

WILLIAM E. GLADSTONE'S GREEK NEW TESTAMENT  
(3-VOLUME SET)

Pitts Theological Library Special Collections 1826 BIBL A

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This piece, held in the Pitts Theological Library Special Collections, is a three-volume set of William E. Gladstone's personal Greek New Testament. Born in Liverpool, England, Gladstone (1809–1898) attended Eton and Oxford College before beginning his political career. Among the many other offices held over the course of his long political career, Gladstone served as the Prime Minister of Britain on four separate occasions (1868–1874; 1880–1885; 1886; 1892–1894). As evinced by his personal annotations found within his New Testament, Gladstone was well-known for his deep religious convictions and the influence these beliefs had upon his public career, as seen in three of his works: *The State in its Relations with the Church* (1838), *Church Principles Considered in their Results* (1840), and *The Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture* (1903).

This three-volume set is titled *The New Testament with English Notes* and was authored by T. F. Middleton and published by A. J. Valpsy in 1826. Gladstone's copy has been re-bound with blank pages interleaved to allow additional space for annotations. The majority of his remarks contain relevant parallels found in classical Greek and Latin literature, though occasionally he makes reference to Patristic sources and a few more modern theologians. Of special interest are his more lengthy personal reflections on Scripture, some of which span an entire page or more. The exact timeframe in which Gladstone used this New Testament is unknown and only a single entry in the entire collection is dated—a lengthy commentary on Romans 8:38, dated March 30, 1834. Interestingly, his personal diary entry for this day notes that he partook of the sacrament at 8AM at St. Philip's, a chapel in Waterloo Place, read a number of religious and theological works, and “wrote in Bible.”<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, all modern authors he cites within these volumes were published before the date of publication of this set, so they do not offer any clue as to a possible timeframe.

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\* This report and the related database were prepared by Zane B. McGee, a PhD student in Emory's Graduate Division of Religion.

<sup>1</sup>W. E Gladstone, *The Gladstone Diaries* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 99; held at Woodruff Library, call number DA563 .A34.

The Gladstone New Testament offers several areas for further exploration for those who might be interested in political history, theology, the history of New Testament interpretation in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, or the interaction of faith and politics. Possible avenues to be explored include close readings of the Gladstone's personal analysis of significant passages (see, for example, his remarks at Luke 13:4; Rom 8:38; Rom 9:22; 2 Pet 1:5; James 2:10), a search for the sources of the references list by Gladstone (i.e., are they his own original observations, or is he using other reference material in his study), an assessment of the actual classical references cited, or an examination of concurrent entries in his diaries or in his personal correspondence.<sup>2</sup> To aid in such research, a database has been created that provides information for each annotation in this set, including the biblical passage referenced, approximate number of lines in the entry, languages used (English, Greek, Latin, or French), a general description of the content of the entry, related images of the physical pages, and additional comments if needed.

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<sup>2</sup> Several volumes of Gladstone's personal and professional communications exists. Of note for the present purpose is *Correspondence on Church and Religion of William Ewart Gladstone* (New York: Macmillan, 1910), held at Pitts Theological Library, call number BX5037 .G5.