last was animated and inspired by the warmest friendship for our country, with sympathy for our unfortunate struggle, and with a strong faith in love and free institutions.’<sup>11</sup> Additionally the *Daily Nashville Union* perceived Bright to be ‘one of the most illustrious members of the British Parliament.’<sup>12</sup>

R. A. J. Walling explained how Bright was observed as a memorable politician by Americans because he ‘was the clearest, the most distinguished, and finally the most

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<sup>9</sup> Morgan, ‘Celebrity’, p. 95.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p. 98.

<sup>11</sup> ‘John Bright on American Affairs’, *The Daily Green Mountain Freeman*, 13. Jan. 1862, p. 2.

<sup>12</sup> ‘Important Letter’, *Daily Nashville Union*, 8. May. 1862, p. 2. This loyalist newspaper was very vocal in its pro-Union stance and received Government funding in order to better its telegraphic communication, which then contributed to better coverage of the conflict for its readers.

regarded of all voices that, from the onset of the crisis to the end, never wavered in support of Lincoln and the Union.’<sup>13</sup> This high regard was demonstrated in his correspondence, where individuals like Edward Atkinson stated that ‘your name stands first among Englishmen, as the best and truest friend of America.’<sup>14</sup> The idea of Bright being a ‘friend’ to the United States resulted in many people wanting to be associated with him, which was the case with Joseph Lyman. A Union soldier and lawyer, he described that ‘for your love of peace everywhere and universal humanity, you will allow me to call myself your obliged friend and humbled servant.’<sup>15</sup>

Similarly, some individuals believed that Bright and his speeches were a credit to the British nation. His unwavering support for the Union did not go unnoticed in transatlantic correspondence and he was vocal in establishing his predictions for the Civil War. In Rochdale in December 1861, he spoke to the recipients at the dinner party and discussed his thoughts on the future of America. Here he stated that:

‘But this I think I know, - that in a few years, a very few years, the twenty millions of freemen in the North will be thirty millions, or even fifty millions, - a population equal to or exceeding that of this kingdom.’<sup>16</sup>

Clearly Bright referred to the abolition of slavery, but it was also an example of his advocacy for the Union, which was greeted with lots of cheers and ‘waving of handkerchiefs’ from those who attended.<sup>17</sup> This was similarly evident in correspondence with Amasa Walker who argued that Bright had ‘done your own country and ours a great service by your efforts...’<sup>18</sup> This ‘service’ that Walker

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<sup>13</sup> Walling, *The Diaries of John Bright*, p. 252.

<sup>14</sup> BL, Atkinson-Bright MS, Add MS 43391, Atkinson to Bright, 6. Feb. 1862, f. 99.

<sup>15</sup> BL, Lyman-Bright MS, Add MS 43391, Lyman to Bright, 21. Dec. 1861, f. 73.

<sup>16</sup> F. Moore, *Speeches of John Bright M.P. on the American Question* (Boston, 1865), p. 66

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, p. 8.

<sup>18</sup> BL, Walker-Bright MS, Add MS 43391, Walker to Bright, 6. Jan. 1862, f. 79.

described regularly appeared in the letters, which almost suggests that Bright was viewed as a worker by the Americans. Bright's letters of recognition, alongside extracts printed in American newspapers, therefore are important to acknowledge in order to draw attention to his influential role in the transatlantic network at such an early and ambiguous stage in the conflict.

## **II - The American Electoral System**

In Bright's correspondence, the American electoral system appeared to be of significance to his politics and campaigning in British reform. Bright had respected America prior to the conflict as a result of the shared common principles that they both possessed: liberty, equality and morality. As a result of this admiration, he had been accused by his British counterparts of 'wanting to Americanize their country.'<sup>19</sup> Bright's enquiries reflected the influence that American democracy had on his own Parliamentary reform campaigns, most notably the extension of the franchise. Bright viewed the American system as one of freedom and being free 'meant not only to be ruled by others but also to participate in the process of ruling.'<sup>20</sup> Frank Moore, in his collection of Bright's speeches published in 1865, wrote how 'Mr. Bright was ever a sincere friend to the United States, and often bestowed unstinted praise upon the institutions of this country.'<sup>21</sup> This was reiterated by Keith Robbins, who argued 'Bright had long admired the United States, contrasting its open society and political institutions with his own country.'<sup>22</sup> Similarly, John Cole stated in the *Rochdale Observer* that 'John Bright's admiration for America had already earned him the

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<sup>19</sup> Stevenson, *Lincoln in the Atlantic World*, p. 131.

<sup>20</sup> C. Hall, K. McClelland & J. Rendall, *Defining the Victorian nation: Class, Race, Gender and the British Reform Act of 1867* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 58.

<sup>21</sup> Moore, *Speeches of John Bright M.P.*, p. x.

<sup>22</sup> Robbins, *John Bright*, p. 155.

description in Parliament as the “Member for the United States,” which demonstrated how important Bright was in Anglo-American affairs during this turbulent period.<sup>23</sup>

There was a clear link between his own principles and American democracy, as demonstrated in Ella Dzelzainis and Ruth Livesey’s research. British counterparts observed the American embodiment of democracy and individuals like Bright, and particularly Richard Cobden, admired the radical nature of American politics.<sup>24</sup>

Livesey, like Cole, termed both these individuals as ‘Members for America’ because they possessed the beliefs ‘in the rationality of republicanism, at least, if not to act as thoroughgoing advocates of social and political democracy.’<sup>25</sup> The idea of a republic was associated with a more equal society and universal liberty, which Cobden and Bright wanted for England.

This link was further demonstrated through the use of correspondence, particularly with the House of Representatives’ member for Massachusetts, J. Hayson. The letters dated back to 1853, where Hayson provided background and detailed information on how American elections were contested. The American system was highly democratic in comparison to the British system, as most men regardless of class status got one vote in secret, and whichever candidate secured the most votes won the nomination.<sup>26</sup>

Furthermore, examples of ballot tickets were provided in order for Bright to visually gain a fuller understanding of the more inclusive American election process. In the House of Commons, Bright complimented the American system and argued that ‘there

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<sup>23</sup> J. Cole, ‘Lincoln’s Thanks’, *The Rochdale Observer*, 9. Sept. 1989.

<sup>24</sup> Livesey places more importance on Richard Cobden in British reform. Although she does acknowledge Bright and his importance, she argued that Cobden was more influential with Anglo-American affairs and bringing the radical nature to British politics.

<sup>25</sup> A. Howe, ‘John Bull and Brother Jonathon: Cobden, America and the Liberal Mind’, in E. Dzelzainis and R. Livesey (eds.) *The American Experiment and the Idea of Democracy in British Culture, 1776-1914* (Surrey, 2013), p. 6.

<sup>26</sup> BL, Hayson-Bright MS, Add MS 43391, Hayson to Bright, 12. Jan. 1861, f. 1. Slaves were excluded from the right to vote and barely had any civil rights that were guaranteed by the Constitution.

is no other Government, powerful Government, in the world, that has uniformly been so much disposed to abide by known, and, as far as possible, defined law, as the Government of the United States.<sup>27</sup> In doing this he demonstrated that although they were in the middle of an internal conflict, American men had more rights than their British counterparts.

Moreover, Bright's admiration of American democracy allowed him to overlook the tariff system that contradicted his beliefs on free trade. In particular, the Morrill Tariff was of concern as it was an increased import tariff which hoped to encourage industrial growth and better wages for American workers. Under Lincoln it acted as extra revenue for the Union forces, which provoked hostility from the British free trade movements. Bright described the tariff as 'their "foolish tariff"' and how that it was 'in part responsible' for the English middle-class being undecided on the Union.<sup>28</sup> Although he stated his opinions in his correspondence with Charles Sumner, Senator for Massachusetts, Bright still appreciated American democracy and their inclusive voting, which is why he strongly campaigned for the Union cause. Although he supported the Union, he did not believe that Britain should become involved in the conflict in order to maintain its democracy; instead it should remain impartial in the struggle.

### **III – British Neutrality**

As a result of his pacificism, Bright supported British neutrality and it prominently featured in his letters from America. Throughout the war, it was a controversial issue as although the British did not want to be involved in an internal rebellion, many leading

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<sup>27</sup> J. Bright, 'United States – Correspondence In Case Of The "Trent"', *Hansard – UK Parliament*, <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1862-02-17/debates/eba95710-9d35-4f3d-9f73-e25b42c7fcfc/UnitedStates%E2%80%94CorrespondenceInCaseOfTheTrent> [accessed 11/7/18]

<sup>28</sup> Trevelyan, *The Life of John Bright*, p. 303.

American officials desired British intervention. Letters between Bright and Charles Sumner from September 1861 described the state of British public opinion as being in a ‘languid and confused state.’<sup>29</sup> Donald Bellows argued that historians in the 1950s denied that Britain had any preference in the War nor were confused about Union motives, but rather that the British Government unanimously adopted a policy that was both ‘neutral’ and ‘pragmatic.’<sup>30</sup> However, this was not the case, for the British public and governing classes were indecisive on their stance on the American Civil War. For example, the aristocracy in Britain had social ties with American slave-owners whilst traders and merchants had business links with the U.S. and wanted to avoid paying heavy taxes. With regards to British politics specifically, however, many policies united classes and groups to campaign for a common cause, such as the Anti-Corn Law League. Mark Bennett described how in the early Victorian period, ‘extra-parliamentary campaigns had come to develop formal structures and organisations – the most famous of which was perhaps the Anti-Corn Law League – mirroring the increasingly complex party organisations which both Liberals and Conservatives found necessary to manage the post-1832 electorate.’<sup>31</sup> As a result of the formation of these formal organisations and structures, it created groups where people of similar opinions could come together.

Eugenio Biagini reinforced this concept and described how British politics provided a ‘collective identity’ for those with similar interests in the Victorian years.<sup>32</sup> This collective identity was based along class and regional lines, with the northern areas of the country being more liberal and containing a larger percentage of working-class

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid, p. 310

<sup>30</sup> D. Bellows, ‘A Study of British Conservative Reactions to the American Civil War’, *The Journal of Southern History*, 51:4 (November, 1985), p. 505.

<sup>31</sup> M. Bennett, ‘Confederate Supporters in the West Riding, 1861-1865: “Cranks of the Worst English Species”’, *Northern History*, 51:2 (September, 2014), p. 313.

<sup>32</sup> Biagini, *Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform*, p. 2.

people that heavily relied on the cotton trade. Although a trade blockade would affect northern workers the most, they supported Union morality. The north-west of England was more liberal than its southern counterparts because of their deep hatred for slavery, but also because of their desire for democratic reform. Lancashire's workers saw the Civil War as an opportunity to express their opinions on slavery and support those who were being oppressed in America.<sup>33</sup>

In comparison the southern areas of Britain and the upper classes, although not wholly supportive of the Confederacy, disliked the idea of the Union starting an internal conflict and infringing upon the Southern states' right to secession. The upper class believed that 'the South would and should be allowed to secede in peace.'<sup>34</sup> The South should have been allowed to secede, according to the Conservatives, because it was 'already a nation' due to its separate culture and people from the more liberal northern American states.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, the British aristocracy considered Confederate recognition from a trade and financial perspective in order to protect the cotton trade, but in doing this they were perceived to be supporting slavery. This explains why Lord Palmerston and Queen Victoria issued the Proclamation of Neutrality in 1861 as it appeared to safeguard British interests. In the House of Commons, Lord John Russell explained the reasons for adopting this strategy: 'Her Majesty's Government has felt that it was its duty to use every possible means to avoid taking any part in the lamentable contest now raging in the American States.'<sup>36</sup> Bright supported this decision to avoid any involvement in the Civil War despite his open allegiance to the Union. However, as a supporter of pacificism and from experiences with Britain's involvement

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<sup>33</sup> 'Address from Working Men to President Lincoln', *The Manchester Guardian*, 1. Jan. 1863, p. 3.

<sup>34</sup> Bellows, 'A Study of British Conservative Reactions to the American Civil War', p. 508.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 518.

<sup>36</sup> Lord J. Russell, 'Southern Confederation Letters of Marque – Question', *Hansard – UK Parliament*, <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1861-05-02/debates/eef684e4-7676-426c-8eae-62eb44723b1c/SouthernConfederationLettersOfMarque%E2%80%9494Question> [accessed 11/7/18]



in the Crimean War, he understood that neutrality would be beneficial for Britain in safeguarding her national and international interests. However, support for neutrality was not unanimous amongst the population and support for the recognition of the South was an important issue. This acknowledgement concerned both Bright and Richard Cobden, who both wanted to avoid recognition being a possible *casus belli*.

Bright's transatlantic correspondence demonstrated how British neutrality was a controversial issue. The idea of a negative British 'tone' towards America was developed by Zebina Eastman, an Illinois abolitionist, who also acknowledged the negativity towards Bright in Britain. Eastman stated that 'I am sorry to say that I see an unfriendly tone, in the fact that your speech was not printed in more of the English newspapers', which evidently demonstrated the resentment towards Bright.<sup>37</sup> This undesirable British tone was largely due to a lack of understanding of the complex nature of the American conflict. In Rochdale in August 1861, Bright attempted to explain the conflict and how America said 'that they are not going to liberate slaves. No; the object of the Washington Government is to maintain their own Constitution, and to act legally, as it permits and requires.'<sup>38</sup> It explained what the Union was fighting for and at this point that was to uphold the Constitution to keep the nation united. By the Union retreating from listing the abolition of slavery as one of its aims, it created the illusion that relations between the Union and the Confederacy were, to an extent, civil and understanding. Donald Bellows has argued that as a result of the Union not listing slavery as a reason for the conflict, many Britons believed, from their little knowledge of the war, 'that secession was inevitable and would be accepted peacefully by the North.'<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> BL, Eastman-Bright MS, Add MS 43391, Eastman to Bright, 10. Dec. 1861, f. 60.

<sup>38</sup> Moore, *Speeches of John Bright M.P.*, p. 6.

<sup>39</sup> Bellows, 'A Study of British Conservative Reaction', p. 509.

The negative image that was created around William H. Seward in England is another factor that contributed to Confederate sympathisers' reasons for backing British intervention in the Civil War. For Bright, Seward was his desired candidate for the 1860 presidential election due to their shared principles on freedom and morality. From the 1850s Seward in Congress supported the prevention of slavery's expansion and resisted the Whigs numerous attempts to expand it, which Bright similarly did. In comparison, Lincoln discussed the prevention of the expansion of slavery, and later its abolition, during the course of the Civil War yet at the start stated that he had no intention of breaking down the institution. Keith Robbins argued, therefore, that Bright saw Lincoln's selection as a 'surprise.'<sup>40</sup> Similarly to Bright, Cobden did not appear to be an admirer of Lincoln from the start, as he demonstrated in his correspondence with Bright. Cobden said that 'Lincoln...is a backwoodsman of good sturdy common sense, but evidently unequal to the occasion.'<sup>41</sup> Nonetheless Seward's appointment to Secretary of State was important as he shared Bright's letters with Lincoln.

Leading MPs like Palmerston, Russell and Gladstone did not hold the same view as Bright regarding Seward. Although Eastman described Seward as '...by public reputation, one of the most friendly [sic] to England of all our American statesmen', government officials distrusted him.<sup>42</sup> This caution was because of Seward's ill-mannered handling of the *Trent Affair*, where he provoked ideas that a foreign war would serve as a 'distraction' and take away internal attention from the Civil War. The Confederate envoys that were arrested during the Trent Affair were sent by Jefferson Davis to Europe in an attempt to seek European intervention on the Confederate side. Although these Confederates boarded a mail ship sailing for Britain illegally due to the

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<sup>40</sup> Robbins, *John Bright*, p. 156.

<sup>41</sup> BL, Cobden-Bright MS, Add MS 43651, Cobden to Bright, 25. Mar. 1861, f. 234-6, in A. Howe & S. Morgan (eds.), *The Letters of Richard Cobden. Volume IV: 1860-1865*, (Oxford, 2015), p. 163.

<sup>42</sup> Eastman-Bright, 10. Dec. 1861, f. 61.

naval blockade, Seward's response in saying an Anglo-American war would be a distraction to the Civil War strained Anglo-American tensions at this peak moment in the conflict. However, Bright defended Seward's actions in Parliament and explained how Seward provoking a war with England was a theory, and instead he was 'anxious to get into war, or difficulty, with this country.'<sup>43</sup> On the other hand, Bright's correspondence with Joseph Lyman described how 'nothing could be so intensely and universally popular as a War with England.'<sup>44</sup> Although the British and Americans, Seward included, had similarly and equally aggressive characters when it came to conflicts, British intervention at any cost was widely regarded as an unpopular idea on both sides.

Overall though, Seward was a significant figure in Anglo-American relations despite mixed opinions on his actions. The speech made in Parliament by Bright demonstrated how Bright continued to bring awareness of the American Question and to campaign for the Union cause. Therefore, British neutrality although highly controversial, is essential in helping to understand Anglo-American relations. Southern states mirrored British hierarchical society and thus prompted the recognition of the Confederacy, yet its advocacy for slavery opposed the concept of Victorian morality. Zebina Eastman and Joseph Lyman's letters, as well as Bright's speeches, were significant in the discussion of the adoption of this policy and whether it was an adequate measure.

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<sup>43</sup> Bright, 'Correspondence In Case Of The "Trent"' [accessed 11/7/18]

<sup>44</sup> Lyman-Bright, 21. Dec. 1861, f. 68.

#### IV – The Impact of the ‘Trent Affair’

The event that was to test the strength of British neutrality and Anglo-American relations was the *Trent* Affair. In November 1861 a US Navy Officer, Captain Wilkes, captured a British mail ship named *Trent* and took two Confederate envoys as hostage. This was a violation of transatlantic code as Union forces boarded a British ship which was viewed as offensive by many leading British officials. *Trent* therefore had more of a substantial impact on the governing classes than the working classes, which created a stronger sense of fear that Britain would see this event as a reason to invade America.

Bright’s correspondence highlighted the effect that the incident had on transatlantic relations and the aristocracy and when writing to Charles Sumner in November 1861, he described how it had ‘made a great sensation here, and the ignorant and passionate and “Rule Britannia” class are angry and insolent as usual.’<sup>45</sup> The latter part of this quote refers to anger amongst the British people, but mostly the aristocracy. There was severe distrust of each country respectively, which was highlighted by Amasa Walker, where he stated that ‘I do not distrust you or the people of England generally, but must be allowed to distrust your Government.’<sup>46</sup> Walker encouraged Bright, by using his high status of U.S. Representative for Massachusetts, to convert sympathies to the Union cause. This mutual distrust of governments was a longstanding tension that lasted throughout the conflict, and although it eased at times with trusting the American government, there was always a sense of uncertainty and distrust with regards to their British counterparts.

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<sup>45</sup> Bright-Sumner 19. Nov. 1861, ‘November Meeting: A New England Primer; Isaac Hull to Nathaniel Silsbee; Payments to Provincial Officials; The Trent Affair; The Trent Affair, November, 1861; Letters of John Bright, 1861-1862; Letters of Daniel Webster, 1834-1851; Letters of Francis Baylies, 1827-1834’, *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 45 (October 1911 – June 1912), p. 148.

<sup>46</sup> Walker-Bright, 6. Jan 1862, f. 79.

Moreover, Bright was pivotal in attempts to gain an apology from his American counterparts in order to ease tensions and prevent a potential British intervention. Britain eventually received an apology, but it does not discredit Bright's efforts in attempting to maintain peaceful relations. His efforts were acknowledged by Louise Stevenson: 'John Bright had described to Lincoln the forces in Britain that supported and those that opposed the United States', and for her this was his contribution to helping mend affairs.<sup>47</sup> To some extent it was useful, as British attitudes towards the conflict were complex and by corresponding with Americans, he helped to explain the differing opinions. Additionally, in December 1861 he wrote to Charles Sumner and stated what he believed was the correct protocol for the Americans to follow. Bright argued that if he was the President, he 'would write the most complete answer the case is capable of, and in a friendly and courteous tone, send it to this country.'<sup>48</sup> He had often described himself as 'a native and citizen of your country' and therefore felt it was his duty to protect American democracy and Anglo-American relations during this turbulent time.<sup>49</sup>

Bright's speech in the House of Commons provides a connection between the private life of his correspondents and the publicity of politics. In February 1862 Bright discussed how Britain had not acted in a respectful manner towards the Americans and described *Trent* simply as the 'most unhappy accident' that arose 'between two friendly countries.'<sup>50</sup> He further suggested that the Government's actions should have been meticulously planned by using 'moderate and courteous means' before resorting 'to measures which send a paralysis through all the ramifications of the greatest commerce

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<sup>47</sup> Stevenson, *Lincoln in the Atlantic World*, p. 156.

<sup>48</sup> Bright-Sumner, 'November Meeting', 5. Dec. 1861, p. 150.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*, p. 150.

<sup>50</sup> Bright, 'Correspondence In Case Of The "Trent"' [accessed 11/7/18]

in the world, and create immense loss to almost all classes of people.’<sup>51</sup> Conversely William Edward Baxter MP, a Liberal politician from Scotland, defended the Government’s handling of the controversy and argued that ‘Her Majesty’s Government acted rightly when they took a determined and decided stand in the *Trent affair*.’<sup>52</sup> Lord Palmerston agreed with Baxter and stated that ‘what we did was not at all calculated to provoke the people or Government of the United States. It was simply a measure which it was our bounden duty to take...’<sup>53</sup> In the previous year, however, Bright vocalised his opinion and although he later termed the event a miscalculation, he did state that the *Trent* Affair was ‘both impolitic and bad.’<sup>54</sup> Nonetheless, what these speeches demonstrated were Bright’s attempts to repair relations with America through debating with the British Government and illustrated to them how *Trent* was a mistake with no malicious or hidden intentions.

Additionally, the *Trent* Affair further provoked the fear of an American war with Britain due to British naval and military movements in Canada. These movements occurred after the *Trent* outrage when Britain feared an invasion of their colony. Donald Ross, from Halifax Nova Scotia, Canada, described how British preparation in Canada meant ‘a day of reckoning will come; where it will be found, that the northern States of America cannot be bullied or insulted with inferiority.’<sup>55</sup> He further stated that the evocative move of British troops to Canada across the Atlantic was a dangerous strategy and that ‘a “fight with the Yankees”’ was looking to be the inevitable outcome.<sup>56</sup> For Ross, this policy was unnecessary as the Union had never intended to invade Canada so instead the surplus of British troops overcrowded Canadian

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Moore, *Speeches of John Bright M.P.*, p. 56.

<sup>55</sup> BL, Ross-Bright MS, Add MS 43391, Ross to Bright, 6. Jan. 1862, f. 76.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, f. 76.

barracks.<sup>57</sup> Nonetheless for the British as an imperialist nation the protection of their colonies was one of their top priorities. Thus, the *Trent* Affair was an important discussion in Bright's transatlantic correspondence and an event that had a substantial impact on Anglo-American relations. Bright's letters and speech in Parliament, although not responsible for helping to avoid British intervention in the Civil War, were influential in maintaining peaceful relations with the Union.

## **V – The Civil War**

Regarding Bright's handling of the *Trent Affair*, Union soldier Joseph Lyman wrote that 'it is ardently to be hoped, that there are people of truthful good & peace-loving men in England to maintain your views.'<sup>58</sup> As discussed earlier, *Trent* divided opinion in Britain, yet Lyman hoped that many would observe the situation from Bright's view. This was similarly the case with the Civil War itself as the conflict began to unfold. Lyman's correspondence was beneficial in providing updates on the War, but additionally in understanding how the Americans perceived the conflict. From his personal experience, he described it as 'not a conquest...not a subjugation nor tribute...but merely annexation.'<sup>59</sup> Conversely, as demonstrated by British neutrality, the Union's motives confused the British as many in Parliament believed that it was an imperialist conquest. *The Rochdale Observer* commented on the War after its outbreak and described the situation in America as 'ominous' and that 'any hour may precipitate a contest between the north and south and plunge the continent into the horrors of civil war.'<sup>60</sup> This underlined, once again, the ambiguous feelings surrounding the War and

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid, f. 77.

<sup>58</sup> Lyman-Bright, 21. Dec. 1861, f. 68.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, f. 65.

<sup>60</sup> *The Rochdale Observer*, 20. Apr. 1861, p. 2.

how smaller papers like *The Rochdale Observer* were eagerly looking to America for further updates.

Moreover, Lyman observed that the reunification of the United States would bring about the Civil War's end, and how 'the war that we of the North have but just begun, & which we have hardly yet engaged in efficiently, mustn't be a long war.'<sup>61</sup> He was adamant that the War would not last long because of the South's lack of resources. Although they had a better relationship with London and Paris and could therefore acquire more resources, the Union blockades on Confederate ports from late 1861 halted trade to the South, and therefore crippled its economy.<sup>62</sup> Additionally, Lyman's correspondence in 1862 expanded on the idea of the stronger Confederate relationships with England and France and how these nations could both intervene at this later stage. He discussed the strong British sympathy towards the recognition of the Confederacy and why they would consider intervention due to the Union blockade and the detrimental impact this had on Britain's finances.<sup>63</sup> Overall, the updates on the Civil War that Bright received are important to acknowledge as they allowed Bright to broaden his knowledge and aid him in bringing awareness to the conflict. Moreover, Lyman's letters were significant in demonstrating how Americans viewed the War and that a short conflict was desired. None of these letters, however, discussed slavery and if that would affect the length of the conflict.

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<sup>61</sup> Lyman-Bright, 21. Dec. 1861, f. 64.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, f. 72.

<sup>63</sup> BL, Lyman-Bright MS, Add MS 43391, Lyman to Bright, 11. Feb. 1862, f. 103. However, Lyman could not account for the French, and in particular Napoleon III, as he had imperialistic agendas and sympathised more with aristocratic elements of society.



## VI – Slavery & Abolition

Undoubtedly, Bright was involved in debates involving slavery and its abolition.

Although most Civil War historiography focuses greatly on slavery, this chapter has so far established that other themes featured frequently in Bright's letters. Nevertheless, Joseph Lyman in his letters wrote that 'there is in England a considerable confusion of ideas & uncertainty whether or not this war of the North against the South is an Anti-Slavery war or a war of Emancipation...'<sup>64</sup> This was because the Union's aims were misinterpreted: as Lorimer has argued 'the English expected the American struggle to be fought over slavery', but the reality was much more confused.<sup>65</sup>

As a result of this, it led Duncan Andrew Campbell to argue that 'the impact of southern slavery on English opinion has never been adequately accounted for.'<sup>66</sup> This was demonstrated in Southern British newspapers such as *The Times*, who debated whether 'time and history will decide whether it was a good and sagacious deed to destroy a fabric of so long duration, because of the election of Mr. Lincoln...'<sup>67</sup> A reason for this could be because of the many contributing factors that shaped public opinion, such as a lack of understanding of the War itself, jealousy of America's advancements as a world power and their handling of the *Trent Affair*. However, the severe ambiguity that surrounded the reasons for the War is what resulted in Britain's neutrality policy. Nevertheless, the majority of Britain concurred on the immorality of slavery and even those that did not understand the reasons for the Civil War, believed in universal freedom to some extent.

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid, f. 66.

<sup>65</sup> D. Lorimer, 'The Role of Anti-Slavery in English Reactions to the American Civil War', *The Historical Journal*, 19:2 (June, 1976), p. 406.

<sup>66</sup> Campbell, *English Public Opinion and the American Civil War*, p. 18.

<sup>67</sup> 'Causes of the American Civil War', *The Times*, 24. May. 1861, p. 9.

This differed to correspondence between Bright and Lindley Murray Moore, a Quaker and abolitionist, who shared similar religious and pacifist views as Bright. Moore explained the Union's motives for the conflict and described how slavery was central to the struggle, almost to give the conflict a moral purpose.<sup>68</sup> Murray Moore then explained if the Union moved quickly in the conflict, the slaves would be freed sooner. In January 1862 he wrote that 'as far & as fast as the Federal forces advance, such slaves will receive their freedom,' therefore demonstrating how the quicker the Union advanced, the faster policies of emancipation could be adopted.<sup>69</sup> Joseph Lyman simultaneously outlined that the two objectives of the Union, whether they were recognised or not, were the reunification of the U.S. and the abolition of slavery in order to potentially bring about British intervention. For Lyman, the 'war of ours can truly end in the re-union of our whole country and in the Emancipation of Slaves...'<sup>70</sup> Both of these goals were interconnected and relied on each other, which was not an uncommon opinion in Bright's transatlantic network.

These feelings were shared by William Seward, who also looked at the bigger picture of slavery and 'treated abolition more as a practical problem in an international context.'<sup>71</sup> Seward had always viewed slavery as immoral, as seen earlier in his role as Senator for New York where he opposed the pro-slavery sections of Congress, but his concern lay with the physical state of the United States after slavery's destruction. Amasa Walker, a U.S. Representative and a member of the Republican party, offered another insight into the confusion that slavery caused within the Federal Government. When corresponding with Bright, he echoed Seward's ambiguous views and discussed the split in opinions in

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<sup>68</sup> BL, Moore-Bright MS, Add MS 43391, Moore to Bright, 10. Jan. 1862, f. 81.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid, f. 83.

<sup>70</sup> Lyman-Bright, 21. Dec. 1861, f. 70.

<sup>71</sup> K. L. Brauer, 'The Slavery Problem in the Diplomacy of the American Civil War', *Pacific Historical Review*, 46:3 (August, 1977), p. 444.

Congress. Walker then went on to state that ‘the great difficulty is that slavery paralyzes [sic] our government.’<sup>72</sup>

Likewise, at a speech in Rochdale, Bright described how slavery had split American politics and ‘for thirty years it has constantly been coming to the surface, disturbing social life, and overthrowing almost all political harmony in the working of the United States.’<sup>73</sup> Bright explained how British newspapers had spoken negatively of the conflict and of Lincoln, stating that there had not been ‘one fair and honorable and friendly article’ about the President.<sup>74</sup> This was because of the confusion that Lincoln had created regarding the role of slavery in the conflict. He did not openly advocate abolition because he was cautious of the effects that it would have on the political and economic systems. However, prior to the Civil War’s outbreak he despised slavery ‘because of the monstrous injustice of slavery itself. I hate it because it deprives our republican example of its just influence in the world...’<sup>75</sup> In a reply to the *New York Tribune* editor Horace Greeley, he further argued that his ‘paramount object in the struggle is to save the Union and is not either to save or destroy slavery.’<sup>76</sup> Lincoln’s argument linked with Bright’s speech in Rochdale and demonstrates that slavery had a detrimental impact on the progression of American democracy and that Lincoln prioritised reunification.

Similarly to Lincoln, Bright’s stance on slavery evolved with the War. As an advocate for abolition he believed that slavery hindered the growth of democracies yet did not

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<sup>72</sup> Walker-Bright, 6. Jan. 1862, f. 79.

<sup>73</sup> Moore, *Speeches of John Bright M.P.*, p. 26.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid*, p. 35.

<sup>75</sup> A. Guelzo, *Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation: The End of Slavery in America* (New York, 2004), p. 4.

<sup>76</sup> A. Lincoln, ‘A Letter from President Lincoln; Reply to Horace Greeley. Slavery and the Union The Restoration of the Union Paramount Object’, [originally printed in *the New York Tribune*], *The New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/1862/08/24/archives/a-letter-from-president-lincoln-reply-to-horace-greeley-slavery-and.html> [26/05/2018]

identify as an abolitionist. Bright summarised his feelings towards slavery in a speech at the end of 1862, where he portrayed slavery as ‘the huge, foul blot upon the fame of the American Republic.’<sup>77</sup> In another speech in 1861 he argued that the Confederate slave states wanted ‘the recognition of a Christian nation’, which was to be ‘based upon the foundation, the unchangeable foundation in their eyes, of slavery and barbarism.’<sup>78</sup> The *Rochdale Observer* similarly shared Bright’s opinions on slavery and what would happen to their views should it be announced as a cause for the war:

‘If the slaves should take the opportunity of their masters hands being full to strike a blow for their own liberty, the sympathies of England will be with them, even though the immediate consequences would probably be not a little disastrous to our manufacturing districts.’<sup>79</sup>

What this extract from the *Rochdale Observer* demonstrated was how Lancashire’s inhabitants were aware of the damaging impact that the abolition of slavery would have on its cotton trade, yet they were willing to sacrifice their livelihoods to support the Union. Bright further demonstrated the North’s resilience at a speech in December 1862, where he argued that the disenfranchised would sympathise with the Union cause and how ‘hopeless millions of this country will never sympathize with a revolt which is intended to destroy the liberty of a continent...’<sup>80</sup> This extract was reiterated by Donald Bellows, who believed that ‘the British as a whole, including most conservatives, opposed slavery.’<sup>81</sup> From these three speeches it is evident that Bright viewed slavery as an immoral system and acknowledged the negative impact that it had on America. Overall though, the correspondence and speeches demonstrated that slavery was an important element of Bright’s political career during the Civil War.

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<sup>77</sup> J. Bright, ‘Selected Speeches of the Rt. Hon. John Bright M.P. on Public Questions [1853] – VI: America – II: The War and the Supply of Cotton’, *Online Library of Liberty*, <http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/bright-selected-speeches-of-the-rt-hon-john-bright-m-p-on-public-questions> [accessed 05/12/17]

<sup>78</sup> Moore, *Speeches of John Bright M.P.*, p. 27

<sup>79</sup> *The Rochdale Observer*, 27. Apr. 1861, p.2.

<sup>80</sup> J. Bright, “‘America – II: The War and the Supply of Cotton”, [accessed 05/12/17]

<sup>81</sup> Bellows, ‘A Study of Conservative Reaction’, p. 520.

If the abolition of slavery was debated, then an alternate cotton supply needed to be sourced quickly. Both Joseph Lyman and Edward Atkinson prepared papers about cotton supplies for Bright's perusal. Lyman's paper, titled 'Cotton Supply from India', provided a clear alternative supply of cotton that Britain could use rather than maintaining the upkeep of the Confederacy through purchasing their cotton. By stating facts about the construction of rail roads in India and how they would aid the effective transportation of cotton, Lyman illustrated how Indian cotton would be a suitable alternative.<sup>82</sup> He did this through the statistical analysis of the growth of cotton in India, which was coupled with the evidence found in Bright's Cotton Report of 1848. His research is commendable as it helped demonstrate the suitable concessions that needed to be made and that the differing circumstances and climate in India must be considered before gaining a new cotton supply. The differing circumstances, for example, included the correct times to pick cotton, and the fluctuating Indian weather, which was not a concern with Confederate cotton as the Confederacy did not have a humid climate.<sup>83</sup> Despite the positives of Lyman's research, it allowed for criticism to arise, which he stated himself. Personally, he found Indian cotton to be 'so dirty' due to the excessive moisture that it endured.<sup>84</sup> It was important that Lyman included both sides of the debate, as it demonstrated that it was not a letter merely persuading Bright, and thus Parliament, to source an alternative arrangement for a cotton supply.

Similarly, Edward Atkinson was influential in providing analysis on the cotton trade. Unlike Lyman, Atkinson was involved in the cotton mills in New England prior to the War's outbreak, and therefore had more in common with Bright.<sup>85</sup> Through his

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<sup>82</sup> Lyman-Bright, 21. Dec. 1861, f. 72.

<sup>83</sup> Lyman-Bright, 11. Feb. 1862, f. 101.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, f. 101.

<sup>85</sup> T. W. Higginson, 'Edward Atkinson', *Proceedings of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, 42:49 (August, 1907), p. 761. Edward Atkinson was an economist as well as the founder of the American Anti-Imperialist League. His inspirations included John Bright and Richard Cobden.

pamphlet titled 'Cheap Cotton by Free Labor', he presented an alternative supply whereby Britain could acquire cheap and fairly priced cotton from nations that did not support slavery. Moreover, should no alternative supply be adopted, Atkinson referred to adopting a policy of free trade in the Anglo-American cotton supply, which would have appealed to Bright and would symbolise a 'bond of peace' between nations.<sup>86</sup> In doing this, Atkinson perhaps believed that a 'bond' made 'of peace and friendship never to be broken between the two countries' would have been established.<sup>87</sup>

Although these pamphlets had substantial impact and collectively influenced Bright's speech in December 1862 on 'The War and the Supply of Cotton', Bright appeared to disagree with their ideas. In this speech he overlooked the work of Lyman and Atkinson and stated that '...it would be unreasonable that we should object to trade with and have political relations with a country, merely because it happened to have within its borders the institution of slavery.'<sup>88</sup> What this demonstrated is that even after receiving analytical reports on alternate cotton supplies, Bright argued that trading with the Confederacy should be not discontinued. There could be a number of reasons for this, including the fact that Bright was a factory owner and therefore a cotton supply that brings poorer quality cotton would infringe on his profits and livelihood. Yet in his speech he referred to the immorality of slavery and how because of this it did not mean that Britain should not 'trade with and have political relations' with America.<sup>89</sup> It suggested that Bright believed that slavery had to be abolished within America, and even if Britain ceased trading with the Confederacy, slavery would still exist. Following this speech and correspondence, new supplies from India and Egypt were

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid, f. 98.

<sup>87</sup> BL, Atkinson-Bright MS, Add MS 43391, Atkinson to Bright, 6. Feb. 1862, f. 98.

<sup>88</sup> Bright, 'America – II: The War and the Supply of Cotton' [accessed 5/12/17]

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

arranged, and therefore the Union blockade brought a brief end to the Confederate supply of cotton to Lancashire.

## **VII - Conclusion**

This chapter has shed light on how central John Bright was in transatlantic correspondence from the commencement of the American Civil War. Many historians have referred to Bright's natural instinctive nature and how from the start of the conflict 'Bright began to meddle with the conflict at the highest level.'<sup>90</sup> His 'meddling', in this respect, was done through his speeches which proved to be highly influential and attracted a lot of attention in newspapers locally and nationally but also internationally as many transatlantic correspondents mentioned that they had received copies of Bright's speeches. This correlates with the correspondence as it is clear that prior to the 1860s Bright was interested in exploring the principles of American democracy, which was a system that he valued so highly and aspired to bring about in British society. It is evident that once the War began, Bright supported the Union and aided understanding of the conflict in Britain. His advocacy was celebrated through the numerous letters of recognition that he received from Americans congratulating him for his speeches and for his unwavering support.

The correspondence highlighted how severe the implications of Britain's Proclamation of Neutrality were for Americans and how it was viewed across the Atlantic. A British lack of understanding of the War and American society caused severe strain on Anglo-American relations, and ultimately could have brought about an Anglo-Union War alongside the internal rebellion. Individuals such as Zebina Eastman and Joseph Lyman

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<sup>90</sup> Robbins, *John Bright*, p. 158.

proved influential in addressing the negative stigma that had been created by British neutrality and helped outline the American grievances towards it, which Bright demonstrated through various speeches in Rochdale and the House of Commons in 1861. Additionally, the controversy caused by the *Trent Affair* nearly brought about British intervention in the Civil War, yet it was not as well discussed in the correspondence as was originally assumed. A reason for this could have been that the seizing of British commanders was a mistake and one that was not carried out by the Federal Government, and therefore it was not premeditated. Although an apology was issued by the Americans, it was individuals like Eastman and Amasa Walker, who were significant in prompting Bright to continue to defend the Union cause despite the international outrage that had been committed.

Fourthly, slavery was frequently discussed in different incarnations by numerous individuals. Although this research sheds light on the other issues that concerned Bright's transatlantic network, the early correspondence demonstrated that slavery was a significant issue from the war's outset as it contributed to feelings of ambiguity towards America. The harshness towards the Union, portrayed by the aristocracy, was a result of a lack of understanding about the Union's reasons for the War. The individual rights of states meant that the South had, legally, the official right to secede from the Union, and as the Union declared that they were fighting to maintain and reunite the Republic, Britain viewed this as a clear violation of state rights. However, the correspondence between Bright, Lindley Murray Moore and Lyman helped to explain the immorality of slavery, and simply confirmed Bright's own views on its existence. His speeches demonstrated the negative implications that he believed slavery had on the United States and suggested that its removal would eradicate any constrain on the progression of democracy. Furthermore, *The Rochdale Observer* was influential in



stating that its workers pledged full support to the Union, which would prove to be significant at a speech in Manchester in December 1862, which will be discussed in the following chapter.

Linked with slavery, the idea of sourcing an alternate cotton supply was an important factor to discuss. The correspondence from Lyman and Edward Atkinson highlighted that purchasing Indian grown cotton would reduce the monopoly that the Confederacy had on the cotton trade, and therefore cripple their economy. Although their views were overshadowed in Bright's later speeches in 1862, their work was essential in providing reports which then formed the basis for Bright's speeches. Therefore, this chapter has demonstrated the issues that were the most important in the transatlantic correspondence in the early stages of the War and lays the foundations for how it will evolve as the conflict continued. It has illustrated that slavery was not the only topic of discussion, and that it appeared that British neutrality was a more controversial and debated topic than abolition. This focus on British neutrality in Bright's transatlantic correspondence re-evaluates our understanding of the Civil War's impact on Britain because it demonstrates how Bright's network was primarily concerned with British attitudes towards the conflict and less so on the public's views on slavery.

## Chapter 2

### Attitudes, Abolition, the Emancipation Proclamation and Support in Lancashire

The years 1862 and 1863 are often argued to be the most important years of the American Civil War due to infamous battles of the Battle of Gettysburg and Vicksburg, but also for the Emancipation Proclamation. The Confederates were increasing their number of victories and up until September 1862, slavery had not been mentioned as a reason for the continuance of the war. The threat of British or European intervention was still a possibility and at this stage for the Union, if Europe fought on the side of the rebels it would guarantee an early Confederate victory. As a result of this notion, a growing acceptance of a prolonged conflict emerged as opposed to a quick Union victory, and it was concluded that the only way the conflict would be resolved would be ‘with the exhaustion of one party or the other.’<sup>1</sup> John Bright’s continued influence in his correspondence increased which thus impacted on the growth of Union support in Britain. Within this writing new individuals emerged alongside the writers of the previous year. Lewis Tappan, in particular was important with regards to slavery, as he was a New York abolitionist who worked towards freeing slaves and was at the forefront of denouncing the Democrats. Despite this change, on the whole Bright’s correspondence appeared forward-looking during a time of gloomy public morale, which was due to the hope that future peace was achievable.

This chapter aims to demonstrate the evolution of Bright’s correspondence in the conflict’s middle years, and to draw attention to the nature of British attitudes and Lancashire’s support for the Union. Through looking at Lancashire’s backing for the

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<sup>1</sup> BL, Motley-Bright MS, Add MS 43391, Motley to Bright, 9. Feb. 1863, f. 138.

Union, it challenges Mary Ellison's research and her belief that support for the Union in this region was a myth.<sup>2</sup> It will do this through examining the attitudes of the British government, abolition, the drafting of the Emancipation Proclamation, the impact of the 'Cotton Famine' and the workingmen's speech at the Manchester Free Trade Hall. It is essential to acknowledge that continuing letters of congratulations to Bright demonstrated his important status, which would become even more apparent after his speeches in 1862 and 1863. Following this, British attitudes towards the conflict will be examined as there remained a lack of understanding. Bradford R. Moore, who served in the Legation of the U.S., would prove vital in explaining why the British may have held certain opinions, with the hope of easing the strain on Anglo-American relations. Palmerston's unpopularity exacerbated the tensions due to his support of neutrality, however in speeches in Parliament he had explained why he supported this policy. This will be explained in greater depth in this chapter and will illustrate that Palmerston's views regarding Britain's involvement in the conflict coincided with Bright's.

Slavery is the central topic to this time in the War, however, this chapter aims to recognise other factors that were of greater significance to Bright's correspondence. What is important in this chapter in order to understand abolition is Lincoln's lack of identification and claim of being an abolitionist throughout his time in Congress. His main aim at the War's commencement was the reunification of the U.S. regardless of the abolition of slavery, which was stated in his response to Horace Greeley in the last chapter. Yet the drafting of the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 symbolised a change in his attitudes. Its passing would prove to be the turning point in the Civil War as it demonstrated the Union's shift towards emancipation. However, Bright's correspondence exemplified the harsh criticism that the proclamation received from the

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<sup>2</sup> Ellison, *Support for Secession*, p. ix.

abolitionist movement due to its advocacy of gradual emancipation as opposed to immediate emancipation.

Finally, the effects of the Lancashire ‘Cotton Famine’ are vital in order to understand this period. It is undeniable that Lancashire workers suffered immense economic restrictions and poverty as a result of the naval blockade of the previous year, which consequently led to mass unemployment across the region. Despite this suffering, this correspondence highlighted the resilience of Lancashire operatives through their consistent support of Lincoln and the Union. It is here where Mary Ellison’s argument will be challenged, as the workers’ reaction to the famine demonstrated loyalty to the Union. The support was displayed in the speech at the Manchester Free Trade Hall in December 1862 where workers and middle-class individuals, with influence from Bright, pledged their full support to Lincoln. It received international attention from Bright’s correspondents and also Lincoln, and therefore had a significant impact in helping to repair Anglo-American relations.

### **I – Bright’s Increasing Popularity and British Attitudes**

Bright’s popularity peaked during the middle years of the Civil War, which has been made evident through the letters that he received. In many of them, both Bright and Richard Cobden were praised for their continuing efforts in supporting the ‘American Question.’ This was illustrated in letters from Marcellus Hartley, a Union representative in charge of purchasing guns from Europe. He wrote, in February 1863, that ‘we have much to thank you & Mr. Cobden for & I assure you the people here appreciate your efforts in our cause.’<sup>3</sup> This was similarly said by Lewis Tappan, who

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<sup>3</sup> BL, Harley-Bright MS, Add MS 43391, Hartley to Bright, 22. Dec. 1863, f. 175.

promoted the idea of Bright being remembered forever in America: ‘your name, and your utterances on behalf of rational freedom, and as defiance of our Gov. & country, will be held in everlasting remembrance.’<sup>4</sup> Bright’s efforts were appreciated by Americans which is evident from these letters, and also from the fact that local newspapers referenced his speeches.

Bright’s admiration of American democracy continued to be apparent through his speeches in Rochdale. He argued that the British people would soon recognise why a democracy in Britain would be functional, help them gain more rights and how they ‘...may learn that an instructed democracy is the surest foundation of government, and that education and freedom are the only sources of true greatness and true happiness among any people.’<sup>5</sup> Moreover, America was more democratic as it was ‘not cursed with feudalism, - it is free to every man to buy and sell and possess and transmit.’<sup>6</sup> However, in Britain, American democracy continued to be denounced and criticised about the problems that it brought. This was discussed by Brian Holden Reid, who explained how ‘British critics tended to blame American democratic excesses, not least social equality, for these weaknesses. They took comfort in the differences of the British social system, and attributed the supposed superiority of Southern generalship to the more "aristocratic" style of the slave.’<sup>7</sup> Conversely, Bright viewed American democracy positively and described the nation as ‘the “ark of refuge” for all those in Europe who were denied political rights and an opportunity to advance economically.’<sup>8</sup> Thus it can be argued, his public idolisation of the idea of American democracy contributed to the increased number of letters that he received.

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<sup>4</sup> BL, Tappan-Bright MS, Add MS 43391, Tappan to Bright, 5. Mar. 1863, f. 143.

<sup>5</sup> Moore, *Speeches of John Bright M.P.*, p. 260.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 142.

<sup>7</sup> B. H. Reid, “‘A Signpost That Was Missed?’ Reconsidering British Lessons from the American Civil War’, *The Journal of Military History*, 70:2 (April, 2006), p. 393

<sup>8</sup> Blackett, *Divided Hearts*, p. 7.

These letters, in comparison to some opinions of British newspapers, were more positive. *The Times* were renowned for discrediting the efforts of Bright and Cobden by highlighting the flaws of the Union. These articles were read by higher ranking Americans like Henry B. Adams, the son of Charles Francis Adams and U.S. Ambassador to the UK, which led to government officials closely working with Bright. Moreover, correspondence with William Henry Aspinall suggested that the Executive were updated on British opinion through the use of sharing his correspondence. Aspinall, at first a prominent American businessman but later a ‘spy’ for the Union who prevented the supply of ships from Britain to the Confederacy, frequently forwarded Bright’s responses to the Cabinet. In 1863, he redirected Bright’s reply onto Salmon P. Chase, Lincoln’s Secretary of the Treasury, to then read onto Lincoln at meetings. After doing this Aspinall described Bright’s letter as having ‘had its influence’, but did not describe his reasons for this.<sup>9</sup> David Trueblood, however, argued that Bright’s opinions were significant to Lincoln because ‘in Bright, Lincoln found a true model, an astute statesman who, like himself, had a pervading sense of the sovereignty of God.’<sup>10</sup> In other words, Bright’s replies were of great importance to the Union and were highly valued by those in top Government positions. Bright was influential in a range of issues, as the previous chapter has acknowledged, however he continued to be significant in changing British attitudes towards the conflict.

British attitudes towards the Civil War, although still divisive, had evolved in the conflict’s middle years. Anglo-American affairs were described as ‘extremely delicate’ which was due to the negative opinions held by the British government.<sup>11</sup> As seen in the last chapter, Britain’s lack of understanding of the conflict led to misinterpretations

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<sup>9</sup> BL, Aspinall-Bright MS, Add MS 43391, Aspinall to Bright, 25. Sept. 1863, f. 170.

<sup>10</sup> Trueblood, *Abraham Lincoln*, p. 118.

<sup>11</sup> J. Bright, ‘America’, *The Observer*, 20. Apr. 1863, p. 1.

of the Union's motives, as the Union blockade was seen as a potential Anglo-American conflict. As a result of this, MPs and the British public 'remained opposed to a conflict' between America and Britain.<sup>12</sup> The New York Chamber of Commerce reacted to this decision and Britain's perceived lack of empathy, which for them had 'been a matter of surprise...that the attitude of the Federal Government towards the rebel states was so little understood in Great Britain.'<sup>13</sup> For the British, Southern secession appeared to be a benefit for the Union because 'in one stroke the North would be rid of slavery and the moral, economic, and political problems it posed.'<sup>14</sup> Attempts were made by Bright to explain the conflict through various speeches in the previous year, yet confusion surrounding the Union's motives existed.

Bradford R. Moore, whose official state position gave him direct insight into Federal policies, discussed British attitudes in his correspondence. In Moore's correspondence with Bright, he described how Palmerston's actions towards the Union would not be forgotten by Americans: 'never again, will the British Government, as long as it is in the hands of such a man as Lord Palmerstone [sic], be trusted.'<sup>15</sup> This lack of trust between both nations was a strong feeling that had appeared earlier in the conflict with the immediate sending of British troops to Canada as a precautionary manoeuvre, despite no mention or threat of an American invasion.<sup>16</sup> Throughout the conflict Palmerston was vocal about maintaining a neutral policy rather than intervention and after being approached by MPs to help 'put an end' to the conflict, he argued that 'the House will see that anything like interference with the war now going on would only

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<sup>12</sup> P. E. Myers, *Caution & Cooperation: The American Civil War in British American Relations* (Ohio, 2008), p. 27.

<sup>13</sup> BL, Perit-Bright MS, Add MS 43391, Perit to Bright, 8. Mar. 1862, f. 108.

<sup>14</sup> Bellows, 'A Study of British Conservative Reaction to the American Civil War', p. 512.

<sup>15</sup> BL, Moore-Bright MS, Add MS 4391, Moore to Bright, 27. Feb. 1862, f. 106r.

<sup>16</sup> This was mentioned in the previous chapter and was present in the correspondence between Donald Ross and John Bright.

aggravate still more the sufferings of those now under privation.<sup>17</sup> To avoid exasperating Anglo-American relations further, he maintained a favourable attitude for non-intervention and therefore American perceptions of Palmerston as being untrustworthy were slightly misinterpreted. This demonstrates how Palmerston favoured neutrality as oppose to Moore's belief of Palmerston supporting Confederate independence by not allowing British intervention in the conflict. Moreover, Moore discussed Palmerston's comments regarding previous wars between America and Britain. In his letter, Moore stated that Palmerston 'now admits what his intentions were when we were engaged in a war with the slave oligarchy' and how they were different 'than what was expected of British honour.'<sup>18</sup> The concept of honour had appeared earlier in the War, but Moore's writing related to the fact that Victorian Britain perceived itself as committed to humanity due to its high level of social conduct, which encompassed values like religion, industry and morality.<sup>19</sup> For Moore, it was Palmerston's words that brought American fears of a war between Britain and America into reality, which was an idea that had been suggested by Joseph Lyman in 1861.

The possibility of a transatlantic conflict led to the construction of a negative image of Palmerston and British MPs like Lord Lyons and Lord Russell, who were viewed as misinformed men who were acting out of their own self-interest. Mr. P. M. Wetmore, a member of the New York Chamber of Commerce, reinforced this when he stated that public feeling 'both in France and England, had been insidiously harvested and misled by dangerous men...'<sup>20</sup> This idea was reiterated in Moore's correspondence where he

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<sup>17</sup> 'United States – The Civil War', *Hansard – UK Parliament*, <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1862-06-30/debates/f3d8d9f2-18e4-460c-a46b-7ef74c75941b/UnitedStates%E2%80%94TheCivilWar> [accessed 11/07/18]

<sup>18</sup> Moore-Bright, 27. Feb. 1862, f. 106-107.

<sup>19</sup> This 'honour' related to domestic reform such as breaking the rigidity of the class system, but also related to events abroad in their empire and beyond. Britain had previously abolished slavery in 1833 and because of this, Moore believed that Britain should have severed ties with the Confederacy who upheld the institution.

<sup>20</sup> BL, Wetmore-Bright MS, Add MS 43391, Wetmore to Bright, 6. Mar. 1862, f. 118.



argued that Palmerston and Russell were evidently Southern sympathisers and that Britain could have avoided the strains in Anglo-American relations had they professed their lack of sympathy for the South.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, Charles Norton, an American author and social reformer, believed that the strain caused by Southern sympathisers had created a feeling of enthusiasm in America over the prospects of a war with England. He stated that ‘the course of leading men in England and still more the spirit shown in the Governing classes, - the aristocracy & the commercial classes – towards the North, have excited a feeling throughout their country of deep resentment.’<sup>22</sup> Despite this, the fact that Britain continued to trade with the Confederacy and had not yet intervened to aid the Union instilled greater fear of an Anglo-American struggle.

However, Palmerston’s minimal understanding of the conflict resulted in the offer of neutrality, as it safeguarded British interests. As demonstrated earlier, neutrality had been interpreted as Southern sympathy, but had Britain intervened and supported the Union, events like the *Trent Affair* would most likely have still occurred.<sup>23</sup> Historian Kinley Brauer argued that Palmerston never defended the South, nor criticised the North for its handling of slavery, which is unlike Russell or Gladstone who publicly discussed it.<sup>24</sup> Whilst Moore placed responsibility on Palmerston, Bright criticised the Government as a whole and the press for their lack of understanding and how this ultimately influenced the Americans’ interpretation of Britain. At a speech discussing “Slavery and Secession” at the Public Hall in Rochdale, Bright spoke about British attitudes towards the conflict and argued that ‘people don’t know very much about America. They are learning more every day. They have been greatly misled by what

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<sup>21</sup> BL, Moore-Bright MS, Add MS 43391, Moore to Bright, 4. July. 1862, f. 123.

<sup>22</sup> BL, Norton-Bright MS, Add MS 43391, Norton to Bright, 8. May. 1863, f. 150.

<sup>23</sup> This is because instead of a Union blockade on Confederate ports, Britain would have boycotted the cotton trade from the South, which would have similarly reduced exports and therefore crippled the Southern economy.

<sup>24</sup> Brauer, ‘The Slavery Problem in the Diplomacy of the American Civil War’, p. 461

are called “the best public instructors.”<sup>25</sup> Despite this Bright’s correspondents reiterated the fact that public opinion in Britain had changed significantly due to their increased knowledge of the conflict, which mostly came from speeches like Bright’s. Therefore, Bright believed that Palmerston alone could not be held accountable for the way in which Americans interpreted British feelings.

Nonetheless, mediation was still desired by the British people in areas such as Bacup, Rawtenstall and Rossendale in Lancashire. Meetings were held in these industrial segments of Rochdale to show, as Mary Ellison argued, that ‘only a recognized South could participate as an equal in peace negotiations.’<sup>26</sup> Negotiations of peace could only be achieved if the Confederacy gained its own independent recognition not only by the Union, but by Britain. Furthermore, contrary to Bradford Moore’s argument on Britain’s actions, Ellison stated that it was frequently assumed that British neutrality was misinterpreted as automatic support for the Union. However, she believed that this was not the case, and argued that people like Bright, Richard Cobden and Milner Gibson actually supported neutrality rather than intervening to help the North.<sup>27</sup> It is true that Bright and Cobden supported neutrality as oppose to a conflict with the United States, largely due to their beliefs in pacificism, which was made evident with their involvement in campaigning against British involvement in the Crimean War. It was the work of individuals, therefore, that helped ease the tension and illustrated how Britain remained neutral as a means of preventing an Anglo-American War.

Additionally, ill-feelings towards William H. Seward continued to contribute to the tensions. The previous chapter demonstrated how the ill-feelings were caused by his

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<sup>25</sup> Moore, *Speeches of John Bright*, p. 164.

<sup>26</sup> Ellison, *Support for Secession*, p. 136.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, p. 96.

negative handling of the *Trent Affair*, but also because of his lack of discouragement against an Anglo-American war. Seward further believed that slavery did not need to become an issue in the conflict as he believed that it would be over long before European opinion could fully develop on the issue, which caused particular confusion to Lyons. Seward's tactic contributed to the dismissal of slavery until September 1862, which was disliked greatly by most Britons. Had slavery been discussed at the start of the War, British people would have understood the deep roots of the conflict and perhaps may have intervened or provided support for the Union. Even in America, Seward's actions created an uncertainty about him amongst politicians. In his diary, Salmon P. Chase wrote how Seward was heavily criticised by politicians and many desired for his resignation.<sup>28</sup> This criticism was with regards to his views on slavery and how Lincoln should word the Emancipation Proclamation.

British neutrality had caused considerable debate over European officials choosing policies based on self-interest, rather than on a lack of understanding. This is true to an extent as Britain was extremely conscious of the safety of her colonies in North America and wanted to safeguard them. Recent historians have strengthened this argument, and discussed the ideas held by the working class as opposed to just the government. Kinley Brauer noted that these arguments challenged the idea that working-class support for the Union was universal, and that they actually perceived slavery as a 'moral problem.'<sup>29</sup> Mary Ellison also highlighted that workers support for the Union was not universal nor guaranteed just because the Confederacy advocated slavery.<sup>30</sup> The ambiguous stance on slavery and commencing a war against their own people created several limitations for the Union and reasons to support it. But on the

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<sup>28</sup> S. P. Chase 1808-1873, *Inside Lincoln's Cabinet: the Civil War Diaries of Salmon P. Chase* [1<sup>st</sup> ed.] (New York, 1954), p. 174.

<sup>29</sup> Brauer, 'The Slavery Problem in the Diplomacy of the American Civil War', p. 440.

<sup>30</sup> Ellison, *Support for Secession*, p. 11.

whole workers, and Bright, held principles of morality and liberty very highly and supported the Union.

Therefore, the above correspondence demonstrated the evolution of attitudes and opinions from the previous chapter. Although a lack of trust continued to exist in Anglo-American relations, towards the end of 1863 the tension appeared to have reduced. The evolution was illustrated by John Lothrop Motley, an American author and diplomat, who corresponded with Bright and concluded that ‘the time has gone by when America was feverishly asking an unprofitable sympathy from England...’<sup>31</sup> The Unionists had realised that Britain was not to be manipulated into intervention and appeared to have accepted their policy of neutrality. Palmerston’s speech in Parliament clarified his reasons for adopting such a policy, which was because of his fear of aggravating the situation further. Bright held this similar view which reiterated Ellison’s statement in that backing for neutrality did not insinuate Union support. Nonetheless, Bright’s speeches on British neutrality were influential in explaining Union motives and it allowed the workers in Rochdale to expand their knowledge on the conflict and craft their own opinions. This section has made it evident that British neutrality continued to be of interest in transatlantic correspondence and demonstrates how it was discussed in greater depth than slavery.

## **II – Abolition and the Emancipation Proclamation**

For Janet Toole, Royden Harrison and Eugenio Biagini, it was evident from the start of the war that ‘slavery was the burning political question...’<sup>32</sup> The number of letters that

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<sup>31</sup> BL, Motley-Bright MS, Add MS 43391, Motley to Bright, 9. Feb. 1863, f. 139.

<sup>32</sup> J. Toole, ‘Workers and Slaves: Class Relations in South Lancashire in the Time of the Cotton Famine’, *Labour History Review*, 63:2 (July, 1998), p. 161.

Bright received discussing slavery highlighted its importance in the conflict, however, this chapter aims to move beyond abolition. It intends to bring attention to British neutrality and Union support in Manchester, but it does not mean to disregard abolition as an important topic of discussion. Britain had a historic sentiment with abolition which linked with the concept of morality, that was central to Victorian Britain and included the principles of sexual restraint, hard work and a sense of responsibility in helping those in poverty or oppressed by the system. According to Stefan Collini, Victorian character ‘was an expression of a very deeply ingrained perception of the qualities needed to cope with life, an ethic with strong roots in areas of experience ostensibly remote from politics.’<sup>33</sup> Paradoxically, it was Britain who perfected the Atlantic slave trade and benefited the most from it, yet they were the nation that brought about its end and aimed to remove it worldwide.

As argued in the first chapter, Bright’s stance on abolition was uncertain due to his lack of identification with the abolitionist movements in the traditional sense. In a letter from Mr. P. Wetmore, from the Chamber of Commerce, he described Bright as a ‘statesman of England’ who had ‘emancipated principles which lie at the root of international equity...’<sup>34</sup> Wetmore had acknowledged Bright’s attempts in Parliament to defend the Union and speeches in support of abolition, which further demonstrated Bright’s far-reaching impact on Anglo-American affairs. Undoubtedly Bright supported the abolition of slavery and the removal of the Atlantic slave trade, but it was not his priority.

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<sup>33</sup> S. Collini, *Public Moralists: Political Thought and Intellectual Life in Britain, 1850-1930* (Oxford, 1991), p. 116.

<sup>34</sup> BL, Wetmore-Bright MS, Add MS 43391, Wetmore to Bright, 6. Mar. 1862, f. 119.

Bright was concerned with the oppressed everywhere, which included slaves but incorporated the working class. At a speech in Rochdale, he argued that the abolition of slavery was not only concerned with the freedom of slaves, but the freedom of all men in the United States. He stated that ‘not only is the question of negro slavery concerned in this struggle, but, if we are to take the opinion of leading writers and men in the Southern States of America, the freedom of white men is not safe in their hands.’<sup>35</sup> Political leaders built on this and partially influenced the working classes opinions on slavery. Joseph Park claimed that ‘many of those well-known political leaders whose opinions had weight with the working class proclaimed from the first that slavery was the cause of the struggle.’<sup>36</sup> What this demonstrated was how universal liberty, that America was supposedly founded upon, had failed the people in terms of voting and franchise extension, but also in granting freedom to every citizen. Theodore Tilton, an American newspaper editor who identified with the abolitionist movements, reinforced Bright’s thoughts and stated that ‘you [Bright] are right. The struggle in this country is nothing less than Slavery against Freedom, and Freedom against Slavery.’<sup>37</sup> Bright’s view was demonstrated at a speech in London in 1863, where he argued ‘the war in the United States has originated in the effort of the slaveholders of that country to break up what they themselves admit to be the freest and best government that ever existed, for the sole purpose of making perpetual the institution of slavery.’<sup>38</sup> Therefore, slavery clearly threatened the American Republic that Bright so fondly admired.

As a comparison to Bright, Lincoln evolved his views on abolition. Eric Foner noted the anger and agitation in public sentiment that arose through Lincoln’s decision to

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<sup>35</sup> Moore, *Speeches of John Bright*, p. 147.

<sup>36</sup> J. H. Park, ‘The English Workingmen and the American Civil War’, *Political Science Quarterly*, 39:3 (September, 1924), p. 436.

<sup>37</sup> BL, Tilton-Bright MS, Add MS 43391, Tilton to Bright, 30. Jan. 1863, f. 135.

<sup>38</sup> Moore, *Speeches of John Bright*, p. 182.

maintain reunification as the sole issue of the conflict and how it helped lay the foundations for the emancipation movement by the Executive.<sup>39</sup> Lincoln believed that the focus on emancipation symbolised a sign of Union weakness because it would come at a time when the Union was on the defence and a Confederate victory looked likely. However as Lincoln's opinions publicly evolved, he identified with abolitionists and described how they were all 'part of a common antislavery struggle.'<sup>40</sup> Even William Seward, after a long battle of denying slavery's significance in the conflict, finally addressed slavery in the summer of 1862, where 'for the benefit of the diplomat, he now stressed that slavery in the United States was well on the road to destruction and would not long survive the war.'<sup>41</sup>

Nevertheless, Lincoln and Seward respectively supported policies of gradual emancipation. The reasons for their support of gradual policies was because of the unknown consequences emancipation would have and there was a widespread fear of a depression occurring following its immediate destruction. John Lothrop Motley argued in his correspondence with Bright that gradual policies were a mistake as the South and its 'oligarchy' have challenged the principle of 'the dignity of human labor' through slavery and the universal civil rights it failed to uphold.<sup>42</sup> The Confederacy failed to maintain these rights because, according to Wendy Hamand, slavery was the 'cornerstone' of their region.<sup>43</sup> Therefore, by Lincoln maintaining gradual emancipative policies, the government would have been contradicting the original intentions of the Constitution and continued to benefit the Southern economy.

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<sup>39</sup> E. Foner, *The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery* (New York, 2010), p. xix.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, p. 31.

<sup>41</sup> Brauer, 'The Slavery Problem in the Diplomacy of the American Civil War', p. 449.

<sup>42</sup> BL, Motley-Bright MS, Add MS 43391, Motley to Bright, 9. Feb. 1863, f. 138.

<sup>43</sup> W. F. Hamand, "'No Voice from England": Mrs. Stowe, Mr. Lincoln, and the British in the Civil War', *The New England Quarterly*, 61:1 (March, 1988), p. 16.

The former treatment of slaves was a concern to Marcellus Hartley, an American arms dealer and merchant, who wrote to Bright with regards to how the Federal Government was treating slaves.<sup>44</sup> The movement of Northern men to the South improved work opportunities for former slaves and as a result ‘the black man is found to do better with wages & the whole system of Plantation raising is found to be capable of improvement under northern men with black free labour.’<sup>45</sup> Additionally, Hartley discussed how it was important to look to the future of the nation following the abolition of slavery despite the negative impact it would have on the Confederate economy. In a letter to Bright, he wrote that ‘notwithstanding the great loss to the Southern Slave holder, the world will in the end be the gainer.’<sup>46</sup> His belief was that after the abolition of slavery the South could only continue to exist through reunification and therefore restoring the Republic. Hartley’s correspondence with Bright was significant because it illustrated how abolition was starting to positively affect slaves. The increased recognition of the benefits of abolition resulted in the drafting of the Emancipation Proclamation originally in September 1862, and later January 1863, which received mixed reactions.

Although the Emancipation Proclamation was a clear demonstration of Lincoln’s Executive power, it is important to analyse what it did not do and what it failed to do. Allen Guelzo described the impact that the Proclamation had on Lincoln’s enemies and how ‘the outright Lincoln haters only found in the Proclamation more reason for their hatred.’<sup>47</sup> This was true with regards to Lord Russell who described the announcement as ‘a measure of war, and a measure of war of a very questionable kind.’<sup>48</sup> Similarly, the Secretary of Legation in the U.S., William Stuart, argued that the Proclamation was

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<sup>44</sup> Hartley was suggested to the Federal government and they selected him as their procurer, and therefore was considered highly by American officials and a valuable source of information.

<sup>45</sup> BL, Hartley-Bright, 22. Dec. 1863, f. 176.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, f. 176.

<sup>47</sup> Guelzo, *Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation*, p. 159.

<sup>48</sup> ‘The American War’, *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, p. 7.



‘cold, vindictive, and entirely political that does not abolish Slavery where it has the power.’<sup>49</sup> Even supporters of Lincoln such as Harriet Beecher Stowe, an American abolitionist and author, acted as a spokesperson for the abolitionists and was outraged by the Proclamation as it did not condone immediate emancipation.<sup>50</sup> However, Bright’s views were recognised by Stowe in his transatlantic network, where she ‘praised the Liberal Member of Parliament John Bright whose constant support for the Union was a source of comfort for many in the North.’<sup>51</sup> Although this thesis does not centre on abolition, it is important to acknowledge the views of prominent abolitionists in the transatlantic network because it demonstrates how complex abolition was, as within the movement there was not a cohesive policy regarding abolition. As described earlier, the ideas of gradual or immediate emancipation divided the movements and created this split in opinions.

Bright’s correspondence discussed the impact of the Proclamation and the effect that it would have on the outcome of the War. Theodore Tilton argued that although Lincoln was slow to create the policy, the drafting of the Proclamation was a step forward. He wrote that ‘the President (a good man, & may God bless him!) was slow free to it, & slower to act upon it.’<sup>52</sup> Similarly, Bradford R. Moore illustrated that the Proclamation symbolised a bigger turning point in the nature of the conflict as ‘the war has now for the first time begun in earnest, on the part of the north.’<sup>53</sup> Wendy Hamand reiterated the idea of the Proclamation as a turning point, but argued that it also symbolised ‘a time when English skeptics fell into line behind the Northern cause.’<sup>54</sup> Moreover, John Lothrop Motley believed the document to be a success as it tried ‘to urge & offer

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<sup>49</sup> Brauer, ‘The Slavery Problem in the Diplomacy of the American Civil War’, p. 463.

<sup>50</sup> Hamand, “‘No Voice from England’”, p. 14.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>52</sup> Tilton-Bright, 30. Jan. 1863, f. 135.

<sup>53</sup> BL, Moore-Bright MS, Add MS 43391, Moore to Bright, 18. Jan. 1863, f. 133.

<sup>54</sup> Hamand, “‘No Voice from England’”, p. 21.

compensated emancipation in the loyal states' which, he believed, was 'the most reasonable system of abolition that human wisdom can devise.'<sup>55</sup> On the whole, the Emancipation Proclamation was not received positively by American and British counterparts, however it was presented at a point which would months later become the turning point in the Civil War.

### **III – The Impact of the ‘Cotton Famine’**

Moving beyond abolition, the consequences of the ‘Cotton Famine’ had a significant impact on Anglo-American affairs. Undoubtedly, the cotton industry was central to British trade, and was described as ‘the greatest industry that ever had or could by possibility have ever existed in any age or country’ by many MPs.<sup>56</sup> Sven Beckert described how ‘historians generally view the U.S. Civil War as a crucial turning point in the history of the American nation. But it was more than this: the Civil War sparked the explosive transformation of the worldwide web of cotton production and, with it, of global capitalism.’<sup>57</sup> U.S cotton was superior for a number of reasons, however, its main reasons were its rich, fertile land and easily accessible transportation links.<sup>58</sup> Historian D. J. Oddy produced statistics relating to the amount of cotton that America provided to Britain and how this related to the total number of British imports. Oddy argued that ‘Britain bought nearly 71 per cent of the American crop in 1859-1860, which amounted to 80 per cent of the United Kingdom’s total imports of raw cotton.’<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Motley-Bright, 9. Feb. 1863, f. 140.

<sup>56</sup> ‘The Cotton Supply’, *Hansard – UK Parliament*, <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1862-06-19/debates/8425fcff-7850-41cd-a722-d97c8dadad3b/TheCottonSupply> [accessed 11/7/18]

<sup>57</sup> S. Beckert, ‘Emancipation and Empire: Reconstructing the Worldwide Web of Cotton Production in the Age of the American Civil War’, *The American Historical Review*, 109:5 (December, 2004), p. 1405

<sup>58</sup> ‘The Cotton Supply’ [accessed 11/7/18]

<sup>59</sup> D. J. Oddy, ‘Urban Famine in Nineteenth-Century Britain: The Effect of the Lancashire Cotton Famine on Working-Class Diet and Health’, *The Economic History Review*, 36:1 (February, 1983), p. 72.

In Bright's correspondence, the New York Chamber of Commerce also realised the importance of the cotton trade in maintaining relations between nations and believed that 'commerce and peace are familiar companions. They thrive best when they keep company with each other.'<sup>60</sup> Likewise, economist Edward Atkinson, illustrated that an alternate cotton supply would not save Britain and America's relationship as Britain's dependency on American cotton was too strong. He wrote that '...the partial dependence of England upon our country for their supply of thy [sic] most necessary material may be made a bond of peace and friendship never to be broken between the two countries.'<sup>61</sup> However, it was proposed that in instances of conflict, the two principles should separate to avoid damaging relations, which was clearly the case between Lancashire and America during the Civil War. Nevertheless, the previous chapter noted how at a speech in Birmingham, Bright publicly disagreed with Atkinson's advice about an alternate cotton supply.<sup>62</sup> What this demonstrated was that the opinions of Bright's transatlantic network could not alter his own views, and that slavery would not be the cause of the collapse of Britain's cotton trade with America

The causes of the 'Cotton Famine' and whether the Union naval blockade immediately impacted on the industry has been intensely debated amongst historians. Barnard Ellinger stated that the surplus of cotton was beyond the control of the cotton operatives, and described how the 'decline in her industry, which may have been inevitable in any case, has been hastened by political factors which are quite beyond her control.'<sup>63</sup> David Surdam similarly believed that the Civil War was responsible for its downturn, and that 'in the absence of the wartime disruptions, there is nothing to

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<sup>60</sup> Wetmore-Bright, 6. Mar. 1862, f. 118.

<sup>61</sup> BL, Atkinson-Bright MS, Add MS 43391, Atkinson to Bright, 6. Feb. 1862, f. 98.

<sup>62</sup> This was done at a speech in Birmingham in December 1862, where he argued that trading with America did not symbolise support for the Confederacy or slavery.

<sup>63</sup> B. Ellinger, 'British Foreign Policy in Relation to the Lancashire Cotton Industry', *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1931-1939)*, 16:2 (March-April, 1937), p. 250.

suggest either a significant temporary or permanent downturn in the demand for American-grown cotton.’<sup>64</sup> Had the war not occurred, there is little evidence to suggest Britain would have sourced an alternate cotton supply and whether a blockade on the shipment of cotton would have happened. Therefore, the overproduction of cotton that helped bring about the industry’s collapse was through no fault of the workers. The stockpiles of cotton staved off the downturn to an certain extent but once this supply had ran out, the crisis occurred.

The economic downturn began in early 1862 and at its peak in November, three-fifths of the Lancashire cotton workers were unemployed.<sup>65</sup> To put this into a national perspective, ‘a quarter of the whole population was directly dependent on the supply of cotton for its livelihood.’<sup>66</sup> Additionally, the levels of unemployment fluctuated across the entire Civil War era. Brady cross-referenced those in full time employment in the Lancashire cotton industry compared to those who were unemployed in the same industry. He found that from November 1861 the total unemployment figures in Lancashire was 0, and when compared with November 1862 this had risen to 330,759 at its peak figure.<sup>67</sup> Furthermore, one year later these figures dropped to 247,463 which symbolised the start of the recovery period from the downturn.<sup>68</sup> The ‘Cotton Famine’ brought mass poverty and unemployment to the region and many families struggled for their livelihoods. For Lancashire the cotton trade was its specialism and the majority of the county depended on the survival of this industry. Joseph Parks has claimed that in 1860, 310,000 out of 440,000 people living in Lancashire were employed in cotton.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> D. G. Surdam, ‘King Cotton: Monarch or Pretender? The State of the Market for Raw Cotton on the Eve of the American Civil War’, *The Economic History Review*, 51:1 (February, 1998), p. 131.

<sup>65</sup> Brady, ‘A Reconsideration of the Lancashire “Cotton Famine”’, p. 156.

<sup>66</sup> ‘The Cotton Supply’ [accessed 11/7/18]

<sup>67</sup> Brady, ‘A Reconsideration of the Lancashire “Cotton Famine”’, p. 156.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid*, p. 156.

<sup>69</sup> Park, ‘The English Workingmen and the American Civil War’, p. 432.

This accounted for 70 per cent of the region's involvement in the cotton industry, demonstrating its importance in the area and explains the huge effect that the 'Cotton Famine' was to have on the region, and Anglo-American affairs.<sup>70</sup>

Bright, as a man associated with the working-classes, acknowledged the extent of the worker's struggles, which was displayed at his speeches in Rochdale. In Rochdale he 'presented himself as the man who throughout his life was an outsider, outside the classically trained culture of the Victorian ruling classes, and superior to it. He was made by an English culture, by English literature and English history.'<sup>71</sup> Many of Lancashire's cotton operatives accepted forms of public relief and 'by early 1863, a quarter of the inhabitants of Lancashire, more than 500,000 individuals, received some form of public assistance' which puts into perspective the impact that the collapse had.<sup>72</sup> To assist his workers, he became involved in setting up funds to relieve the workers' sufferings. He wrote to Charles Sumner in December 1862 asking, 'if a few cargoes of flour could come, say 50,000 barrels, as a gift from persons in your Northern States to the Lancashire working men.'<sup>73</sup> Those in the Free States had recognised the suffering that Lancashire workers endured as a result of the 'Cotton Famine' and therefore felt it was their duty to send relief.

This prompted the creation of the American International Relief Committee for the Suffering Operatives of Great Britain, which by 4<sup>th</sup> December 1862 'announced that the sum of \$26,200 had been subscribed.'<sup>74</sup> Additionally by 9<sup>th</sup> January 1863, the committee had sent '11,236 barrels of flour, 50 barrels of pork, 125 barrels and 375

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<sup>70</sup> This was calculated by turning 310,000/400,000 into a percentage. It is my own estimation.

<sup>71</sup> Joyce, *Democratic Subjects*, p. 127.

<sup>72</sup> Beckert, 'Emancipation and Empire', p. 1410.

<sup>73</sup> Trevelyan, *The Life of John Bright*, p. 309.

<sup>74</sup> American International Relief Committee for the Suffering Operatives of Great Britain, *Report of the American international relief committee, for the suffering of operatives of Great Britain: 1862-1863* (New York, 1864), p. 13.

boxes of bread...’ amongst other commodities.<sup>75</sup> Bright did not directly contribute to this relief, but nonetheless he corresponded with Sumner and brought thousands of dollars to assist Lancashire’s workers. He later extended his thanks to the ‘merchants of New York for their relief of the suffering people of the Lancashire cotton districts.’<sup>76</sup> The gesture from these merchants was well received and showed that the supposed ‘dislike’ towards England was untrue. The relief illustrated the identification that American workers had with the British working-classes. Similarly, MPs in Parliament questioned the importance of the cotton supply on Britain as a nation. They believed that ‘the supply of cotton... was not a mere Lancashire question – it was a question of great national importance.’<sup>77</sup> It was also of a question of international importance, which was demonstrated by the effect it had on a committee in Melbourne, Australia. The *Rochdale Observer* printed how the Mayor of Manchester received £5,000 in funds to ‘show that we, who did not forget the sufferers in Ireland and in India, feel also for sufferers about our old homes.’<sup>78</sup> This reiterates one of the aims of this research, which is to internationalise the Civil War. Bright’s correspondents however were interested in the attitudes of Lancashire workers towards the Union.

#### **IV – Lancashire’s Support for the Union**

From the previous section it is undeniable that the majority of workers in Lancashire were affected by the ‘Cotton Famine.’ Nonetheless, they remained loyal and wholeheartedly supported the Union. In a letter to Sumner, Bright stated that ‘our working-class is with you and against the South.’<sup>79</sup> Joseph Park reinforced this when he

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid, p. 30.

<sup>76</sup> Charles McLaren, ‘Reminiscences of John Bright’, *The North American Review*, 155:430 (September, 1892), p. 318.

<sup>77</sup> ‘The Cotton Supply’ [accessed 11/7/18]

<sup>78</sup> ‘Australian Sympathy with Lancashire Distress’, *The Rochdale Observer*, 20. Sept. 1862, p. 6.

<sup>79</sup> Stevenson, *Lincoln in the Atlantic World*, p. 150.

argued that ‘the workingmen kept a favorable attitude toward the North in spite of the blockade, which, according to the reports of the time, was accepted as the principal cause of the Lancashire Cotton famine.’<sup>80</sup> This was largely a result of Bright’s presence in the region as many ‘areas without a link to Bright showed little interest in showing that democracy as a system had failed, more often criticising America in general rather than their political system in particular.’<sup>81</sup>

In Bright’s transatlantic correspondence, however, there was little discussion on Lancashire’s sympathies with the Union; instead the focus was on Bright as an individual, or Britain. Publicly, though, a meeting was convened by the Mayor of Rochdale in order to give their ‘thanks to American subscribers in aid of the unemployed work-people of Lancashire’, and for them to express their sympathies with the Union.<sup>82</sup> Everyone at that meeting was sympathetic towards America which was warmly received by Americans, as workers risked their own livelihoods in order for America to achieve reunification and, later, the abolition of slavery. The abolition of slavery in Britain helped to strengthen Victorian morality and as a result, the support for the Union was a by-product of the workingman’s hostility towards slavery.<sup>83</sup> What this meant was that since its abolition in Britain, the British government had ‘begun the process of internationalizing abolition.’<sup>84</sup> From this, workers realised that their support of abolition, in turn, signified support of the Union and Lincoln.

In Lancashire, workers correlated ‘free labour’ and slavery and because of this sympathised with the slave’s position of being repressed. For Bright, the correlation lay

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<sup>80</sup> Park, ‘The English Workingmen and the American Civil War’, p. 432.

<sup>81</sup> Bennett, ‘Confederate Supporters in the West Riding’, p. 323.

<sup>82</sup> Moore, *Speeches of John Bright*, p. 130-131.

<sup>83</sup> Park, ‘The English Workingmen and the American Civil War’, p. 435.

<sup>84</sup> S. Drescher, *Abolition: A History of Slavery and Antislavery* (Cambridge, 2009), p. 208-209.

in the language spoken by both respective counterparts. At the Rochdale Public Hall, Bright stated how Americans and the English spoke the same language and that ‘if we should not find the people of New York speaking Lancashire, we should find them speaking English’ and that Americans will even have read the same books as those in Lancashire.<sup>85</sup> He further discussed how the British working classes related to slaves and how they could ‘sympathize with them who are still in bondage’ due to their disenfranchisement by the political system.<sup>86</sup> This identification linked with James Randall’s early arguments in that the ‘masses of the British working people recognized as did Bright the identity of their cause with Lincoln’s.’<sup>87</sup> However, for the people of Rochdale their identification with the Union came from Bright’s speeches and views, but also from their liberal nature and support of nonconformity.<sup>88</sup> Historically Rochdale was a liberal town due to its high population of workers and members of the working-class, as well as its involvement in the Anti-Corn Law League, start of the Co-operative movement and Chartism. As a result, they created an alliance with Liberal politicians so that their opinions were being accounted for.

Despite this, a factor that demonstrated the level of Union support in Lancashire was the number of working and middle-class societies. Mary Ellison, despite arguing that there was considerable Confederate support in Lancashire, stated that ‘there was undoubtedly in Manchester a section of the influential press that believed implicitly in the justice of the Northern cause’ and it was these people that joined the Manchester Union and Emancipation Society.<sup>89</sup> Richard J. M. Blackett illustrated that this particular society formed at a meeting in Manchester where over 3,000 people attended, in retaliation

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<sup>85</sup> Moore, *Speeches of John Bright*, p. 137.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 162.

<sup>87</sup> J. M. Hernon Jr, ‘British Sympathies in the American Civil War: A Reconsideration’, *The Journal of Southern History*, 33:3 (August, 1967), p. 357.

<sup>88</sup> Ellison, *Support for Secession*, p. 13-14.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.



against pro-Confederate groups forming in London.<sup>90</sup> Bright was partially responsible for the formations of these societies, as his various speeches helped to ‘encourage pro-Union meetings and expressions of sympathy.’<sup>91</sup>

However, pro-Confederate groups existed within Lancashire, like the infamous Southern Independence Association, which were popular in Oldham and boasted 313 members of its organisation living in Lancashire, but also a further 70 members living in neighbouring Yorkshire.<sup>92</sup> Ellison believed that Union support in Lancashire acted as a propaganda tool used by Bright and Cobden, arguing that ‘deep and widespread abolitionist feeling in Lancashire mistrusted the motives of Lincoln and the North as far as slavery was concerned.’<sup>93</sup> Blackett similarly argued that ‘confronted by the shortage of cotton and a loss of jobs, Lancashire workers acted out of self-interest and supported the Confederacy...’<sup>94</sup> However the above statistics regarding members of the Union and Emancipation Society, and later the address to Lincoln by Manchester’s workers, demonstrated the support for the Union in Lancashire.

#### **V – Address at the Manchester Free Trade Hall, December 1862**

The opinions of those in Lancashire can be easily explained by examining the address made by the workingmen of Manchester at the Free Trade Hall in December 1862, which passed resolutions in favour of the Union. Ellison dismissed the effectiveness of this speech and believed that ‘Lincoln inspired remarkably little interest in the weaving towns.’<sup>95</sup> However it is undeniable that it was effective in helping Anglo-American

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<sup>90</sup> Blackett, *Divided Hearts*, p. 98.

<sup>91</sup> Stevenson, *Lincoln in the Atlantic World*, p. 151.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99. It is important to remember that support for the Union was not necessarily support for reunification and the abolition of slavery, but rather against a backward-facing Confederacy.

<sup>93</sup> Ellison, *Support for Secession*, p. 10.

<sup>94</sup> Blackett, *Divided Hearts*, p. 4.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 174.

relations and further demonstrated the resilience of the working people of Manchester. As a comparison, Mark Bennett analysed the support for the Confederacy in the West Riding and discussed how speeches made about the 'Cotton Famine' influenced its workers. He did reference Bright and his impact in Lancashire, but also stated that those who had previously attended Bright's speeches 'may have simply been siding with a popular local figure against two divisive outsiders as a way of demonstrating that a war which was causing them hardship should at least be fought for a noble cause.'<sup>96</sup> This may have been true, to some extent, as Bright was an admirable figure in the region and an icon for radical politics. Nonetheless the address at the Free Trade Hall was organised and attended by a mixture of cotton workers and the Manchester middle-class, which illustrated how support for the Union was not subject to a particular class.<sup>97</sup> Moreover, it also symbolised how workers were educated enough about the conflict to conduct a speech on such a scale. The knowledge that they had acquired about the conflict came from Bright's previous speeches and though he had limited involvement in organising and did not attend the speech, his influence was, without a doubt, present in that hall.

The emphatic tone of the address was a clear indicator of the undying support for the Union. The workers made particular reference to the choice of 'legal freedom' and stated that 'one thing alone has, in the past, lessened our sympathy with your country and our confidence in it, - we mean, the ascendancy of politicians who not merely maintained negro slavery, but desired to extend and root it more firmly.'<sup>98</sup> The lack of abolitionist politicians had, in the workers' eyes, contributed to the strain on Anglo-

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<sup>96</sup> Bennett, 'Confederate Supporters in the West Riding', p. 319.

<sup>97</sup> This concept of classes mixing together was not uncommon in such a class-conscious period as Victorian Britain. The meeting further demonstrated how the Civil War was a class issue in England and that the 'slavery question' had class at its core.

<sup>98</sup> 'Address from Working Men to President Lincoln', p. 3.

American relations. Even so, these relations were maintained through Lincoln's election to the Presidency and the notion that a Union victory would result in the abolition of slavery, and now Manchester's sympathy had resided again with the Union. The enemies of the Union, which existed in towns like Oldham, were defined as those that 'oppose liberty at home.'<sup>99</sup> Bright reinforced this in a private letter to Boston, where he wrote that 'the haters of your Republic are few in comparison to the whole people, and every day adds to the number of those who hope to see slavery destroyed and the Union restored.'<sup>100</sup> Moreover, the workingmen presented the idea that both Lancashire and America shared similar language, culture and principles. This was summarised with the following section of the address:

“We are certain that such a glorious consummation will cement Great Britain to the United States in close and enduring regards. Our interests, moreover, are identified with yours. We are truly one people, though locally separate.”<sup>101</sup>

This idea of language similarities was demonstrated earlier in the chapter by Bright, and therefore illustrated how the workers' views were simultaneous with Bright's opinions.<sup>102</sup> It is evident from the above extract that there was a common understanding between Lancashire and the Union due to their shared struggle of the Civil War. Allen Guelzo stated that this address prompted a response from Lincoln, where he 'promised the Manchester workingmen that they would have the "admiration, esteem, and the most reciprocal feelings of friendship among the American people"' after organising a meeting on such a large scale.<sup>103</sup> For Lincoln, the meeting at Manchester demonstrated that 'Manchester was a very important ally to Abraham Lincoln's Union during the

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid, p. 3.

<sup>100</sup> Bright, 'America', p. 1.

<sup>101</sup> 'Address from the Workingmen', *The Manchester Guardian*, p. 3.

<sup>102</sup> See page 17 and section on the 'Cotton Famine'

<sup>103</sup> Guelzo, *Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation*, p. 204-5. Lincoln's response was published in January 1863.

American Civil War.’<sup>104</sup> John Lothrop Motley commented on the scenes displayed at this meeting and was humbled at the strength that the workers showed in such a time of crisis. In his opinion, this meeting changed his perception of how the British viewed not only the American people, but also the Civil War and wrote that these ‘recent events has proved that the great heart of England is good.’<sup>105</sup> Therefore the meeting was crucial for changing opinions of Britain in Bright’s transatlantic correspondence, and contributed to the strengthening and restoration of Anglo-American relations.

Moreover, the address at the Free Trade Hall had a reasonable impact within Britain. The *Manchester Guardian*, in an article addressed to its editor, discussed how well publicised and attended this event was, as tickets were given out quickly and many people received up to 10 tickets each.<sup>106</sup> Following this address, Bright’s speech at Exeter Hall in June 1863 continued to explain why the Confederacy started the Civil War and campaigned for additional Union support. Exeter Hall was famously affiliated with the Anti-Slavery Society and therefore proved to be a suitable venue for speeches on abolition. Similarly to what Bright said in northern England, in London he discussed how the Confederacy ‘had made slavery the issue and having rushed into the battlefield to settle the great question it was sinking into inevitable ruin.’<sup>107</sup> From this, it is evident that the Manchester meeting was highly effective not only for future speeches, but also for the impact that it had on the future of abolition in America. On the other hand, the *Manchester Guardian* argued that the meeting was not influential as the more respectable middle class stayed away.<sup>108</sup> It is undeniable that the workingmen’s address

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<sup>104</sup> Dr. D. Brown, ‘Abraham Lincoln and Manchester’, *Archives+*, <https://manchesterarchiveplus.wordpress.com/2013/02/22/abraham-lincoln-and-manchester/> [14/3/17]

<sup>105</sup> Motley-Bright, 9. Feb. 1863, f. 139.

<sup>106</sup> ‘Correspondence: Notice to Correspondents’, *The Manchester Guardian*, 3. Jan. 1863, p. 6.

<sup>107</sup> ‘Mr. Bright MP on the American Question’, *The Manchester Guardian*, 17. June. 1863, p. 3.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid*, p. 6.

in Manchester was influenced by Bright's earlier speeches and helped to ease the strain of Anglo-American relations that had occurred in previous years.

This chapter has continued to demonstrate Bright's influence in Anglo-American affairs and the evolution of his correspondence as the Civil War continued. The years discussed were fundamental because of the increased number of letters that Bright had received, which was largely a result of his successful speeches. Although this chapter acknowledged the vital role of abolition in Anglo-American affairs, it aimed to draw attention to other issues that were discussed in the transatlantic correspondence. The continued lack of understanding by the British government proved highly problematic and frustrating to Bright and to Americans as it was evident that little effort was made to understand the conflict. Moreover, the correspondence illustrated how the continued distrust of Palmerston broke down relations due to his policy of neutrality, which was still believed to be a sign of Confederate sympathy. Individuals such as Bradford Moore revised Palmerston's image to allow Bright to understand why Americans thought so negatively of Britain. Britain had a negative image because it was believed that they desired a war with America, however up until this time, there was no wish for a transatlantic conflict. Furthermore, not only was the distrust of Palmerston an issue in Anglo-American affairs but the suspicion of William Seward and his existing lack of support for abolition added to the hatred that had been established following the *Trent Affair*. As a result of this the British deemed him unworthy of their support, yet their views changed once abolition was announced.

Undeniably, 1862-1863 were important years for discussions on slavery in Bright's correspondence because it saw the abolition of slavery as a motive for the continuance of the conflict. Bright believed in its abolition yet failed to identify with any

movements, and whilst his pacifist views did not believe going to war was the solution for peace, he later believed that the only way to abolish slavery was through this conflict. For Bright slavery had wider connotations; he related it to the lower working classes of Britain who were oppressed due to the disenfranchised political system. His view was demonstrated at speeches in Rochdale which resonated with the workers and helped influence their opinions on slavery. Arguably the drafting of the Emancipation Proclamation in January 1863 was critical as it helped change British attitudes towards the conflict and, to some extent, contributed to reducing tensions. Correspondents such as John Lothrop Motely warmly received the document however it sparked considerable debate in the transatlantic networks over gradual versus immediate emancipation. Although it has been acknowledged, this chapter has moved beyond abolition by incorporating and drawing attention to British attitudes and Manchester's support for the Union.

Lastly, the impact of the Lancashire 'Cotton Famine' and the sourcing of alternate supplies was a prominent theme in this chapter. Many cotton operatives lost their livelihoods and it was feared that a rise in Confederate support would appear in the area. Mary Ellison's argument was contested in this thesis as she believed that there was considerable Confederate support in Lancashire. Her hypothesis was challenged following the analysis of 'The Address of the Workingmen of Manchester' in December 1862, which demonstrated the resilience of the north-west and acted as a turning point in Anglo-American affairs. Influenced by, but not organised by John Bright, workers and middle-class individuals gathered to pledge their full support to Lincoln and the Union during this internal rebellion. The workingmen's address was symbolic because this meeting was 'a means of demonstrating strength: not only in the numbers attending, but also in the ability to appropriate and maintain control over a particular space in the

town.’<sup>109</sup> This was an act of reassurance that despite the hardships they were enduring, it was for the greater good as slavery would be abolished as a result of it. It illustrated determination, resilience and how universal freedom crossed transatlantic boundaries and was relatable on the other side of the Atlantic.

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<sup>109</sup> Bennett, ‘Confederate Supporters in the West Riding’, p. 312.

### **Chapter 3**

#### **Capital Punishment, Re-election and Lincoln's Assassination**

S. Montgomery Bond, Chairman of the Office of the Committee on Labor, Incomes and Revenue, wrote to Bright in April 1865 stating that 'we all love you here, for you have shown your regard for free principles, which are dear to us, and we wish to honor you in every way that we can.'<sup>1</sup> Statements of this nature typically featured in Bright's letters at the end of the Civil War. Although it was a letter asking for a sentence from Bright that was to be read at the Great Central Fair Committee, it illustrated how Bright was respected in the United States and that should he decide to visit, he would receive an enthusiastic reception. Bond represented the views of many other individuals during this period such as Edmund C. Bittinger, member of the U.S. Navy, Frank Moore, a journalist, and John Skirving, an architect. The latter two individuals collected Bright's speeches in order to produce a compiled book that would be available to the public, as a means of extending his influence to younger generations.

The preceding chapter showed how abolition was not central to correspondence in 1862-1863, and that British neutrality as well as the effects of the Lancashire 'Cotton Famine' were of equal significance. This chapter builds on this and demonstrates the final evolution of Bright's correspondence, through the topics of discussion that appeared. Specifically, it recognises the continued lack of emphasis on abolition and the conflict and draws attention to areas of Bright's interest that are often overlooked by historians, particularly capital punishment. His interest in the death penalty in America will be examined as an example of Bright's legacy and how it can be considered.

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<sup>1</sup> BL, Bond-Bright MS, Add MS 43391, Bond to Bright, 4. Apr. 1865, f. 194.



Moreover, British neutrality was discussed in less depth at the War's end compared to chapter one and two, due to Britain's continued support of this policy. This stance was made evident in correspondence between Earl Russell and President Davis, leader of the Confederacy. Here Davis highlighted that an offer had been suggested to Britain where they could build vessels in their country to send to the Confederacy, which would therefore create jobs and income, yet it was swiftly declined.<sup>2</sup> The declining of this offer illustrated to the Confederates that Britain was to maintain their policy of neutrality. Overall though, the lack of discussion in the correspondence on British neutrality is why it did not feature in chapter three.

Within this final chapter letters discussing Bright's legacy, capital punishment, Lincoln's re-election, the Civil War, abolition and Lincoln's assassination will be examined. The admiration for Bright continued to be widespread amongst American individuals and even culminated in the rise of requests to produce books of Bright's speeches on America. Frank Moore, who had never corresponded with Bright previously, compiled a collection of Bright's speeches on the 'American Question' that had been presented in the House of Commons. Moreover, the admiration that Bright and Lincoln had for one another will be discussed as a means of demonstrating Anglo-American relations. Henry Janney, a confidant of Lincoln, was important as he read Bright's letters to the President and his interest in them. Lincoln's admiration for Bright was such, that he was due to be presented with a marble bust in Bright's likeness. The significance of this gesture becomes more striking when one considers that, while Lincoln's untimely fate prevented him from accepting the sculpture, the bust became a

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<sup>2</sup> Anon, 'America: Correspondence between Earl Russell & President Davis', *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, 26. May. 1864, p. 4.

constant fixture in the décor of the President's office for over a century.

## **I – Publications of Bright's Speeches and the Marble Bust**

The end of the Civil War signified a further increase in attempts to recognise Bright. As made evident from the previous chapters, Bright throughout the period received letters of gratitude from Americans. However, from April 1865, Bright received letters offering condolences following the death of his reform partner, Richard Cobden.<sup>3</sup> Anthony Howe and Simon Morgan focused on Cobden's pivotal role in helping Lancashire with the relief campaign during the 'Cotton Famine', where 'he failed to convince Bright to join him.'<sup>4</sup> However the previous chapter demonstrated how Bright reached out to Charles Sumner to send relief to Lancashire.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, Ruth Livesey and Ella Dzelzainis, although they do acknowledge that Bright was significant, referred to Cobden's speeches, pamphlets and letters and the ways in which they influenced the Anti-Corn Law League's opinions on America. They concluded that through focusing on his speeches and letters, it helped to demonstrate how he 'played an important role in shaping the image of America presented by the League to its supporters and the wider public.'<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, historians such as Duncan Andrew Campbell believed that Bright's influence was limited and instead had damaged Anglo-American affairs and thus his legacy has been exaggerated. Campbell described Bright as 'the one individual who deserves no credit whatsoever for the fact that there was no breakdown between Britain

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<sup>3</sup> As discussed in the introduction of this thesis, many historians have placed more emphasis on the impact that Cobden had on Anglo-American relations as oppose to Bright and argue that it was Cobden who was at the forefront of maintaining a transatlantic relationship.

<sup>4</sup> A. Howe & S. Morgan (eds.) *The Letters of Richard Cobden. Volume IV: 1860-1865* (Oxford, 2015), p. xlvii.

<sup>5</sup> See pp. 49-50.

<sup>6</sup> Howe, 'John Bull and Brother Jonathon', in Dzelzainis & Livesey, *The American Experiment and the Idea of Democracy in British Culture*, p. 100.

and the Union.’<sup>7</sup> Bright’s impact in maintaining a good relationship was minimal, according to Campbell and as a result of this he cannot be recognised for his efforts in the Civil War.

In comparison to Campbell, the letters highlighted that Bright’s speeches carried a greater impact. Supporting this notion, Edmund C. Bittinger, who served in the US navy, referenced Bright’s speeches and argued that they had a significant effect in America. In his letter he wrote that ‘your recent, truthful & fearless vindication of this country, in the dark hours of new history, will never be forgotten.’<sup>8</sup> By underlining these adjectives, Bittinger added emphasis and symbolised his gratitude for Bright’s work. Additionally, Frank Moore was aware of the significance of Cobden in helping to shape British opinions of the Civil War, but again placed greater focus on Bright’s speeches. This led to a correspondence between Bright and Moore regarding the publication of his speeches, in a collection entitled ‘The Rebellion Record.’ By creating this book, Moore gave Bright the title as ‘the defender of the rights of humanity.’<sup>9</sup> Moore would be the editor of the collection and the final proof reader, as perhaps for him, he could preserve Bright’s integrity. He further stated that 250 copies of this book would be produced which would be met with approval from ‘our honest and patriotic public.’<sup>10</sup>

The production and acceptance of books was, however not unique to Moore, for John Skirving corresponded with Bright regarding the acceptance of a published work titled ‘Men of Progress – American Inventors.’ Skirving was an architect, artist and engineer who played a large role in the development of the Government buildings in Washington

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<sup>7</sup> Campbell, *English Public Opinion and the American Civil War*, p. 241.

<sup>8</sup> BL, Bittinger-Bright MS, Add MS 43391, Bittinger to Bright, 15. Apr. 1864, f. 212.

<sup>9</sup> BL, Moore-Bright MS, Add MS 43391, Moore to Bright, 28. Nov. 1864, f. 223.

<sup>10</sup> BL, Moore-Bright MS, Add MS 43391, Moore to Bright, 6. Feb. 1865, f. 238.

and was hired to help improve air ventilation in the Capitol building.<sup>11</sup> Bright's acceptance of this published work would be viewed as an honour, and 'an undeniable testimonial of the universal esteem and admiration in which you are held in America.'<sup>12</sup> Although admiration was present in correspondence, it is not as evident in American historiography. For example, Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Team of Rivals* (2013), did not mention Bright or the role he played in maintaining Anglo-American relations during the internal rebellion.<sup>13</sup> Nonetheless, the volume of letters received demonstrates that Bright was a vital character in maintaining a positive image in America. The letters from Moore and Skirving help to reinforce this and also James McPherson's argument, where he contended that Bright undoubtedly was the 'foremost British champion of the Union.'<sup>14</sup>

Furthermore, the correspondence between Bright and Americans revealed the extent of Lincoln's admiration for him. The only evidence of correspondence between Lincoln and Bright was a resolution that Bright received, which enclosed Lincoln's ideas of what 'he hoped to see adopted by public meetings in England.'<sup>15</sup> Despite this occasion, they had never properly corresponded, yet both developed a positive image of one another through regular updates. These updates occurred in Lincoln's Cabinet meetings, where individuals such as Henry Janney would read out Bright's letters to the President. In a letter dated after Lincoln's assassination, Janney stated how after reading one of his letters, Lincoln described Bright as 'the only British statesman who

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<sup>11</sup> In this letter, Skirving was making and writing a book. He wrote to Bright to check if he would like to receive a copy of it.

<sup>12</sup> BL, Skirving-Bright MS, Add MS 43391, Skirving to Bright, 13. Jan. 1864, f. 182.

<sup>13</sup> See 'Literature Review', p. 10. Goodwin's work is highly influential in the Lincoln debate and her work helped in the adaption of the film 'Lincoln.' However, within this book she never gives reason for not discussing Anglo-American relations. Although the book focuses on the way in which Lincoln handled his political enemies, it does have a focus on American foreign policy during the Civil War and the way Lincoln managed it. This could explain why she did not discuss Bright or his relations with America, even though he was integral in maintaining a strong relationship with Britain which could constitute as foreign policy.

<sup>14</sup> J. M. McPherson, *Drawn with the Sword: Reflections on the American Civil War* (New York, 1996), p. 215.

<sup>15</sup> Trevelyan, *Life of Bright*, p. 303.

has been unfaltering in his confidence in our ultimate success.’<sup>16</sup> This was because Bright never doubted the Union’s motives nor tactics for war, and because of this he was widely regarded in America. It is often assumed that Bright and Lincoln corresponded with one another, however, their “friendship” was built on mutual admiration. Lincoln was preoccupied with the Civil War and barely corresponded with any of his associates and confidants, apart from William Seward, and did not keep a Civil War journal. However, as discussed, Lincoln was aware of Bright’s support for the Union through reading the letters received by some of his closest colleagues, which demonstrates the extent of their “friendship” and mutual respect.

This high status culminated in the construction of a marble bust in honour of Bright by British artist John Warrington Wood, that was placed in Lincoln’s office.<sup>17</sup> According to Louise Stevenson, this bust symbolised ‘the relationship that had developed between the British M.P. and President Lincoln during his first term, 1861-1865.’<sup>18</sup> Immediately it represented the level of respect and recognition that both Americans and the President had towards Bright. Bill Cash portrayed the bust as having ‘a likeness of Mr. Bright’, which was placed proudly in Lincoln’s office following his assassination, because it was believed that it represented ‘a noble and good friend of our cause in this unholy rebellion.’<sup>19</sup> By placing the bust in Lincoln’s office after his death, it symbolised how it would become a permanent feature of the presidential office, where it stood for over a century into the Kennedy administration. Alongside this bust there was a portrait of Bright in Lincoln’s office, which was discussed in an article by the *Manchester Guardian* following the visit of a French man, named M. Auguste Langel, who saw

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<sup>16</sup> BL, Janney-Bright MS, Add MS 43391, Janney to Bright, 26. Apr. 1865, f. 249.

<sup>17</sup> Although it was originally intended as a gift to Lincoln following his second inauguration, he never saw the finished product as a result of his assassination.

<sup>18</sup> Stevenson, *Lincoln in the Atlantic World*, p. 128.

<sup>19</sup> Cash, *John Bright: Statesman, Orator, Agitator*, p. 144.

Lincoln both in private and public settings. When writing to the *Manchester Guardian*, Langel described how the portrait ‘was that of John Bright, the eloquent defender of the American Union in the British Parliament.’<sup>20</sup> Overall, even though the bust was later moved to the diplomatic room in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, having both a portrait and bust of Bright in Lincoln’s office symbolised the amount of respect that Bright had from the highest government official in America.

## **II – Capital Punishment**

As stated in the introduction, the latter Civil War years saw a shift in the correspondence. A perceived area of Bright’s interest often overlooked by historians was capital punishment. As seen in the first chapter with Bright’s interest in the American electoral system, he aimed to reconstruct aspects of British society that embodied American democracy, and perhaps that was his intention here. Britain still employed the use of capital punishment; the significance here is that in many states in America it had already been abolished. The abolition of capital punishment in some U.S. states helped to portray the idealisation of American democracy and that, according to Bright, Britain could achieve this by making similar reforms. Sir Samuel Romilly was the frontrunner of the British campaign to abolish the death penalty and helped reduce the number of crimes that were punishable by death and abolished minor crimes receiving the death penalty.

Following this reduction, the British Liberal state was ‘concerned with improving morality and character.’<sup>21</sup> With relation to punishments, this was done through the

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<sup>20</sup> M. A. Langel, ‘A Frenchman’s Recollections of Abraham Lincoln’, *The Manchester Guardian*, 23. May. 1865, p. 7.

<sup>21</sup> J. Perry, ‘Liberalism and Liberty’, in P. Mandler (ed.) *Liberty & Authority in Victorian Britain* (Oxford, 2006), p. 84.

increase of life sentences or transportation to other countries. With this, George Rudé argued that ‘the scaling down of capital crimes naturally had the effect of increasing the number of sentences to prison and transportation.’<sup>22</sup> Despite this scaling down, it is evident that although these reforms largely reduced the number of crimes punishable by death, capital punishment was still allowed.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, Britain’s move towards the eradication of the death penalty was slow and although public executions were abolished in 1868, it was not until 1969 when capital punishment was finally made illegal in Britain.

Within his writing, Bright corresponded with a number of State Governors in order to broaden his understanding and examine how the justice system worked in individual states. Austin Blair, the State Governor of Michigan, was an important correspondent regarding capital punishment and was often referred to as ‘the Civil War Governor.’ Blair gained this title because he was a strong opponent of slavery and supported the extension of the franchise to include women and African-Americans, but he also led the effort to ban capital punishment in Michigan. Blair supported Lincoln and campaigned for the state of Michigan to offer its entire military resources to help maintain the Union thus demonstrating the views that Bright had shared. Within his letters, Blair provided a brief history of Michigan’s state legislature and informed Bright that crimes were a rare occurrence.<sup>24</sup> However, in Michigan the death penalty did not apply to crimes of treason. Regarding this, Blair wrote that ‘there has never been any abolition of the death penalty for treason, defined in our Constitution to “consist only in levying war against the State, or in adhering to its enemies, giving them aid and comfort.”’<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> G. Rudé, ‘Protest and Punishment in Nineteenth-Century Britain’, *A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, 5:1 (Spring, 1973), p. 21.

<sup>23</sup> The crimes still punishable by death following amendments made in the early nineteenth century were murder, piracy, arson in the Royal Dockyards and high treason.

<sup>24</sup> BL, Blair-Bright MS, Add MS 43391, Blair to Bright, 3. Mar. 1864, f. 189.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, f. 189.

Additionally, Blair answered Bright's questions which ranged from the date of its abolition to the number of convictions since its removal. The death penalty in Michigan was abolished on 1<sup>st</sup> March 1847 and according to Blair, life was not taken away often due to Michigan's small population, which in the 1840s totalled 300,000 people.<sup>26</sup> The low number of inhabitants was a result of the Upper Peninsula and northern two-thirds of another peninsula being composed of woodland.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, since its removal, murders occurred less frequently, as between 1847-1864 there were only 37 murder convictions in the state.<sup>28</sup> This averaged at around 2.5 murder convictions per year, which Austin Blair attributed to the removal of the death penalty. Instead, prisoners served out life sentences, which he believed was a more workable system, and one that should be adopted in Britain. Similarly, Randall McGowen has argued that 'the prison existed to save life and to serve life; its goal was to take hardened offenders and by softening them render them good neighbors and citizens.'<sup>29</sup> In comparison, McGowen described the death penalty as 'a counsel of despair.'<sup>30</sup>

The Governor of Rhode Island, James Smith, also answered Bright's questions surrounding capital punishment. Smith gathered opinions from other leading politicians such as the Supreme Judge State Attorney, who reinforced his own views and increased their legitimacy. With regards to Smith's views on the abolition of the death penalty, he argued that he did 'not think that its abolition has had any effect upon the security of life.'<sup>31</sup> What he meant was that since the abolition of the death penalty in Rhode Island in 1852, there had been no increase in the number of murders committed. Smith's argument differed from Blair's, as the rate of murders had declined since the abolition

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid f. 190. Following the abolition of the death penalty, the population rose to 600,000.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, f. 190.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, f. 190.

<sup>29</sup> R. McGowen, 'A Powerful Sympathy: Terror, the Prison and Humanitarian Reform in Early Nineteenth-Century Britain', *Journal of British Studies*, 25:3 (July, 1986), p. 326.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, p. 326.

<sup>31</sup> BL, Smith-Bright MS, Add MS 43391, Smith to Bright, 21. Mar. 1864, f. 187.



of capital punishment in Michigan in 1847. Nonetheless, like Blair's argument, Smith stated that the public in Rhode Island were content with the decision to abolish the act of crimes punishable by death.<sup>32</sup> On various occasions Smith and Bright corresponded about new information regarding public feelings toward the death penalty. In doing this, it appeared as if Smith felt honoured in discussing the death penalty with Bright and hoped that the information provided would 'aid you in your efforts upon the subject in which all should take a deep interest.'<sup>33</sup> In a later letter Smith described a time line of public opinion toward capital punishment and from it drew his own conclusion. His opinion is stated below:

'I am clearly of the opinion that the present state of the Law upon this subject is sustained by public opinion in this State and believe that it will continue to be, until it is satisfactorily shown by the statistics that crimes against life have been considerably increased in consequence of it. My observation fully justifies me in saying that convictions of murder is far more certain now, in proper cases, than when death was the punishment of it.'<sup>34</sup>

The above quotation demonstrated that Smith was a supporter of the current system in Rhode Island and believed that the abolition of the death penalty was beneficial for any nation. He argued that the public reinforced the State's decision yet an increase in murder rates following its abolition could alter public opinions. Smith also suggested that murder conviction rates were more legitimate, and there was no risk of innocent people being executed for a crime that they did not commit. As a result of these factors he concluded in his letter to Bright that 'the public sentiment' was 'to be in favor of the present mode of punishment.'<sup>35</sup> The information about public opinion is important because British and American citizens were seen as being similar in principle, and

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<sup>32</sup> The death penalty was replaced by life imprisonment, which again was deemed a more moral punishment.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, f. 187.

<sup>34</sup> BL, Smith-Bright MS, Add MS 43391, Smith to Bright, 4. Apr. 1864, f. 197.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, f. 197.

therefore there was a chance that British subjects would react to the abolition of the death penalty in the way that American citizens did in Rhode Island.

To build on from Blair's and Smith's letters, the Governor of Wisconsin contributed to the discussion of capital punishment in America. James T. Lewis, previously a lawyer and politician, believed that the death penalty was wrong on moral grounds and deemed it arbitrary to take a life following a conviction.<sup>36</sup> On the other hand, Lewis believed that the public could suffer without the death penalty, as once released and dependent on their original sentencing, prisoners could reoffend very quickly. The lack of sentencing defied retribution and that people should suffer for the crimes that they committed through the death penalty. Despite this notion, Lewis's beliefs concurred with those of Blair and Smith in concluding that the removal of capital punishment was beneficial for their respective states.

He further described his own personal role in the removal of the death penalty and therefore his personal connection to it. Here he wrote that he had 'the honor of advocating and voting for the abolition of this penalty & the pleasure of seeing a law placed upon the statute book forbidding its execution,' therefore demonstrating that its abolition was personal to himself too.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, Lewis's and Blair's letters can be compared by analysing how the population of Wisconsin affected its murder rate. As opposed to Michigan, Wisconsin's population grew from a reasonable 305,391 people in 1850, to a much larger 775, 629 in 1860.<sup>38</sup> However, the population increase in Wisconsin had negative implications on the rate of first-degree murder. Lewis wrote that between 1854 and 1857, immediately following the removal of the penalty, 41 first

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<sup>36</sup> BL, Lewis-Bright MS, Add MS 43391, Lewis to Bright, 29. Mar. 1864, f. 192.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, f. 192.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, f. 193. Wisconsin was largely composed of woodland areas, like Michigan, yet they still boasted a much larger population.

degree murders were committed in Wisconsin.<sup>39</sup> As stated earlier Michigan saw 37 murder convictions in 17 years following the abolition of capital punishment, yet Wisconsin constituted a higher number in a much shorter amount of time. Lewis suggested no reasons as to what caused this surge, but it may have been due to the fact that the deterrent of capital punishment had been abolished. Yet, this is mere speculation; what can be concluded though is that capital punishment was an intense discussion during the final two years of the Civil War. Bright never spoke publicly about the death penalty during the War, but in 1880 the Prisons Act of 1868 and capital punishment was discussed in the House of Commons. Bright stated his opinion on capital punishment and argued that ‘I was against public executions; I am against capital punishment. But I believe that the present system is one which is outraging the feelings of the public...’<sup>40</sup> However, he did not refer to or state any facts that he had received from the State Governors, so it is unknown if their writing influenced this speech. Yet it is evident from his letters to the Governors that it was, at the very least, a factor that existed in the back of his mind.

The discussions on capital punishment demonstrated that the War appeared less important, possibly due to the clear Union victory, and that Bright could divert his attention back to British domestic reform. Kevin Haddick Flynn argued that, for the Confederacy, ‘the end had been inevitable since Gettysburg’ and therefore this was the indication of an inevitable win for the Union.<sup>41</sup> Another factor that occurred that, for some, indicated a clear Union victory was Lincoln’s re-election. His re-election was a fundamental aspect of the Civil War as it symbolised a northern endorsement of his

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid, f. 193.

<sup>40</sup> ‘Capital Punishment – The Prisons Act, 1868 – Executions in Kirkdale GAOL’, *Hansard – UK Parliament*, [https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1880/mar/05/capital-punishment-the-prisons-act-1868#S3V0251P0\\_18800305\\_HOC\\_26](https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1880/mar/05/capital-punishment-the-prisons-act-1868#S3V0251P0_18800305_HOC_26) [accessed 26/7/18]

<sup>41</sup> K. H. Flynn, ‘Where the murderin’ cannons roar...’, *History Ireland*, 20:5 (September/October, 2012), p. 32. The Confederate defeat was inevitable due to their continued lack of resources and manpower, which became more obvious as the Civil War continued.

leadership and policies. However, it rarely featured in Bright's transatlantic network, and there are a number of reasons that explain why this may have happened.

### **III – The 1864 Presidential Election**

The reason for the absence of Lincoln's re-election in discussions is unknown, but it may be a result of the lack of belief in Lincoln securing the re-election. This was because the only incumbent President that had secured his re-election was Andrew Jackson, and every President since Jackson that had served during a conflict had been removed from office. Furthermore, Lincoln's support for emancipation created ambiguity amongst some Northern voters who did not desire the abolition of slavery. In the first chapter the outcome of the War was unknown and therefore created ambiguous feelings in America and Britain, however the victories at Gettysburg and Vicksburg symbolised that a Union victory was likely. Due to Bright's strong support for the Union's campaign from the onset, it would appear obvious that he would fully support Lincoln's re-election, which could have been a reason why very few letters of correspondence discussed such a critical event.

Regardless though, the 1864 election was significant first and foremost due to it occurring in a time of rebellion; the only other time that an election was held during a conflict was in 1812. Many Americans resented the internal conflict and as a result favoured the Democratic candidate George B. McClellan, with the hope that the War would cease.<sup>42</sup> James Smith, who previously had contributed to the discussions regarding capital punishment, was similarly vocal about Lincoln's re-election. The

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<sup>42</sup> George B. McClellan was commissioned as war general at the start of the Civil War and was important in training the Army of the Potomac.

Governor of Rhode Island supported Lincoln's re-election yet explained how Lincoln was contending with families and their traditional voting behaviours rather than individual's beliefs.<sup>43</sup> As Lincoln was the first Republican President he had opposition from loyal Democrat supporting families whose livelihoods were threatened with the abolition of slavery, but also from Republicans who did not want to be associated with an individual that caused an internal conflict. On the whole though, James Smith believed that the people were 'clamorous for his renomination.'<sup>44</sup>

William Whiting, a Representative for Massachusetts, was also influential in the discussion on Lincoln's re-election. Whiting, similarly to James Smith, believed that no other candidate came close to Lincoln which was because of the belief that Lincoln was the only politician that could bring about the reunification of the United States. Whiting considered that this opinion was that of the majority, which was evident from him stating that 'we feel confident that Mr. Lincoln will be re-elected, and that by the permanent establishment of his war policy, our government will maintain its unity, and restore its dignity and power on the basis of universal freedom.'<sup>45</sup> By using 'we', it suggested that Whiting referred to the American people, and that a large percentage of them supported Lincoln's re-election. Lincoln received an 'overwhelming vote', which Whiting believed symbolised the final settling of 'the Government on his subject.'<sup>46</sup> It was this belief in Lincoln that led to the continuation of the fighting and the number of volunteers that applied to aid the Union forces. Whiting reported that on average the Union received up to 1,000 new recruits every day, which was significant in

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<sup>43</sup> BL, Smith-Bright MS, Add MS 43391, Smith to Bright, 4. Apr. 1864, f. 198. This was common in America, as many families voted along longstanding partisan lines, despite sometimes not supporting the party's policies, as it was seen as a form of tradition.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, f. 198.

<sup>45</sup> BL, Whiting-Bright MS, Add MS 43391, Whiting to Bright, 19. Sept. 1864, f. 223.

<sup>46</sup> BL, Whiting-Bright MS, Add MS 43391, Whiting to Bright, 27. Feb. 1865, f. 245.

maintaining manpower on the battlefield.<sup>47</sup> By considering the rate of volunteers, it is evident that Lincoln's leadership continued to be supported.

Clearly though, there was opposition to Lincoln's reinstatement into office. Former Secretary of the Treasury, Salmon P. Chase, discussed the opposition that Lincoln faced not only from the Democrats, but how 'Republicans, too, were in open opposition to their own presidential nature.'<sup>48</sup> The open opposition was evident in their disapproval of his re-nomination to stand as the Republican candidate, which was because Republicans feared that Lincoln's advocacy for the abolition of slavery and commencement of the Civil War could lose them the election. Furthermore, hostility towards Lincoln's re-election and Bright's advocacy for it existed within Britain. The *Manchester Guardian* highlighted this in an article titled 'a Radical's Address to Mr. John Bright,' where the author disputed Bright's authority and how he could support 'the active ally, the promoter and inciter of the most pitiless destruction that ever infamised and cursed humanity.'<sup>49</sup> The 'pitiless destruction' that the author referred to was the American Civil War, and it is evident that they did not understand the conflict enough in order to appreciate why Bright supported the Union.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, the article further denounced Lincoln's character and argued that his polite mannerisms were a means to gain a political advantage to achieve his political goals. The following excerpt described the attack on Lincoln's character and morals:

'Oh, what charming mealy-mouthed-ness our thundering prophet can use when it suits his purpose to slime over the deadly work of his friends, the erasing of all civilised man's work and his very existence from states as vast as empires!'<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> BL, Whiting to Bright, 19. Sept. 1864, f. 219.

<sup>48</sup> Chase, *Inside Lincoln's Cabinet: the Civil War Diaries of Salmon P. Chase*, p. 236-237.

<sup>49</sup> Anon, 'A Radical's Address to Mr. John Bright', *The Manchester Guardian*, 7. Nov. 1864, p. 4.

<sup>50</sup> The Union did not appear to be the problem, but rather the conflict itself. As a result of this it appeared as though the author believed that Bright supported the rebellion as a means of crippling the country and the South, as opposed to backing Union policy. In doing this the article contradicted the letters from Whiting and Smith, and thus demonstrates how a minority of individuals believed that Lincoln's re-election would be a mistake.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*, p. 4.

From the above it is evident that Bright's popularity was not universal in places outside of his transatlantic network, and his support for Lincoln's re-election offended the author. The article in the *Manchester Guardian* therefore illustrated how in 1864 and upon his re-election, Lincoln was viewed by some as a despot. James McPherson argued that as a result of this negativity towards Lincoln, 'every political observer, including Lincoln himself, believed in August that the Republicans would lose the election.'<sup>52</sup> Despite this negative article, overall the British were pleased upon hearing the news of Lincoln's re-election. Richard Blackett has contended that, in Britain, Lincoln's re-election was even celebrated in some areas; 'in the weeks after the election, groups throughout Britain adopted memorials congratulating Lincoln and the nation for demonstrating that democracy worked even under the most trying of circumstances.'<sup>53</sup>

Nevertheless, the correspondence demonstrates that both American and British individuals supported the re-election of Lincoln because it was believed to be best for the country. By backing Lincoln, it would allow for continuous and coherent government policies, which would aid reunification. Richard Cobden presented this argument in a letter to Bright, where he explained the positive implications of Lincoln's re-election. Cobden wrote that 'I have urged it from a foreigners point of view, because he has evinced an imperturbably good temper & conciliation in his relations with Europe, which has been of the most vital importance in their critical dilemma.'<sup>54</sup> From 1861 Cobden regularly corresponded with Bright about the Civil War and Britain's handling of it, which seemed to affect him, as Anthony Howe and Simon Morgan argued that 'the American situation itself continued to consume Cobden as it did even

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<sup>52</sup> McPherson, *Drawn with the Sword*, p. 204.

<sup>53</sup> Blackett, *Divided Hearts*, p. 13

<sup>54</sup> 'BL, Cobden-Bright MS, Add MS 43652, Cobden to Bright, 24. Feb. 1864, f. 163-165', taken from A. Howe & S. Morgan, (eds.) *The Letters of Richard Cobden Volume IV 1860-1865* (Oxford, 2015), p. 485-486.

more so Bright.<sup>55</sup> John Hobson later reinforced Cobden's advocacy for Lincoln's re-nomination and that it would be for the benefit of the American nation. This was because he believed that Lincoln had 'less temptation to embark in foreign controversies or quarrels.'<sup>56</sup>

What this chapter has shed light on is that despite the importance of Lincoln's re-election occurring during a conflict, its significance was not reciprocated in Bright's transatlantic correspondence. Yet in the second chapter, the Emancipation Proclamation was debated frequently, and its passing appeared to have an effect on the letters, as correspondence discussing slavery and its abolition had significantly reduced.

#### **IV – The Diminution of Abolition in Correspondence**

There is considerable ambiguity surrounding abolition's perceived lack of importance towards the end of the War, as steps towards emancipation had commenced only in the previous year. The 1863 Emancipation Proclamation was an advancement towards the full abolition of slavery, but in the latter two years of the war it did not appear to have as much significance in letters. This was because up until the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment, no immediate changes to slavery were made. Despite this, James Smith suggested that 1864 was an important year in the conflict and stated that he believed that it would 'see the gigantic Rebellion & Revolution conquered', and that slavery would seal 'its fate in this continent, and to President Lincoln may be credited the work of saving this land from the horrors of a slaveocracy.'<sup>57</sup> It was significant because of the ratification of the abolition of slavery by Louisiana and Maryland's state

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<sup>55</sup> Howe & Morgan, *The Letters of Richard Cobden*, p. xxvi.

<sup>56</sup> J. Hobson, *Richard Cobden: The International Man* (London, 1919), p. 378.

<sup>57</sup> BL, Smith-Bright MS, Add MS 43391, Smith to Bright, 4. Apr. 1864, f. 198.



constitutions. It also saw the repeal of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 and Lincoln's support for a constitutional amendment to abolish slavery. However, Bright had diverted his attention to British domestic reform, which may have contributed to the decreased number of abolitionist letters. The lack of correspondence overlooked these achievements, which reinforces the aim of the thesis to move beyond slavery.

Another possible reason, as stated throughout this research, could have been Bright's lack of identification with abolitionists in the traditional sense. Although Bright supported abolition, he appeared more comfortable in the British political circle as opposed to becoming involved in the American anti-slavery movement. Robin Blackburn argued that those who were part of abolitionist movements were moved by their appeals 'to righteous conduct and to the "rights of man", the virtues of "free labour" and responsible government.'<sup>58</sup> The characteristics that Blackburn described are similar to those of Bright, yet as James McPherson described an abolitionist was someone 'who before the Civil War had agitated for the immediate, unconditional and total abolition of slavery in the United States.'<sup>59</sup> From the evidence examined, it demonstrates how abolition was not Bright's sole aim, which instead was enfranchisement in Britain. As commonly seen by radicals in this period, Bright connected those in Britain without the vote and American slaves and believed that those excluded from the franchise were little better than African-American slaves. Bright had argued previously that the views of the 'great body of the working classes in England' had often been misrepresented by America, as they seemed to only be aware of the views of the London press and Confederate sympathisers.<sup>60</sup> When speaking to an audience in Birmingham, he described how the 'Free States are the home of the working

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<sup>58</sup> R. Blackburn, *The American Crucible: Slavery, Emancipation and Human Rights* (London, 2011), p. 26.

<sup>59</sup> McPherson, *The Abolitionist Legacy*, p. 4.

<sup>60</sup> Bright, 'America – II: The War and the Supply of Cotton' [accessed 05/12/17]

man' and argued that if workers were supporters of freedom for all white people then they should support a government that aims to free all African-Americans.<sup>61</sup> The workers could relate, somewhat, to the levels of oppression that slaves experienced in America and therefore supported their freedom as if it was their own.

This was similarly deliberated by Simeon Whiteley, a British-born newspaper writer, strong Unionist and President of the Denver Council. He described how abolition had been welcomed at some meetings and how individuals were devoted in maintaining universal freedom. In the newspaper clipping, he wrote that 'whereas, in the struggle now in progress between a Constitutional Democracy and the revolt of an Aristocracy, founded on human bondage, it becomes the duty of all men who love liberty more than slavery, to give their influence and sympathy to the cause of freedom.'<sup>62</sup> But the idea of 1864 being a significant year was not unanimous, as slavery still existed nor had immediate emancipation been ratified by the government, and thus suggested that Lincoln did little to help the movement. In fact, it was argued that America was 'far from being through with the negro question. Slavery is no lesser abolished.'<sup>63</sup> This was true regarding some Southern states and their desire to stop emancipatory policy due to its infringement on individual state rights that were guaranteed as part of the Constitution. Still though, emancipative measures taken from 1863 safeguarded slaves and therefore the years following this were important in maintaining this action.

Included in the abolition correspondence were letters discussing the treatment of former slaves following gradual emancipation. Edward Atkinson had been influential in discussing alternate cotton supplies, but he also was an advocate of abolition through

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> BL, Whiteley-Bright MS, Add MS 43391, Whiteley to Bright, 10. Feb. 1864, f. 186.

<sup>63</sup> BL, Pike-Bright MS, Add MS 43391, Pike to Bright, 25. Oct. 1865, f. 274.

his support of the Free-Soil Party.<sup>64</sup> However in the War's later years, he discussed the treatment of former slaves and how a better education system would reduce the amount of abuse they received. Atkinson argued that measures were taken to give freedmen education to help with the transition from bondage to freedom and guaranteed that 'every possible effort' was undertaken 'to establish schools throughout the south.'<sup>65</sup> This was true, to an extent, as McPherson argued that 'in less than a decade, northern missionaries established more than a thousand schools for emancipated slaves and sent three thousand teachers to the South.'<sup>66</sup> Atkinson's discussion of better education for African-Americans is useful to this debate as it demonstrated that some Americans were trying to aid a smooth transition for former slaves. The construction of Southern schools meant that the freedmen would not have to move North but could stay in their homes in the former Confederacy and receive education. Seymour Drescher similarly argued that Americans 'were encouraged to think of the nation itself as an associative society, organized by autonomous free agents and perpetually engaged in voluntary collective action.'<sup>67</sup> Therefore, Atkinson's discussion on education helps to illustrate how debates on abolition had evolved over the course of the Civil War. By focusing on a progressive education policy for former slaves, it also reinforces this research's objective of moving beyond abolition.

## **V – Lincoln's Assassination**

Continuing to move away from abolition, without a doubt the pivotal event that occurred in 1865 was Lincoln's assassination. This was made evident by the number of letters of condolences that flooded Mrs. Lincoln, the U.S. Government and its people.

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<sup>64</sup> This political party campaigned for a single issue, which was to oppose the expansion of slavery.

<sup>65</sup> BL, Atkinson-Bright MS, Add MS 43391, Atkinson to Bright, 30. Aug. 1865, f. 270.

<sup>66</sup> McPherson, *The Abolitionist Legacy*, p. 143.

<sup>67</sup> Drescher, *Abolition*, p. 303.

Yet Bright received only one letter discussing it, which may have been due to his own lack of communication regarding Lincoln's death. However, it does not suggest that Lincoln's death was insignificant as Bright explained that he focused on Lincoln when he was alive which was confirmed in his journal entry on 29<sup>th</sup> April 1865. Bright wrote that 'for an hour or near it, I felt stunned and ill. I will not write an eulogy on the character of President Lincoln – there will be many to that now he is dead.'<sup>68</sup> There is no doubt that Lincoln's moral principles and handling of the conflict had impacted on Bright, but Bill Cash highlighted how Bright's backing for the Union had impacted on Lincoln. He identified that upon Lincoln's assassination, Bright's testimonial for Lincoln's re-election was found on his body. The reasons for Lincoln carrying this testimonial on his person were unknown, and because of this Cash correctly argued that 'there is no doubt that Lincoln admired Bright.'<sup>69</sup> When writing to Charles Sumner, Bright appeared concerned about Lincoln's murder undoing the moral growth that America had undergone. Yet he believed that 'it is easy to kill a President, but it is not easy to destroy a nation.'<sup>70</sup> Therefore Bright was fearful of the potential negative consequences that Lincoln's murder could have on America.

Following Lincoln's assassination, Henry Janney corresponded with Bright about the atrocity that had occurred. As stated at the start of this chapter, Janney was significant to Bright and Lincoln's "friendship", as he passed on Bright's letters to the President. He discussed how the nation was feeling following the news of this murder and how '...our hearts are almost breaking for the loss of our dear friend and blessed brother and co-laborer in the cause of Eternal Right and Justice.'<sup>71</sup> Janney argued the reason for

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<sup>68</sup> Trevelyan, *The Life of John Bright*, p. 326.

<sup>69</sup> Cash, *John Bright: Statesman, Orator, Agitator*, p. 144.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid*, p. 173.

<sup>71</sup> BL, Janney-Bright MS, Add MS 43391, Janney to Bright, 26. Apr. 1865, f. 249.

Lincoln's assassination may have been because 'we loved him too much.'<sup>72</sup> Eugenio Biagini also emphasized the impact that both Lincoln's death and Bright's campaigning had on America. He argued that:

'The assassination of the President following the achievement of victory had the effect of emphasizing this phenomenon; "good and great Abraham Lincoln", "a man of the people", was the martyr, but the triumphant hero was "Lincoln's friend", John Bright, who "above all others upheld the cause of freedom in his country.'<sup>73</sup>

The above quotation can be analysed in sections. Lincoln is remembered to be 'good and great' and a 'man of the people' due to his empathetic nature arising from his humble upbringing. Although he was remembered in many ways, such as the saviour of the Union and the "Great Emancipator", his qualities and characteristics were similarly spoken highly of. Barry Schwartz and Howard Schuman, in their analysis of remembering Abraham Lincoln, described how 'Lincoln's earthiness has led some Americans to see his presidential greatness in terms of traits he shared with the common people.'<sup>74</sup> Moreover, the idea of Lincoln being portrayed as a martyr is not a new concept; his assassination had religious connotations. Eric Foner has argued, as a result of Lincoln's murder occurring on Good Friday, that it 'heightened the conviction that Lincoln had sacrificed himself to redeem a sinful nation.'<sup>75</sup> Foner's portrayal of Lincoln as a sacrifice reflects the idea of him being a national saviour, which he had gained, as Foner stated, through acting as a sacrifice in order for the country to be vanquished of its wrong-doings.

However, the idea of Bright being "Lincoln's friend" has been dismantled throughout this research, as Lincoln and Bright never met one another. These three chapters have

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<sup>72</sup> BL, Janney to Bright, 26. Apr. 1865, f. 250.

<sup>73</sup> Biagini, *Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform*, p. 378.

<sup>74</sup> B. Schwartz and H. Schuman, 'History, Commemoration and Belief: Abraham Lincoln in American Memory, 1945-2001', *American Sociological Review*, 70:2 (April, 2005), P. 190.

<sup>75</sup> Foner, *The Fiery Trial*, p. 333.

highlighted the ways in which Bright helped to uphold American principles, such as his speeches in the House of Commons, public speeches in Rochdale and transatlantic correspondence. Although largely forgotten by Americans, Bright was a vital figure for Anglo-American affairs and thus would be remembered alongside Lincoln in maintaining universal freedom. Additionally, Lincoln's assassination had a significant impact in Britain. Although Lincoln was often portrayed as a controversial figure, his death became a symbol for the oppressed in Britain. Duncan Andrew Campbell supported this as he described Lincoln as 'a symbol for English radicals', but that this 'sentiment became widespread only after his death.'<sup>76</sup> American newspapers were also important in demonstrating how Lincoln became a symbol for the internationally oppressed. The *Jeffersonian*, a Republican newspaper from Pennsylvania, described Lincoln's life as a 'life of good works for the oppressed everywhere' which suggested that he had helped others that were being oppressed worldwide.<sup>77</sup> Lincoln had resonance with the working and middle classes of Manchester as demonstrated at the address at the Free Trade Hall in December 1862, and along with Bright's advocacy for American democracy, their grievances were understood by him.

Furthermore, newspapers from Rochdale and Manchester reacted to Lincoln's assassination, which was important in demonstrating how Bright had helped repair Anglo-American relations. The papers were significant as they demonstrated a united stance in Lancashire with a reunited American nation. The *Rochdale Observer*, for example, described how 'Europe, as well as America, has been startled by a great crime.'<sup>78</sup> It is important to highlight though that the assassination failed to make front page news in the *Rochdale Observer*, which may suggest that local matters were of

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<sup>76</sup> Campbell, *English Public Opinion and the American Civil War*, p. 228.

<sup>77</sup> 'In Memorium', *The Jeffersonian*, 20. Apr. 1865, p. 2.

<sup>78</sup> 'Assassination of Mr. Lincoln', *The Rochdale Observer*, 29. Apr. 1865, p. 4.

greater importance. However, after analysing the paper, the Civil War itself never made front page news, so Lincoln's assassination not being a bold headline does not diminish the significance of the event. Additionally, Mr. Edwin M. Stanton, who served as Secretary of War under Lincoln's administration, illustrated how Lincoln appreciated the support he received from Britain, and that 'Mr. Lincoln could hardly have been more deeply or generally respected in America than in England.'<sup>79</sup> He further described Lincoln as 'the idol of the masses of these districts.'<sup>80</sup> Lincoln was portrayed as an idol in Lancashire due to his support for emancipation, and not even the effects of the Union blockade altered this. As demonstrated in previous chapters the Union blockade realistically should have caused resentment towards Lincoln. The *Rochdale Observer* further demonstrated how Lincoln was still respected in this town, which Bright had helped contribute to through his support of the Union.

Similarly, the *Manchester Guardian* was influential in discussing the impact of Lincoln's murder, as it highlighted that Manchester's views of Lincoln did not alter pre-assassination. In the weeks following his assassination, the paper described Lincoln as 'a statesman, a diplomatist and a soldier.'<sup>81</sup> Additionally, it covered the resolutions passed at a meeting at the Town Hall whose aim was to convey their sympathies to the American nation and to Mrs. Lincoln on the loss of their President.<sup>82</sup> The meeting was described as 'crowded' and was held as a result of a public requisition that was presented to the Mayor, which signified that the citizens of Manchester were sympathetic to their American counterparts during their national mourning.<sup>83</sup> The resolutions passed therefore illustrated the continuing strong connection between Britain

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<sup>79</sup> 'The Rochdale Observer', *The Rochdale Observer*, 29. Apr. 1865, p. 3.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid*, p. 3.

<sup>81</sup> 'Ancoats Sunday Lectures Abraham Lincoln', *The Manchester Guardian*, 24. Jan. 1899, p. 12.

<sup>82</sup> 'English Sympathy with America: Town's Meeting in Manchester', *The Manchester Guardian*, 5. May. 1865

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid*, p. 3.

and America. Furthermore, the meeting was an opportunity to unite those who had previously been divided over the Civil War. It was described as a meeting ‘of the citizens of Manchester, not a meeting of one particular party, not a meeting of those who sympathised with the South’, nor yet of those who had strong opinions with respect to the conduct of the North.’<sup>84</sup> Richard Blackett echoed this, as he believed that citizens had been heavily divided prior to Lincoln’s murder. For Blackett, the assassination was a step toward restoring internal political British relations and highlighted that ‘public expressions of grief regardless of affiliation provided much needed solace for Union and Confederate sympathizers alike. They also opened the door to reconciliation between those who had been at political loggerheads for four years.’<sup>85</sup> Moreover, the meeting was influential in improving Anglo-American relations via the passing of a resolution by the attendants of the meeting who ‘wished to express their sympathy with their friends on the other side of the Atlantic in the great national misfortune which had befallen them.’<sup>86</sup> Describing American counterparts as ‘friends’ showed a significant improvement in their relations following such a divisive conflict.

## **VI – Conclusion**

The purpose of this chapter was to demonstrate the final evolution of Bright’s transatlantic correspondence, and to move beyond abolition in order to address issues that have been overlooked by other historians, such as Bright’s interest in capital punishment. This progression in the letters exhibited forward thinking rather than reminiscing on the Civil War and illustrates Bright’s deeper involvement in the conflict. Furthermore, this chapter has showed that Bright maintained his democratic principles

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid, p. 3.

<sup>85</sup> Blackett, *Divided Hearts*, p. 216.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid, p. 3.



throughout the War and allowed his admiration for American democracy to grow. His continued admiration for democracy was recognised in letters from Edmund C. Bittinger, Frank Moore and John Skirving, with the latter two gathering his speeches together for publication. This was to ensure that younger generations would remember Bright and the impact that he had in America. Furthermore, the marble bust of Bright that was placed in Lincoln's office confirmed the special 'relationship' that Bright had with America, and with a man that he never conversed with. The bust, both in its physical presence and underlying significance, reiterates Bright's importance in Anglo-American affairs.

Arguably the main discussion point of this chapter was capital punishment. The correspondence suggested that Bright had some interest in the abolition of the death penalty, with perhaps the goal of contributing to its removal in Britain. Individuals such as Bright, Richard Cobden and Joseph Chamberlain were 'often perceived as wishing to "Americanize" English institutions' which was demonstrated in the first chapter when discussing the American electoral system.<sup>87</sup> It was similarly the case with capital punishment in this chapter as it highlighted Bright's desire to mould the British political system into that of America's. Here, the letters from State Governors proved vital in explaining when capital punishment was abolished, and rates of crimes following it. Murder rates in Wisconsin appeared higher since its eradication, whereas Rhode Island and Michigan saw them significantly reduce. This chapter also highlighted how life sentences replaced the death penalty as punishment, which Bright believed to be a more reasonable punishment. On the whole the letters from the State Governors illustrated

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<sup>87</sup> A. Howe, 'John Bull and Brother Jonathon: Cobden, America and the Liberal Mind', in E. Dzelzainis & R. Livesey (eds.), *The American Experiment and the Idea of Democracy in British Culture, 1776-1914* (Surrey, 2013), p. 110.

that the inhabitants of these states were generally pleased with the decision to abolish the death penalty.

Lincoln's re-election and updates on the final stages of the Civil War made a brief appearance in this chapter. Bright's advocacy for Lincoln's re-election was undeniable and as a result of this it could explain why he received few letters surrounding this topic. Despite opposition within political parties, the majority of Americans endorsed his leadership and policies. Massachusetts Representative William Whiting highlighted this in his letters where he argued that Lincoln was the only person that could reunify the country, and because of this he did not believe that Lincoln would encounter any problems in his re-election.<sup>88</sup> Moreover, the Civil War itself has been discussed throughout this thesis, and therefore was important to acknowledge in this closing chapter in order to highlight the evolution of conversation surrounding it. Consecutive Union victories from the start of 1864 were a possible reason for the lack of updates on the War in Bright's letters as an overall Union victory seemed expected and therefore panic within the Union had diminished. The surrender at Appomattox Courthouse in April 1865 symbolised the close of the War and also the final stage of Bright's correspondence on this topic.

Building on this, as it has done throughout this research, abolition featured in letters in the latter years of the War. However, the aim of this chapter, similar to the two previous ones, was to move beyond abolition as many historians when writing about the American Civil War focus on abolition. Although it was undoubtedly central to the conflict, it appeared less frequently in its latter stages. This was because a gradual emancipative policy was in place and other steps were being taken to ensure the

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<sup>88</sup> BL, Whiting-Bright, 19. Sept. 1864, f. 221.

complete abolition of slavery, such as the provision of education for former slaves. Despite the threats that still persisted to break down emancipation, what had happened with abolition was an ‘immense progress.’<sup>89</sup> However, this chapter has demonstrated how, at the War’s close, abolition continued to not be a vital discussion point for Bright. Finally, Lincoln’s assassination was evidently a turning point in Anglo-American relations and helped repair their relationship. Although Bright spoke little on the murder, one cannot ignore such a fundamental moment in American history. This is because it reunited political parties in both countries, who joined together to express their grievances. To aid the analysis of the correspondence, the examination of the *Rochdale Observer* and *Manchester Guardian* helped validate the support for Lincoln in these areas that had been made evident in previous chapters.

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<sup>89</sup> BL, Pike to Bright, 25. Oct. 1865, f. 275.

## Conclusion

On May 20 1866 Schuyler Colfax, the House of Representatives Speaker and later Vice-President to Ulysses S. Grant, wrote to John Bright requesting his autograph. He wanted a ‘carte de visite’, which was equivalent to a modern-day business card with a small photograph of that person on it.<sup>1</sup> They were a popular collectable item during the American Civil War as soldiers used to send their loved ones photographs. Colfax went on to write that ‘your face is quite familiar to me already, as your portrait hung up in President Lincoln’s Reception room, and often, in the many evenings I spent with him there, he referred to you with sincere regard & even affection.’<sup>2</sup> Lincoln chose to place this portrait in his Reception room in order to remember the loyal support that Bright pledged to the Union. It was accompanied by the marble bust of Bright; however, Lincoln was assassinated before he received this gift.

The portrait of Bright that Colfax described demonstrated his influence on the late President and Anglo-American relations more broadly. Bright’s letters were acknowledged by Lincoln, despite the two of them never corresponding in any meaningful sense, which reiterates their mutual admiration and respect. This research has aimed to shed light on Bright’s transatlantic network during the conflict through the analysis of his correspondence with American citizens. One of the results of this was exploring the nature of Anglo-American relations and the issues that contributed to the tensions. Through his political position, it is undeniable that Bright was influential in these relations through his writing but also his speeches as they helped to illustrate British people’s thoughts on the conflict. By examining his letters and speeches, it

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<sup>1</sup> BL, Colfax-Bright MS, Add MS 43391, Colfax to Bright, 20. May. 1866, f. 291.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, f. 291-292.

helped to link Bright's private and public circles and demonstrated Bright's exemplary oratorical skills and how, through his words and consistent speeches, he vocalised his own views in such a way that was accepted and believed by those present. Those attending his speeches were often those oppressed by the British political system, and as an admirer of American democracy, Bright felt that it was his duty to encourage their involvement in the conflict. This led to the upkeep of the Union blockade during 1862 and 1863, where the workers of Lancashire continued to support the blockade in order to contribute to a Union victory and the abolition of slavery. The efforts made were recognised by members of Bright's transatlantic network, particularly Theodore Tilton, where he thanked their endless effort in supporting the Union, remarking 'may God help you, and all the rest of the nobility of England – by which I mean the noble souls of Lancashire who know how to suffer... I reach my hand to you over the sea!'<sup>3</sup>

Bright's speeches and oratorical strength allowed him to play a significant role in the conflict which has, at times, been overlooked by historians. Bright has been overshadowed by Richard Cobden due to his previous visit to America and his own correspondence with Americans. Despite this, Bright was actively involved in the transatlantic network which helped shape British views of America and vice versa. He corresponded with a range of individuals, which ranged from U.S. Government officials, to Lincoln's confidants and to economists, abolitionists and journalists. The volume of correspondence at the British Library helped to demonstrate the range of views that Bright obtained and sheds light on his key areas of interest. It is important to note that Bright's correspondence continued up until the year of his death in 1889, which illustrates how even after the Civil War Bright remained interested in American politics and events. Additionally, whilst recognising the importance of slavery to the

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<sup>3</sup> Tilton-Bright, 30. Jan. 1865, f. 136.

Civil War, this research demonstrated a move beyond abolition and through the analysis of the correspondence found that it was not always Bright's focus. To demonstrate this move away from focusing on abolition, there was a clear expansion of the existing debates about British neutrality and Manchester's support for the Union, whilst providing newer insight into Bright's interest in capital punishment in America. By structuring this thesis chronologically, it demonstrated the clear evolution of Bright's correspondence and the issues at the time. Bright did not become interested and involved in these issues for his own personal gain, for he idolised the concept of American democracy and wanted the British system to somewhat resemble it.

Through analysing Bright's correspondence with American citizens, it contributes to our existing understanding of Anglo-American relations during the American Civil War. Although historians have argued that Bright was influential in easing tensions, it is too redundant of bold a statement. Bright was influential however in maintaining support for the Union and attempting to keep positive relations with America. One way in which he did this was through his support of pacificism and therefore strongly campaigned against British intervention in the conflict. He became invested in the Civil War from its commencement, and his admiration for American democracy far outweighed any personal gains. His writings to J. Hayson inquiring on the American electoral process indicated that he had an interest in the British system adopting such a method, as it included extending the franchise. This information assisted him in formulating his arguments which led to the later Reform Acts of 1867 and 1884. Bright was a believer in republicanism and for him 'America was not just a new world across the Atlantic in the nineteenth century; it was becoming the thriving embodiment of a political idea: democracy.'<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Dzelzainis & Livesey, *The American Experiment and the Idea of Democracy in British Culture*, p. 2.

Despite intervention being a popular policy amongst the aristocracy, Bright saw how British involvement in the conflict would only worsen relations and the Union's chances of a victory. The Proclamation of Neutrality issued in 1861 sparked fierce debate over Britain's stance in the conflict, but it was adopted to safeguard Britain's interests. Although leading Americans such as Charles Sumner attempted to describe the state of British opinions, it was found to be complex. On the one hand the British aristocracy moved to recognise the Confederacy as an independent nation, in order to continue trade, but on the other, British workers backed the moral principles of the Union. Instead of prompting intervention on either side, Bright took to corresponding with Americans in order to explain the British attitudes towards the conflict, with the hope of easing tensions. In turn, his American counterparts explained how British attitudes were perceived and congratulated Bright for the campaigning that he was doing. Joseph Lyman and Zebina Eastman described how the divide in British attitudes was interpreted negatively by Americans due to the words circulating in the press. William Seward's image also contributed to the divide in opinions as he was seen as a controversial and impulsive figure in the Federal Government. This was because he had not announced his support for abolition and later his handling of the *Trent* Affair impacted on how others perceived him. Bright knew Seward well due to previous correspondence during the 1860 presidential election and regularly defended his actions in Parliament.

Britain's continued lack of understanding of the conflict remained an issue in the conflict's middle years, which was made evident in Bright's correspondence with the New York Chamber of Commerce and with Bradford R. Moore, who served in the Legation of the United States. Bright was influential in explaining the Union's motives for continuing the War, which he did through his speeches in the House of Commons,

in Rochdale and Birmingham. American politicians still distrusted Palmerston and that was because of his refusal to intervene in the conflict. However, Palmerston's speech in the Commons explained how he had made this decision because it would only aggravate relations and the situation further, which would not be beneficial for either side. While the majority agreed with Palmerston, opinion in Britain, and in Lancashire in particular, was divided over the prospect of British intervention.

Tensions were at their peak following the handling of the *Trent Affair* in November 1861 and the start of the Lancashire 'Cotton Famine' at the start of 1862. The *Trent Affair* was the main instance where an Anglo-American War seemed highly likely. Bright corresponded with Sumner explaining that an apology from the President would change opinions in Britain, and this apology eventually came. Lincoln believed that Wilkes' actions were immoral, and he had no permission from the Federal Government to seize the two commanders from the *Trent*. Lincoln knew, with guidance from Bright's letters to Sumner, that their release was right because 'he could not afford to have two wars upon his hands at the same time.'<sup>5</sup> Following this, tensions arose even more during the Lancashire 'Cotton Famine' at the start of 1862. By December 1862, around '500,000 starving operatives' were suffering as a result of the collapse of the cotton industry.<sup>6</sup> This could have potentially led to the entire region demanding recognition of the Confederacy and British intervention on the Confederate side. However, Bright was influential when explaining why the blockade should be upheld. By wishing for intervention on the Confederate side, Bright argued it would be a vote for restricting the freedom of oppressed individuals and upholding a corrupt institution: 'Ask any man in Europe who opens his lips for freedom... whoever has a sympathy for

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<sup>5</sup> 'The Cabinet's Deliberations Respecting the Trent Affair', *The Manchester Guardian*, 16. January 1862, p. 3.

<sup>6</sup> Oddy, 'Urban Famine in Nineteenth-Century Britain', p. 73.



freedom warm in his own heart, - ask him, - he will have no difficulty in telling you on which side your sympathies should lie.’<sup>7</sup> The idea then was to source an alternate supply in order to not support the Confederacy. Edward Atkinson’s reports were significant in demonstrating that Indian cotton could be used instead of American cotton, despite its limitations in terms of quality and transportation. Although contradictory, Bright dismissed Atkinson’s ideas in a speech at the close of 1862, where he believed that Britain should not stop trading cotton with America just because it had slavery in the South.

With this comes the discussions on slavery and how British attitudes towards America were highly influenced by abolition, and had abolition been announced as an aim of the war at the start, it may have prompted British intervention on the Union side. Bright had historically been an advocate of abolition yet did not identify with an abolitionist network as other reforms were his priority. His concern during the conflict’s first years were explaining the Union’s motives and the future of the cotton supply, but also extending the franchise in Britain. Yet during the middle of the conflict he received more letters from his transatlantic network concerned with abolition. Like many radicals of the time, Bright connected the working classes of Britain to the slaves in America, and at a speech in Rochdale stated that ‘you come, as it were, from bonds yourselves, and you can sympathize with them who are still in bondage.’<sup>8</sup> This created a link of identification between workers and slaves, and contributed to their motivation of upholding the Union blockade and enduring their own hardships.

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<sup>7</sup> Bright, ‘America – The War and the Supply of Cotton’ [accessed 05/12/17]

<sup>8</sup> Moore, *Speeches of John Bright*, p. 162.

Bright was also influential in the drafting of the Emancipation Proclamation and ‘his counsel also promoted the cause of emancipation that Lincoln officially endorsed on January 1, 1863.’<sup>9</sup> Both Bright’s involvement in the Emancipation Proclamation and the workers upholding the blockade demonstrate strong Union support in Lancashire. An aim of this research was to illustrate this support and therefore challenge Mary Ellison’s assertion that Union support in Lancashire was exaggerated. The latter sections of chapter two regarding the impact of the ‘Cotton Famine’ and the speech at the Manchester Free Trade Hall in December 1862 demonstrated the loyal support for the Union in this region. The support here was so strong that even the economic downturn and mass unemployment did not deter Union support. The level of backing was demonstrated by the numbers that attended the meetings of the Union & Emancipation Society, and through interpreting Mary Ellison’s and Richard Blckett’s comparisons of the membership of pro-Union and pro-Confederate societies.

The correspondence consulted showed a clear evolution over the course of the War, with Bright’s interest in capital punishment in America becoming more prominent in the final years. Previous historians have overlooked his interest in capital punishment, but this may have been the result of the lack of identification that Bright had with movements in Britain. However, from examining his letters from various State Governors in the U.S. it is unquestionable that it was an area of interest for him. The letters enquired about the murder rates and public opinion in these states following its removal. His speech in the House of Commons in 1868 demonstrated his views towards the death penalty and that he did not support it. It illustrates the clear shift in discussions back to Britain and towards other aspects of American life, as opposed to the conflict and the eventual surrender of General Robert Lee. From this, it can be

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<sup>9</sup> Stevenson, *Lincoln in the Atlantic World*, p. 156.

argued that Bright was looking forward to America's future as opposed to focusing on the past. His admiration of America continued throughout this period and his significance in Anglo-American affairs did not go unrecognised, epitomised by the marble bust of Bright that was placed in Lincoln's office. The bust was a symbol of Bright's continued admiration for American democracy that has been demonstrated throughout this thesis. Lincoln's re-election, although rarely discussed in his letters, was a hugely important event and one that Bright strongly advocated. His endorsement for Lincoln's re-election was found in Lincoln's pocket post-assassination, which symbolised how valued Bright's opinions were to the President.

By examining Bright's transatlantic correspondence, this thesis has re-evaluated the role of his transatlantic network in shaping and reflecting his perspectives on British attitudes towards the conflict, the future of the cotton supply and capital punishment. In turn this impacted on Anglo-American relations, but Bright was not responsible for preventing an Anglo-American war. His efforts contributed to maintaining peaceful relations, however as discussed there were other factors which prevented an Anglo-Union conflict. The conflict came at a low point during his career and its outbreak pushed him onto the international stage as a leader of pacificism and universal freedom. He was an individual of significant importance to British politics but also to America as his support of American democracy and impressive oratorical skills impacted on both sides of the Atlantic, which shows how his celebrity status spanned not only throughout Britain, but to the United States. Bright was particularly interested in American perspectives on British attitudes towards the conflict, and through his speeches in Rochdale and Parliament he transferred the knowledge that he had to those present.

By observing his speeches and letters it bridges the gap between American and British history through the lens of a private network. It places greater significance on Bright's role and his rapport with Lincoln, despite the two never having met. He was influential in maintaining consistent support for the Union in Lancashire and partially contributed to their various speeches and the formations of societies in support of the Union.

Therefore, the analysis of Bright's transatlantic correspondence with American citizens has contributed to our existing understanding of Anglo-American relations and has re-evaluated the topics that were of greatest significance for Bright during the American Civil War.

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