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Mansel: God and Politics

By

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for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

Henry Longueville Mansel (1820-71), Anglican theologian and philosopher, has typically been remembered as a Kantian agnostic whose ideas led to those of Herbert Spencer. This thesis provides a critical challenge to this picture, and offers a thorough revisioning of Mansel's theology in context. First, concerning *misrepresentation*, I argue it was Spencer himself who, having had a youthful relationship with Mansel's sister Katherine, developed a prejudice against him, distorted the reception of his work, and promoted the caricature image of Mansel as an unwitting agnostic and "Kantist". With the help of Liberals such as Goldwin Smith and Leslie Stephen, Spencer's portrayal has stuck. I refute this picture and offer an alternative reading of Mansel. Second, concerning *personalism*, I show that Mansel was essentially a theistic personalist, indebted to the traditions of Bishop Browne, Bishop Butler, and Scottish common sense philosophy. Mansel represents a mid-Victorian example of "I-Thou" philosophical theology, grounded in the religious practice of Christian prayer. Mansel's theistic personalism had much in common with Newman's theology, and I explore the ways in which Newman's *Grammar of Assent* was written in response to Mansel's Bampton Lectures. Third, concerning *politics*, I argue that Spencer's distorted picture of Mansel as a Kantian agnostic served the political interests of partisan Liberals, and was aggressively spread by them because of Mansel's own Tory commitments. Located in context, Mansel, is here interpreted with reference to key personal relationships and personal networks, including his connection with leading Tories, such as Lord Carnarvon and Benjamin Disraeli. Crucially, I interpret his controversies with Frederick Denison Maurice and John Stuart Mill with reference to the political events of 1859 and 1865. These controversies were simultaneously religious and political, and receive a careful contextual reading.

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Introduction

This thesis provides a comprehensive new interpretation of the life and thought of Henry Longueville Mansel (1820-71). Primary focus is here placed on providing a critical reading of the contextual-theological and socio-political dimensions of his work, locating it in the setting of mid-Victorian religion and politics. This represents a new departure in the study of Mansel, raising a new set of questions of the sources, and moving beyond the history of ideas approach adopted by the existing major studies of his work. Rather than interpreting Mansel one-dimensionally as a figure in the history of British philosophy, narrowly focusing on abstract questions of the philosophy of religion, the task here is to place Mansel in context, and explore his work from a different, more critically aware perspective, alert to the religious and ideological dimensions of mid-Victorian political history. I argue that this approach is invited by an attentive reading of the primary sources themselves, including much hitherto ignored and unexplored archive material, and is necessary for the development of a critical understanding of Mansel in light of the historical evidence. The revised picture of Mansel that emerges from this work is, I argue, more theologically significant and politically resonant than has hitherto been allowed: the conclusions I draw indicate the intellectual fruit of serious engagement with his work.

Critically aware mid-Victorian readers were capable of understanding the political dimensions of Mansel's philosophical theology. To illustrate this point one need only look to Sir James Fitzjames Stephen's important review of 'Mr. Mansel's *Metaphysics*' in the *Saturday Review* on the 30th June, 1860. Fitzjames Stephen drew out the partisan political dimensions of contemporary philosophy, observing that

philosophical empiricists held party allegiance with the Whigs, and philosophical intuitionists, like Mansel, held party allegiance with the Tories.

[The] two great metaphysical schools are the representatives in abstract speculation of the two great parties which divide between them almost every department of human affairs... To use a rough and scanty, but intelligible metaphor, those who refer our knowledge to sensation and experience are the Whigs, and those who refer it to intuition are the Tories, of speculation.¹

However crudely drawn, Fitzjames Stephen's simplistic distinction between empiricists and Whigs on the one hand, and intuitionists and Tories on the other, reveals the ideological awareness of contemporary readers of philosophy and theology. That Mansel could be identified as a Tory on the basis of his commitment to a particular form of epistemology suggests that he and his contemporaries were engaged in more than just philosophical speculation: their philosophical statements sometimes encoded or implied, and sometimes made more explicit, adherence to different political values. So too, in fact, did their stated religious commitments, for in this period religion and politics were intimately connected. Reconstructing what this meant for Mansel and his contemporaries proves a fascinating and illuminating challenge.

Religion provided a vital dimension to Victorian political history and, as Jonathan Parry has argued, helped 'establish the ideological context of politics' in the period.

¹ Sir James Fitzjames Stephen, 'Mr. Mansel's Metaphysics' in the *Saturday Review*, vol. IX, no. 840 (30th June, 1860), reproduced in Fitzjames Stephen, *Essays by a Barrister* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1862), pp. 326-27. On Fitzjames Stephen's contribution to political thought, see A. Quinton, *The*

According to Parry it is even possible to understand Victorian politics, ‘by concentrating primarily – although not exclusively – on arguments about religion’.² This does not mean religion was reduced to politics, rather, political positions were adopted as the result of religious views. Religious belief was, much more often than not, genuine and sincere. ‘That Victorian Britain was, indeed, a society remarkable for the extent and intensity of its religious life is barely open to question. Any serious doubt in the matter may be removed... by consideration of the vitality and diversity of religious activity among the Victorians’.³ ‘Victorian England was religious... the morals of the people depended upon Christian truth... Everyone confessed England to be Christian and nearly everyone wanted to keep the country Christian or make it more Christian’.⁴ Unsurprisingly, religious principles informed politics, and different religious commitments were sometimes expressed in divergent political opinions. As such, analysis of religion illuminates the history of Victorian political ideas.⁵

Mansel inhabited this situation, and should be interpreted in light of this broader religio-political context. Indeed, it was said of him, ‘His politics were a part of his Religion’.⁶ He was at once ‘a very sincere Churchman’ *and* ‘a very sincere

Politics of Imperfection (London: Faber and Faber, 1978), pp. 87-90; M. Cowling, *Religion and Public Doctrine in Modern England*, vol. III (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 174-82.

² J. Parry, *Democracy and Religion: Gladstone and the Liberal Party 1867-1875* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 2-3.

³ G. Parsons, ‘Victorian Religion: Paradox and Variety’ in G. Parsons (ed.), *Religion in Victorian Britain*, vol. I (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), pp. 2-13, here citing p. 5.

⁴ O. Chadwick, *The Victorian Church*, part I (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1966), pp. 1-2.

⁵ See P. Jagger (ed.), *Gladstone, Politics and Religion* (London: Macmillan, 1985); R. Brent, *Liberal Anglican Politics: Whiggery, Religion, and Reform 1830-1841* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987); B. Hilton, *The Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought, 1795-1865* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988); P. Jagger, *Gladstone: The Making of a Christian Politician* (Allison Park, Pennsylvania: Pickwick, 1991); R. Brent, ‘God’s Providence: Liberal Political Economy as Natural Theology at Oxford 1825-62’ in M. Bentley (ed.), *Public and Private Doctrine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 85-107; J. P. Ellens, *Religious Routes to Gladstonian Liberalism* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994); R. Shannon, *Gladstone: God and Politics* (London: Continuum, 2007).

⁶ J. W. Burgon, *Lives of Twelve Good Men* (London: John Murray, 1891), p. 356.

Conservative'.⁷ According to George Saintsbury, Mansel was the 'brain' of the 'Tory party in the University'.⁸ More specifically, he was 'the philosophical apologist of the Oxford Tories', at a time when the 'Victorian dons were politicians, [and] their universities were a mirror image of the political nation'.⁹ The high church Tories at Oxford were a bastion of conservatism: their liberal opponents had long held the opinion that, '*Churchmen resident at Oxford...* appeared the most determined enemies to every species of salutary change'.¹⁰ According to Mansel's political and philosophical critic, the partisan liberal, Goldwin Smith, the University of Oxford 'had become the citadel of ecclesiasticism'.¹¹ Mansel sat at the heart of this citadel, organising and guiding the conservative churchmen: as one later historian has explained, 'The clericals [were] ably led by H. L. Mansel... against the liberals'.¹² That Mansel gave expression to the religio-political beliefs of Oxford Tories in the 1850s and 60s therefore demands attention from historians of Victorian theology and politics.

If, as Maurice Cowling suggested, Mansel's 'Conservative Anglicanism' constituted a conscious 'intellectual counter-attack' on Gladstonian liberalism, his philosophical

⁷ 'The New Ecclesiastical Appointments' in *The Spectator*, 10th October, 1868, p. 1177.

⁸ G. Saintsbury, *A Second Scrap Book* (London: Macmillan, 1923), p. 74.

⁹ S. Rothblatt, *The Revolution of the Dons: Cambridge and Society in Victorian England* (London: Faber and Faber, 1968), p. 19.

¹⁰ J. W. Ward, *Letters of the Earl of Dudley to the Bishop of Llandaff*, ed. E. Copleston (London: John Murray, 1840), p. 5.

¹¹ W. R. Ward, *Victorian Oxford* (London: Frank Cass & Co., 1965), p. 156; G. Smith, *Reminiscences* (New York: Macmillan, 1911), p. 99. According to Kitson Clark, 'Oxford and Cambridge... were... two exceedingly strange, inward-looking, clerical republics' (G. Kitson Clark, *Churchmen and the Condition of England 1832-1885* (London: Methuen, 1973), p. 115). Such remarks may be approached with critical caution. Sheldon Rothblatt has drawn attention to the influence of the Whig interpretation of history in historical accounts of Victorian Oxford and Cambridge. Such accounts proceed on the presupposition that change, reform, and progress are desirable, and, as such, are prejudiced against conservatives, irrespective of what the historical facts of the matter establish. Rothblatt identifies W. R. Ward's *Victorian Oxford* as a twentieth century example of the 'modified Whig approach' (S. Rothblatt, *The Revolution of the Dons*, pp. 18-19 and n. 1).

¹² C. Harvie, *The Lights of Liberalism: University Liberals and the Challenge of Democracy 1860-86* (London: Allen Lane, 1976), p. 46.

and theological opponents were equally aware of the political dimensions of their intellectual contest.¹³ A near perfect example of the Victorian awareness of political religion is found in the writings of Mansel's contemporary antagonist, F. D. Maurice. Maurice did not want to reduce Christianity to politics, and he understood the Anglican tendency to think of the Church 'as a Kingdom rather than as a system'.¹⁴ He was aware that many of his countrymen, in contrast to 'Frenchmen or Germans', prioritised questions of practical politics in religious matters. "You Englishmen are such mere *politicians*," this is the ordinary complaint which foreigners make of us. "Alas! how exclusively we are devoted to *politics*," this is our continual groan concerning ourselves'. Politics was the definitive English characteristic: 'Englishmen... find it impossible to think unless they can in some way or other connect their thoughts with action', he suggested.¹⁵ Maurice's literary controversy with Mansel was itself intrinsically religious and political, and I will explore the debate between the two men in such terms. Likewise, I argue that the debate between Mansel and John Stuart Mill, which took place whilst Mill sought election to Parliament as a Gladstonian liberal in 1865, needs to be read in similar terms.

Placing Mansel in context has necessitated study of his published theological and philosophical works alongside extensive study of contemporary journalism (including Mansel's own), his unpublished correspondence with individual politicians, and other surviving archival material which has hitherto been ignored by scholarship. Taken together, the documentary evidence invites a radical reassessment of his life and work. It is now possible to reconstruct a fuller, three-dimensional image of Mansel,

¹³ M. Cowling, *Religion and Public Doctrine in Modern England*, vol. II (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 71.

¹⁴ F. D. Maurice, *The Kingdom of Christ*, vol. II, 2nd edn. (London: James Clarke and Co., 1842), p. 301.

filling in many of the gaps in previous scholarship. Thus, for instance, Maurice Cowling knew that Mansel had written ‘a handful of articles in a Disraelian newspaper’, but he failed to enumerate or identify them. Moreover, Cowling seems to have been unaware that these ‘articles’ were actually the three satirical poems, ‘A New Electoral Fact’ (*The Press*, 4th June, 1853, p. 109), ‘Imitated from Lord Dorset’ (*The Press*, 11th June, 1853, p. 133), and ‘Talents and Turks’ (*The Press*, 24th June, 1853, p. 180). These poems were published at a time when Disraeli had personal editorial control of the newspaper, and indicate that Mansel had his ideological approval at a relatively early stage. Perhaps more significant was the exciting discovery of one contemporary newspaper report which likened Disraeli’s religious statements of 1862 to Mansel’s intellectual position, suggesting a potential theological connection between the two men at this stage. It was reported that Disraeli’s words ‘did no doubt echo Mr Mansel’s philosophical scepticism’,¹⁶ thus corroborating other evidence indicative of a relatively long-term connection between Mansel and Disraeli. A further instance of this relationship is found in Lord Carnarvon’s political diaries. When, as a young Tory frontbencher, Carnarvon sought to influence Disraeli’s policy on Electoral Reform, he did so by handing his party leader a letter from Mansel; Disraeli responded by promising Mansel a deanery, and fulfilled this promise by making Mansel Dean of St Paul’s Cathedral in 1868.¹⁷ Altogether, such examples provide intriguing circumstantial evidence of Mansel’s relationship with Disraeli, and illustrate the promise of seeking to locate Mansel in his political context. Crucially, the fruit of this promise can be substantiated with reference to other archive material which fleshes-out and details Mansel’s activities as a partisan Tory.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 299.

¹⁶ ‘Mr Disraeli on the Church’ (from the *Spectator*) in *The Mercury* (Hobart, Tasmania), 8th February, 1862.

The chief archive sources for this study – curiously previously unexamined in this context – are found in the extensive Carnarvon-Mansel correspondence preserved in the Carnarvon Papers at the British Library and at Highclere. Material contained in these archives has informed the political and contextual reading of Mansel which forms the bulk of this study. Evidence of Mansel’s role as a Tory organiser of the electoral challenges to Gladstone at Oxford in 1859 and 1865 provides the framework for my political readings of the Mansel-Maurice controversy of 1859, and the Mansel-Mill controversy of 1865. I will show how the sources themselves invite such readings of these literary exchanges, and provide a new perspective on how these debates should be interpreted.

Further archive material sheds light on other aspects of Mansel’s life and work. Thus, previously unexamined census data demonstrates Herbert Spencer’s early personal relationship with Mansel’s immediate family, providing impetus for a reconstruction and revisioning of the later intellectual and literary connection between the two men. Knowledge of the personal nature of their early connection provides a contextual explanation for aspects of their later writings, and challenges previous accounts of Mansel’s supposed place in the history of agnosticism and as a forerunner of Spencer. I argue that this archive material means that the history of agnosticism needs to be substantially rewritten.

If materials from the archives throw light on Mansel’s family connections with Spencer and provide a new way of interpreting their intellectual relationship with

¹⁷ See P. Gordon (ed.), *The Political Diaries of the Fourth Earl of Carnarvon, 1857-1890: Colonial Secretary and Lord Lieutenant of Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 133.

reference to personal matters, other archive material helps further the understanding of Mansel's relationships with other key figures. For instance, Gladstone's correspondence with Mansel is of obvious relevance to the theme of this thesis, and although the surviving material is limited, it nevertheless provides a snapshot of their dysfunctional relationship following the 1859 election. Likewise, the Maurice correspondence in the Macmillan archive is illustrative of a similarly dysfunctional relationship between two Victorian gentlemen. Further information on Mansel's working relationship and professional association with a fellow Hamiltonian, personal friend, and intellectual ally, is to be found in his correspondence with Alexander Campbell Fraser preserved in the National Library of Scotland. Of more interest to historians of theology will be the archive material relevant to understanding the intellectual connections between Mansel and Newman. A number of scholars have noted that Mansel's *Limits of Religious Thought* spurred Newman to write the *Grammar of Assent*, but none have provided a full account of the connections between the two texts. This is surprising considering Johannes Artz's claim that this topic in itself 'merits a monograph'.¹⁸ The discovery of Mansel's personal annotations to a copy of the *Grammar of Assent* in the library of St John's College, Oxford, never before noted in scholarly literature, is of obvious importance to the study of both Mansel and Newman, and provides significant new evidence of how the two men agreed and disagreed on theological and philosophical matters.

In summary, therefore, archive material invites the development of a much fuller portrait of Mansel than has previously been allowed. 'I suspect that more may be said on Mansel's behalf,' wrote Alan Sell in 2004, 'and I hope in due course to pursue this

¹⁸ J. Artz, 'Newman in Contact with Kant's Thought' in *Journal of Theological Studies*, vol. XXXI, pt. 2, October, 1980, p. 523.

matter further'.¹⁹ Unfortunately, Sell has not published further on Mansel, and the gap in the scholarship remains. The present contextual study is intended to fill this gap, and provide a vital revisioning of Mansel and the relationship between Victorian theology and politics.

Literature Survey: Overview

Mansel scholarship has not been extensive, but this thesis is certainly not the first investigation of his life and work.²⁰ Mansel has been represented as a prime exponent of Victorian Kantianism and as one of the progenitors of agnosticism. Similarities have been noticed between his work and Kierkegaard's, and he has even been described as an Anglican forerunner of Barth. Overall, the picture that emerges from the existing literature is inconsistent: some scholars have prioritised an image of Mansel as a philosophical sceptic; others have focused on Mansel as a theologian seeking to understand Christian revelation. The existence of these "two Mansels" has created a sense of confusion. At the same time, scholarship has generally failed to recognise Mansel's debt to Jacobi and Reid. Moreover, Mansel's political context, and the political motivations of his major Victorian critics has been entirely ignored. This literature survey will serve two functions. First, I will provide a full account of significant literature on Mansel, classifying it in four categories: biographies; "Barthian" readings; "Kantian" and "history of agnosticism" readings; and historical theological accounts. Second, I will demonstrate the limits of this literature, showing

¹⁹ A. P. F. Sell, *Mill on God* (Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate, 2004), p. 68, n. 193.

²⁰ For previous literature surveys on Mansel, see K. D. Freeman, 'Appendix: Previous Work on Mansel' in *The Role of Reason in Religion: A Study of Henry Mansel* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969), pp. 109-117; see also the relevant discussion by S. Marcucci in *Henry L. Mansel: Filosofia Della Coscienza Ed Epistemologia Della Religione* (Firenze: Felice Le Monnier, 1969), pp. 3-12. The most recent literature survey had been provided in B. Lightman, *Henry Longueville Mansel and the Genesis of Victorian Agnosticism* (Ann Arbor, Michigan, and London: University Microfilms International, 1979), Ph.D. dissertation, Brandeis University, 1979, pp. 160-228. See also, B.

that the majority of scholarship has failed to recognise Mansel's primary theological and philosophical debts to Jacobi and Reid, and has failed to read him correctly as a theistic personalist. I will also indicate how the political context of his work has been ignored. Recognition of these important gaps in the literature will justify the need for the present thesis, and establish the case for the present study as a significant new contribution to scholarship.

In the survey of literature that follows, I have deliberately left to one side works referring to Mansel written by his direct contemporaries, and members of the generation which immediately followed after them. This is because the bulk of the thesis which follows is directly concerned with discussion and analysis of such literature. Thus, the chapter setting Mansel in context includes discussion of contemporary and near-contemporary responses to Mansel by figures as diverse as Goldwin Smith, John Grote, John Caird, Alexander Campbell Fraser and T. H. Green. The chapter on Mansel and politics includes discussion of reviews of Mansel's work in contemporary periodical literature, and accounts of Mansel by figures such as the Earl of Carnarvon. The anti-Manselian works of F. D. Maurice deserve a chapter of their own; so, too, does the literature surrounding Mill's controversy with Mansel. Since much of the Victorian discussion provides the substance of my thesis, this literature survey will concentrate on subsequent readings of Mansel. Nevertheless, it is suitable to begin this survey with reference to the early biographical literature on Mansel, if only because it is of a different type to the controversial philosophical and theological analyses of his work with which this thesis is chiefly concerned. My brief analysis of contemporary Victorian biographical accounts of Mansel will, then, be

Lightman, *The Origins of Agnosticism: Victorian Unbelief and the Limits of Knowledge* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1987), pp. 197-8, n. 4.

followed by a survey which focuses on twentieth-century literature, showing how his work has been interpreted in the light of later concerns and interests. I will indicate how different later readings of Mansel have emphasised one side of his thought or the other, and how they have failed to engage fully with some of the most pressing questions which Mansel's work raises for historical and contextual theology.

Victorian Biographical Studies

Liddon's Funeral Sermon

The first biographical sketch of Mansel was provided by the great Victorian Anglican sermon-writer and theologian, Henry Parry Liddon (1829-90), in his funeral oration preached in St Paul's Cathedral in 1871. This sermon is of special interest because it was written within a week of Mansel's death, and therefore provides an immediate – if very brief – summary account of his life.²¹ Liddon and Mansel had been connected for some years at Oxford. In around 1867, they had worked together in an attempt to prevent the Third Marquess of Bute converting to Catholicism.²² Within eighteen months of Mansel's appointment to the Deanery of St Paul's Cathedral, Liddon had joined him, in April 1870, as a Cathedral Canon. For a little over a year, therefore, Liddon had been directly responsible to Mansel at St Paul's. A few details of their ordinary day-to-day working activities may still be gleaned from the Cathedral archives.²³ Much more significantly, there is good evidence that Liddon owed the

²¹ H. P. Liddon, *The Day of Work: A Sermon preached in St. Paul's Cathedral on Sunday, August 6th, 1871 being the morrow of the funeral of The Very Rev. H. L. Mansel, D.D., Dean of St. Paul's* (London: Rivingtons, 1871).

²² Right Rev. Sir. D. H. Blair, *John Patrick Third Marquess of Bute, K.T. (1847-1900) A Memoir* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1921), pp. 45-7. Bute's conversion inspired Disraeli's novel *Lothair*. See Vernon Bogdanor's introduction in B. Disraeli, *Lothair* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), pp. vii-xvii.

²³ There is a handwritten note from Liddon to Mansel kept with the Decoration documents 1856-78 at Guildhall CF box 18. It is dated May 23rd 1871, stating that an American layman is enquiring about the

older man a profound intellectual debt: in 1933, Carpenter described Liddon as having a ‘Manselian source of illumination’²⁴, and in 1920, Richmond recalled that Liddon had ‘adhered to the Manselian doctrine’.²⁵ A number of Liddon’s sermons were concerned with recognisably Manselian themes (freedom of the will, conscience, alarm at materialism and determinism), and a few referred to Mansel by name.²⁶ Mansel’s work had earlier been used by Liddon with approval in his own Bampton Lectures for 1866, and in the same year, Lewis Carroll had identified both men as Oxford Conservatives in his ‘Elections to the Hebdomadal Council’.²⁷ There is, therefore, very good evidence that Liddon and Mansel shared religious and intellectual sympathies, and Liddon’s funeral sermon was suitably adulatory. In a manner suitable to the genre, Liddon summarised Mansel’s character, achievements, and contribution to Victorian life. He was spoken of as ‘a born metaphysician... a young man of conspicuous general ability... decorated by the highest academical honours’, whose acquaintance Liddon had sought in his own youth.²⁸ According to Liddon, Mansel had used his time as Waynflete Professor to develop, perfect, and correct (i.e., *not just edit and reproduce*) the work of Sir William Hamilton. Then, referring to Mansel’s Bampton Lectures, Liddon drew attention to the idea that the late Dean had been centrally concerned with God’s revelation, and had thus, consecrated his intellectual powers ‘to the service of God’.²⁹ Liddon also included

candlesticks at St. Paul’s. Liddon says that they are only made of gilt wood but he could replicate them which ‘might help to unite us in feeling with an important congregation of the church in the United States.’

²⁴ S.C. Carpenter, *Church and People, 1789-1889. A History of the Church of England from William Wilberforce to “Lux Mundi”* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1933), p. 525.

²⁵ Rev. W. Richmond, ‘Introduction – Reminiscences of Oxford Fifty Years Ago’ in H. S. Holland, *The Philosophy of Faith and the Fourth Gospel* (London: Murray, 1920), pp.3-12, p. 6.

²⁶ For example, see H. P. Liddon, *Christmastide in St. Paul’s* (London: Rivingtons, 1889), p. 16 and p. 422.

²⁷ H. P. Liddon, *The Divinity of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ* (London: Rivingtons, 1888), p. 65; L. Carroll, *Complete Works* (London: Nonesuch Press, 1939), p. 822.

²⁸ H. P. Liddon, *The Day of Work*, p. 9.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

some remarks on Mansel's character, making him appear something of a quaint donnish eccentric. He gently hinted that Mansel had been more suited to professorial life than the deanery:

Many of those about him came into contact with him day by day, and knew not what he was. Like all really great men, he was so homely, so simple, so unassuming; so perfectly indifferent to the opinions which might be formed about him, not through contempt of others, but from a lowly estimate of himself; that those who only saw him on ordinary business, and had no real opportunity of taking his true moral and intellectual measure, mistook their man. They spoke patronizingly of him, as if he meant well, but did not quite realize their expectations; they had no notion of being close to a mind – almost the only mind in England – to which all the heights and all the depths of the most recent speculation respecting the highest truth that can be grasped by the human understanding were perfectly familiar and matters of continuous and anxious thought.³⁰

Liddon included a few details of Mansel's death which support the biographical account later written by Burgon. According to Liddon, Mansel had died peacefully in his sleep following a particularly cheerful Sunday taking part in the morning and evening services at church in Cosgrove.³¹ There is no reason to suppose that this

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 15-16. A similar hint of Mansel's unsuitability for the deanery may be gleaned from Canon Gregory's reminiscences of his time at St Paul's: see R. Gregory, *Autobiography*, ed. W. H. Hutton (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1912), pp. 179-80. Later, Henry Scott Holland referred to Mansel's 'incompetent activity' at St Paul's before the arrival of Liddon. See H. S. Holland, *A Bundle of Memories* (London: Wells Gardiner, Darton and Co., 1915, p. 85.

³¹ H. P. Liddon, *A Day of Work*, pp. 16-17.

account of a particularly peaceful and saintly end was hagiographical embellishment on Liddon's part, as Burgon later supplied other sources which support the story.³²

The sermon was significant because it showed how Mansel's friends and supporters thought he should be remembered in the immediate aftermath of his death. According to Liddon:

[Mansel] made the most of the gifts which God had bestowed on him... He had been furnished with an intellect of exceptional power – an intellect of that particular type and quality which is more commonly found among gifted men of Scotch or German blood than among Englishmen.³³

Liddon was aware that Mansel's work had caused considerable controversy, but this did not mean his positive intellectual position could be faulted. Thus, Liddon cautiously remarked it was 'possible that [Mansel] failed to guard sufficiently his theory of regulative truth'.³⁴ In other words, Mansel's only error was that he should perhaps have gone further in defending himself from attacks. When, eight years later, Liddon preached a memorial sermon on Mansel, his respect was undiminished. Although Mansel had 'roused... a storm of controversy' which had 'not yet died away', Liddon counted him 'one of the princes of the world of thought', and did not doubt that he had entered 'the courts of the Kingdom of Heaven'.³⁵

³² J. W. Burgon, *Lives of Twelve Good Men*, p. 365.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

³⁵ H. P. Liddon, *Christmastide in St. Paul's*, op. cit., pp. 1-17.

Carnarvon's Sketch of Mansel's Work, Life, and Character

About three years after Mansel's death, J. B. Lightfoot (1828-89) – later Bishop of Durham – recommended for publication the series of lectures on Gnosticism which Mansel had delivered in 1868. Lightfoot had for a brief period been another of the Canons appointed to St Paul's whilst Mansel was Dean; he was also arguably the greatest Biblical scholar to have emerged from the Church of England in the nineteenth-century.³⁶ Lightfoot's recommendation indicated that Mansel's work on Gnosticism had to be taken seriously as a work of historical scholarship on early Christianity, and was a credible contribution to Victorian knowledge of the subject. Indeed, as Lightfoot observed, since the discovery of Hippolytus, there had been no English literature on the history of Gnosticism, and this meant there was a need to publish Mansel's lectures. Lightfoot pointed out that the lectures needed little editorial work, and explained this with a snippet of information on Mansel's habitual method of writing: 'I am informed by those who knew him best,' wrote Lightfoot, 'that he never set pen to paper until he had thoroughly worked out his subject, in all its main points, to his own satisfaction; and this representation is fully born out by... his manuscripts, which are singularly free from corrections'.³⁷

Lightfoot's edition of Mansel's *The Gnostic Heresies* began with a 17 page biographical sketch of Mansel by the Earl of Carnarvon, dated 25th September, 1874. Carnarvon was the most prominent of Mansel's former pupils, a 'virtuous, intellectual high churchman' and frontline Tory politician.³⁸ He had forged a career at the

³⁶ S. Neill, *The Interpretation of the New Testament 1861-1961* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 33 ff.

³⁷ H. L. Mansel, *The Gnostic Heresies of the First and Second Centuries* (London: John Murray, 1875), p.xxv.

³⁸ M. Cowling, *1867: Disraeli, Gladstone and the Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), p. 178.

Colonial Office, having served as Under-Secretary for the Colonies, and then Colonial Secretary, in two Derby administrations (1858-59 and 1866-67), and again as Colonial Secretary for a longer, secure spell under Disraeli (1874-78). Carnarvon's sketch of Mansel was therefore written whilst he served as Cabinet Minister with responsibility for a swathe of the British Empire stretching from Canada, to South Africa, and beyond to Hong Kong. This was a crucial time for the Empire: Disraeli's sensational purchase of the majority share in the Suez Canal Company was pulled off in the autumn of 1875 whilst Carnarvon was at the Colonial Office.³⁹ The very fact that Carnarvon dedicated time and energy to writing a short biography of Mansel at this time was significant, and reveals the respect which Carnarvon had for him. The sketch of his life is amiable and largely without trace of any potential criticism. Carnarvon related the extent of his relationship with Mansel, whom he had known 'so well in every aspect and relation of life'.⁴⁰ Predictably, Carnarvon stressed Mansel's Tory commitments, describing him as 'the pillar and centre of the Conservative cause', and 'ablest head' of the Tories at Oxford University.⁴¹ He rebuffed the suggestion that Mansel had obtained academic and ecclesiastical promotion on a partisan political basis.⁴² Rather, Mansel was a man of principle and conviction: 'His Conservatism... was not the Conservatism of prejudice, but of individual conviction, founded on severe thought, adorned by no common learning, and bound up through the entire course of his life with the principles of his religious belief'.⁴³ The picture of Mansel which emerged was of a fixed-minded, rigorous intellectual, who valued principle and integrity over popularity. Referring back to Liddon's funeral sermon,

³⁹ R. Blake, *Disraeli* (London: Prion, 1998), p. 581.

⁴⁰ Fourth Earl of Carnarvon, 'Introduction' in H. L. Mansel, *Gnostic Heresies* (London: John Murray, 1875), p.v.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. xxi.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. xi.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. xxii.

Carnarvon agreed that ‘Mansel’s mind... was not such as best commands immediate popular recognition or sympathy’, and suggested that his ‘intellect was of such a kind that some may have failed to appreciate it’.⁴⁴ Indeed, Mansel’s sometimes impolitic clarity and directness had been partially responsible for some of his more notorious literary controversies: the ‘extreme lucidity and force of expression’ of a Manselian argument ‘sometimes dealt out to his opponents heavier blows than he possibly intended’.⁴⁵ Perhaps Mansel’s training as a logician, and the clarity and directness of thought that discipline demanded, meant he was unused to pulling his punches in philosophical, theological, and political debate. Such qualities of character, united with Mansel’s abilities as a satirist, must have made him a formidable conversationalist. Mansel’s directness, integrity, and adherence to principle, were his greatest strengths. They may also have been his most significant limitations. Carnarvon clearly liked him, and his sketch also drew out his kindness and humour. Indeed, according to Carnarvon, a remarkable ‘sense of humour was a genuine characteristic of the man’.⁴⁶ Overall, Mansel was remembered as ‘one of the truest, steadiest, and most warm-hearted of friends, never varying with change of circumstance or lapse of time’.⁴⁷

Burton’s Biographical Chapter

Burton’s favourable account in his *Lives of Twelve Good Men* (1888) provided the longest and fullest biographical sketch of Mansel’s life to date, and remains to this day the standard source for all later accounts of Mansel’s life. Burton stated that he had drafted his chapter on Mansel in 1884, thirteen years after the death of his subject,

⁴⁴ Ibid., p.vii.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. ix.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. xix.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. xix.

with Charlotte Augusta Mansel's permission.⁴⁸ His account of Mansel as 'The Christian Philosopher' extended to forty-five pages in length, together with a photographic portrait attributed to Mason & Co., of Old Bond Street, London. It was included in the collection alongside eleven lives of other notable Anglicans, comprising Hugh James Rose, Edward Hawkins, Samuel Wilberforce, and others. It is fortunate that the life of Mansel had been one of the first completed: the *Lives of Twelve Good Men* was Burgon's last work, finished just before his death on 4th August 1888, and published in October of that same year.⁴⁹ According to Burgon's own biographer it had been completed in a state of 'nervous exhaustion'.⁵⁰ Despite this fact, the book proved very successful and went through five impressions in less than a year, and continued to be published in subsequent editions thereafter.⁵¹ In Owen Chadwick's estimation, Burgon's *Lives of Twelve Good Men* was 'one of the delightful books of the nineteenth century'. He observed that Burgon's book married 'liveliness' to 'affection'. The writer 'elicited a warmth of friendship', and was adjudged by Chadwick to have combined the virtue of 'honesty' with 'humour'.⁵² Such qualities can certainly be recognised in Burgon's account of Mansel, which was lively, carefully constructed, and an enjoyable read. Although Burgon had been Mansel's personal friend, there is no reason to suspect that the account was not accurate, especially granted Burgon's notoriously candid character. Indeed, if anything, their close association only served to improve the qualities of the account.

Burgon wrote as an Oxford "insider" who shared Mansel's Toryism. Indeed, Disraeli had been responsible for the promotion of both men to senior church positions,

⁴⁸ J. W. Burgon, *Lives of Twelve Good Men*, p. iv.

⁴⁹ E. M. Goulburn, *Life of Dean Burgon*, vol. II (London: John Murray, 1892), p. 293.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 291.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 344.

making Mansel Dean of St Paul's in 1868 and Burgon Dean of Chichester in 1875.⁵³ Predictably, Burgon thought to emphasise Mansel's political opinions, stretching from the 'eager youthful "Toryism"' of his schooldays, through his membership of Gathorne Hardy's election committee in 1865, and including reference to Disraeli's offer of promotion three years later.⁵⁴ According to Burgon, 'He was to the backbone a Conservative, – a Conservative of the best type: had been so from the beginning, – remained so, unchanged to the end. You were always sure of Mansel'.⁵⁵ Burgon's insights, however, were by no means limited to political observations: he also included an astute summary of Mansel's intellectual viewpoint. It was Burgon that accurately recorded that the 'doctrine of *Personality* [was] the central position' of Mansel's Christian philosophy.⁵⁶ In modern terms, Mansel was a Personalist concerned with defending the freedom of the will. As far as Burgon was concerned, Hamilton, and, more particularly, Bishop Butler, were the chief sources of Mansel's thought (*not* Kant, who is mentioned only in passing).⁵⁷ Further, Burgon thought it simply wrong to associate Mansel's name with agnosticism.⁵⁸ Throughout, Burgon, the sympathetic Oxford "insider" thought of Mansel as a faithful disciple of Butler, an orthodox Anglican, and a genuine Christian thinker.

Burgon drew on a range of sources when constructing his account, including use of Liddon's funeral sermon and material from the Earl of Carnarvon. He had evidently collected his own reminiscences, together with other anecdotes about Mansel (many

⁵² O. Chadwick, *The Victorian Church*, Part II (London: A. and C. Black, 1970), pp. 52-3.

⁵³ E. M. Goulburn, *Life of Dean Burgon*, vol. II, p. 91.

⁵⁴ J. W. Burgon, *Lives of Twelve Good Men*, p. 328, p. 356 and p. 362.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 356.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 347.

⁵⁷ Thus Burgon mentioned Mansel's lecture on 'The Philosophy of Kant' on p. 338, but otherwise focused on Butler in the discussion that followed. Likewise, Burgon insisted that Mansel was no agnostic, because he held that 'in the Bible, *God is actually revealed*' (p. 343).

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 340-48.

related to Mansel's wit). It is important to note that Burgon recorded some observations of the limits of writing biographical material on Mansel. He emphasised that Mansel 'kept no Diary', and preserved 'only such letters as related to business matters'.⁵⁹ Burgon explained this by suggesting that University life enabled people to meet face to face for any important conversation, and that Mansel was therefore not in the habit of letter writing. Although it is easy to suppose that Mansel burnt many important letters, there is no reason to suppose that Burgon was being disingenuous in his explanation of this behaviour. The surviving correspondence with Lord Carnarvon, for instance, consists on the whole of many brief notes indicating the need to meet for a conversation on one matter or another. The notable exceptions to this rule – letters which provide additional genuine insights into Mansel's life – are few in number, and form a significant part of my discussion of Mansel's political context in the relevant chapter of this thesis.

Leslie Stephen and the Dictionary of National Biography

The final significant Victorian account of Mansel's life and work was of a different kind. Leslie Stephen (1832-1904) – the father of Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell – was not sympathetic to Mansel. There is no evidence that he knew Mansel personally or entered into correspondence with him. Unlike Liddon, Carnarvon, and Burgon, Stephen wrote about Mansel without any direct knowledge of his person (indeed, he depended on Carnarvon's and Burgon's biographical sketches when producing a new summary account of Mansel's life). Stephen had little natural sympathy for Mansel: the 'Godless Victorian' was a Cambridge radical and a close friend of the radical Liberal M.P., John Morley. Unlike Morley, Stephen 'admired Bismarck more than

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 361.

Gladstone'.⁶⁰ His politics differed to Mansel's; his philosophy differed to Mansel's; his religious views differed to Mansel's. He wrote about Mansel as an opponent.

Stephen's *An Agnostic's Apology* (1893) appeared in the same year that he contributed the entry on Mansel to the *Dictionary of National Biography*. It is natural to regard the two works as complementary: Stephen's interest in philosophical agnosticism apparently provided the context in which he decided to write about Mansel. Overall, Stephen's writings on Mansel viewed him through the lens of Herbert Spencer's agnostic philosophy. The image that emerges of Mansel is therefore distorted and reductive, concerned with intellectual ideas which would have perplexed Mansel himself: Mansel became a mere stepping stone to Spencer.

The whole substance of [Mansel's] argument was simply and solely the assertion of the first principles of Agnosticism. Mr. Herbert Spencer, the prophet of the Unknowable, the foremost representative of Agnosticism, professes in his program to be carrying "a step further the doctrine put into shape by Hamilton and Mansel." Nobody, I suspect, would now deny, nobody except Dean Mansel himself, and the "religious" newspapers, ever denied very seriously, that the "further step" thus taken was the logical step... Mr. Spencer hardly goes a step beyond his original, except, indeed, in candour.⁶¹

To say that Mansel was 'simply and solely' an assertion of Spencer's agnosticism was a reductive argument. Mansel's personalism, religious belief, and adherence to Butler, Reid, and Jacobi were simply ignored by Stephen. Nevertheless, this reductive

⁶⁰ N. Annan, *Leslie Stephen: The Godless Victorian* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 59.

reading of Mansel took hold in later scholarship (perhaps aided by Mansel's personal reasons for not responding to and correcting Spencer's use of his work). Stephen, then, helped consolidate the Spencerian or agnostic interpretation of Mansel which was to be repeated by a number of writers on such themes in the twentieth-century.

Stephen's sketch of Mansel's life appeared in Volume XXXVI of *The Dictionary of National Biography* (1893). The entry ran to 5 columns across 3 pages. Most of the first column dwelt on Mansel's family background, outlining the military exploits of his ancestors in the British army and navy. That Mansel came from a family of officers seemed to matter to Stephen, who remarked that his strong Toryism was appropriate for 'a member of an old family of soldiers and clergymen'.⁶² (Stephen later repeated this point when discussing Mansel in *The English Utilitarians* (1900): 'He was the descendent of an old family of country-gentlemen, the younger members of which had entered the army or navy or held the family living').⁶³ Stephen presumably meant to explain Mansel's political views by suggesting they were merely a matter of hereditary inheritance, predetermined by his social and familial background. Again, Mansel was described as 'a typical Oxford don of the older type', and Stephen associated this with his 'strong tory and high church principles'.⁶⁴ (In *The English Utilitarians*, we are told that Mansel 'was a typical Oxford don, as became his birth').⁶⁵ The impression gained was that social context accounted for Mansel's attitudes, religious affiliation, and career trajectory. This was typical of Stephen, who according to Noel Annan, thought that 'it [was] not the consciousness

⁶¹ L. Stephen, *An Agnostic's Apology* (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1903), p. 9.

⁶² L. Stephen, 'Mansel, Henry Longueville' in Sidney Lee (ed.), *Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol. XXXVI, *Malthus-Mason* (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1893), p. 82.

⁶³ L. Stephen, *The English Utilitarians*, vol. III (London: Duckworth, 1900), pp. 381-82.

⁶⁴ L. Stephen, 'Mansel, Henry Longueville', p. 82.

⁶⁵ L. Stephen, *The English Utilitarians*, vol. III, p. 381.

of men which determine[d] their existence but on the contrary their social existence determine[d] their consciousness'; 'social developments... changed men's ideas, not "the activity of a few speculative minds"'.⁶⁶ Stephen wrote biography with a fundamentally different worldview to that of Mansel's individualistic personalism. The presuppositions of his biographical method distorted the picture of Mansel that emerged. That these presuppositions were drawn from Herbert Spencer should alert the reader to the limitations of Stephen's method.⁶⁷

In line with the "social determinist" Spencerian methodology employed by Stephen, his biographical study represented Mansel himself as a mere stepping stone to Spencer's own agnosticism. There was an inevitability in what Stephen made of Mansel. He claimed that Mansel's antagonists knew that his arguments were 'virtually

⁶⁶ N. Annan, *Leslie Stephen: The Godless Victorian*, p. 231 and p. 227.

⁶⁷ For a detailed analysis of Stephen's biographical method, see J. P. Von Arx, *Progress and Pessimism: Religion, Politics, and History in Late Nineteenth Century Britain* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1985). According to Von Arx, Stephen accepted the Whig view of history as progress, and substantiated this view with reference to Herbert Spencer. 'Stephen found the guarantee of progress in what he called "the underlying law of development... the gradual adaptation of the race to its environment."... In determining the mechanism by which this law of adaptation operated to further the cause of truth, Stephen adopted concepts from both Darwin and Spencer' (pp. 35-6). Crucially, Stephen owed more to Spencer than Darwin: 'Adaptation, for Stephen as for Spencer, was the transmission to posterity by inheritance of characteristics acquired by members of a species as they encountered and adjusted to their environment. It could not, of course, be otherwise if new ideas were to count as the moving force in social evolution' (p. 36). As Von Arx explained, this Spencerian model prejudiced Stephen's biographical work against traditional theology: 'Clearly, by looking at historical change as adaptation, Stephen meant to rule out a theological understanding of people and their social duties; the laws that governed adjustment to the social environment could have nothing to do with revelation' (p. 36). Crucially, the individual was reduced to a mere expression of the predetermining rules of 'an evolutionary science... based on a scientific understanding of the laws of social and historical change' (p. 51). Likewise, 'Ethics could no longer begin with the individual... Rather, ethics must begin by considering society as a whole, considered as a living and growing organism' (p. 51). Further, 'The individual was a part of this larger system seeking equilibrium, and the properties of the individual could only be understood as a function of the individual's adaptation to the larger social organism' (p. 51). Stephen's methodology provided strict limits to his biographical studies. His 'model was essentially a progressivist one, which saw lives as significant insofar as they exemplified intellectual growth... away from received religious beliefs and toward emergent ideas in his culture' (p. 62). 'Biography, presented as intellectual development, both illuminated the meaning of the past as progressive, and defined the significance of any human life as a function of that progress. Stephen's choice of this way of portraying lives implied that the only meaningful kind of life was at the forefront of, or at least in touch with, the latest progressive movement' (pp. 62-3). Stephen's whole conception of biography was, therefore, 'directly opposed to the static essentialism that undergirded the

“agnostic”, and emphasised Spencer’s own remark that he was ‘carrying a step further the doctrine put into shape by Hamilton and Mansel’.⁶⁸ Indeed, Stephen concluded by remarking that, whatever strengths actually lay in Mansel’s thought, ‘Later developments of thought... have proceeded upon different lines’.⁶⁹ Although Stephen drew on Carnarvon and Burgon in his short biography of Mansel, he made much more of Kant, and significantly much more of Spencer in his account than either of the earlier writers had thought necessary. Overall, one gets the sense that Stephen’s biography was carefully crafted to express his own philosophical doctrine, and that he had built a straw man of Mansel to serve his own ends.

History of the Family of Maunsell, Mansell, Mansel

William W. Mansell privately printed an amateur family history in 1850 under the title, *History of the Family of Maunsell [Mansell, Mansel]*. Carnarvon, Burgon, and Stephen all referred to this text. A new edition was published in 1917, including reference to Henry Longueville Mansel.⁷⁰ This edition was dependent on Burgon’s account of Mansel’s life, and added little of interest to the existing information. If it has significance, it lies in the information it gives on Mansel’s younger brother, Robert Stanley Mansel, the railway manager, who had his own professional connection with the Tory politician, Lord Chandos.

All later biographical accounts of Mansel draw on the sources I have described.⁷¹

Christian view of life’ (p. 63), ‘opposed to the authority of revelation, and to... theological metaphysics’ (p. 51).

⁶⁸ L. Stephen, ‘Mansel, Henry Longueville’, p. 82.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

⁷⁰ C. A. Maunsell, *History of the Family of Maunsell [Mansell, Mansel]*, vol. 2, pt. 1 (London: K. Paul, 1917), Mansel and his family can be found on pp. 307-322 in the 1917 publication and pp. 208-219 in the reprint (Tennessee: General Books, 2010).

⁷¹ Some of these other biographies include: ‘Mansel, Henry Longueville’, T. Humphrey Ward (ed.), *Men of the Reign: A Biographical Dictionary of Eminent Persons of British and Colonial Birth who*

Literature on Mansel and the Agnostic Tradition

Following Stephen, a broad range of literature has assumed that Mansel is best interpreted as a forerunner of agnosticism, and has located him in the history of ideas as an unwitting progenitor of this tradition. I have already shown that Stephen's interpretation of Mansel was reductive: reading him 'simply and solely' as an early example of 'the assertion of the first principles of agnosticism', and as the chief inspiration for Herbert Spencer, ignored Mansel's theistic personalism, and his intellectual debts to Butler, Reid, and Jacobi.⁷² Nevertheless, this one dimensional interpretation of Mansel has stuck fast. I have suggested that Mansel most probably would have repudiated Spencer in print were it not for the risk of drawing attention to Spencer's scandalous behaviour towards his unnamed female relative, and the risk this presented to her reputation. It must be remembered that this girl was either Mansel's first cousin or his sister; Victorians took great pains to protect the reputation of female relatives. That Mansel was prevented from responding to the charge of agnosticism for such personal reasons provides a useful explanation for why Spencer was unanswered. All that Mansel was prepared to say was 'I have not read Mr. Spencer's book on First Principles... from what I know of it indirectly, and from what I know directly of the author's other writings, I believe his teachings to be the contradictory, not the complement, of mine'.⁷³ Despite this one sentence refutation of the charge, Mansel's name and agnosticism became linked together in an unfortunate

have Died in the Reign of Queen Victoria (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1885), pp. 598-99; 'Mansel, Very Rev. Henry Longueville, J. Foster Kirk (ed.), *A Supplement to Allibone's Critical Dictionary of English Literature and British and American Authors Containing Over Thirty-Seven Thousand Articles (authors), and Enumerating Over Ninety-Three Thousand Titles* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1902), p. 1072; L. Armour, 'Mansel, Henry Longueville' in W. J. Mander and A. P. F. Sell (eds), *The Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century British Philosophers*, vol. 2: I-Z (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 2002), pp. 744-47.

⁷² L. Stephen, *An Agnostic's Apology*, p. 9.

⁷³ H. L. Mansel, *Second Letter to Professor Goldwin Smith* (Oxford: Henry Hammans, 1862), p. 53.

manner. Stephen presumably did not know of the embarrassing connection between Spencer and Mansel's family; later writers who have followed Stephen in describing Mansel as a progenitor of agnosticism have apparently been completely unaware of the private and personal dimensions of the Mansel-Spencer link. I believe this to be a serious oversight for this type of literature, and it raises a serious question mark against the adequacy of the scholarship discussed in this section.

In 1979, Bernard Lightman completed a doctoral dissertation at Brandeis University entitled *Henry Longueville Mansel and the Genesis of Victorian Agnosticism*.⁷⁴ This was followed in 1984 by a journal article on 'Henry Longueville Mansel and the Origins of Agnosticism', and in 1987 by his book *The Origins of Agnosticism: Victorian Unbelief and the Limits of Knowledge*.⁷⁵ In each of these studies, Lightman examined Mansel as the forerunner of Spencer, and exhaustively surveyed literature on Mansel as 'the chief source of Spencer's agnosticism'.⁷⁶ The approach taken was that of an exercise in the history of ideas, and Lightman neglected to examine the personal dimensions of the Mansel-Spencer connection. The results of this exercise were useful, if limited. Lightman gave examples of contemporaries and scholars besides Stephen who regarded Spencer's *First Principles* as 'the logical next step to *The Limits of Religious Thought*'.⁷⁷ Lightman contrasted such literature with scholarship which argued that Spencer's thought 'was not the inevitable conclusion to

⁷⁴ B. Lightman, *Henry Longueville Mansel and the Genesis of Victorian Agnosticism*. Ann Arbor, Michigan, and London: University Microfilms International, 1979. Ph.D. diss., Brandeis University, 1979.

⁷⁵ B. Lightman, 'Henry Longueville Mansel and the Origins of Agnosticism' in *History of European Ideas*, vol. 5, no. 1 (1984), pp. 45-64; B. Lightman, *The Origins of Agnosticism: Victorian Unbelief and the Limits of Knowledge* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1987).

⁷⁶ B. Lightman, *Origins of Agnosticism*, p. 71.

⁷⁷ B. Lightman, *Origins of Agnosticism*, p. 71. Examples include 'The Coryphaeus of Agnosticism' in *Month*, 45 (1882), pp. 457-70; A. Caldecott and H. R. Mackintosh (eds.), 'Agnosticism: Mansel (1820-1871)' in *Selections from the Literature of Theism* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1904), pp. 360-67; V. F.

be drawn from the premises of the Bampton Lectures’, but yet nevertheless viewed Mansel as ‘the chief source of Spencer’s agnosticism’.⁷⁸ Either – Mansel’s unwanted disciple – became the lens through which Mansel was to be viewed. Lightman traced the history of agnosticism from Mansel and Spencer, through Huxley, Stephen, Tyndall, and Clifford. By selecting to follow Stephen’s lead, and place Mansel in this intellectual context, Lightman’s various studies served to reinforce the notion that Mansel was best interpreted as the forerunner of Victorian agnosticism. Following Lightman, other scholars, like James Livingston, have continued to view Mansel in this light.⁷⁹

Accompanying this “proto-agnostic” reading of Mansel, Lightman perhaps overemphasised Mansel’s intellectual debt to Kant. Indeed, Lightman dedicated an entire chapter of his book to ‘Mansel and the Kantian Tradition’. By placing the emphasis on Mansel’s use of Kant, Lightman simultaneously downplayed other important influences on his thought. Although Lightman acknowledged that Mansel was at times critical of Kant, and that he ‘often looked to Hamilton’s work for a clear and consistent modification of Kant’s theory of knowledge’, he failed to provide a sufficient exploration of other important influences on Mansel, such as Butler, Reid, and Jacobi. This was arguably a significant oversight. As will be shown in my discussion of Mansel’s intellectual context, Mansel was never critical of Jacobi, agreed with Jacobi’s criticisms of Kant, and developed an “I – Thou” personalism on

Storr, *The Development of English Theology in the Nineteenth Century, 1800-1860* (New York: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1913), p. 422.

⁷⁸ B. Lightman, *Origins of Agnosticism*, p. 71. For examples of such literature see p. 202, n. 16.

⁷⁹ J. C. Livingston, *Religious Thought in the Victorian Age: Challenges and Reconceptions* (New York: T. & T. Clark, 2007), p. 24. Livingston had previously surveyed this territory in ‘British Agnosticism’ in N. Smart, J. Clayton, P. Sherry and S. T. Katz (eds.), *Nineteenth Century Religious Thought in the West*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 231-270. On Lightman, see also, D. W. Dockrill’s book review, ‘The Origins of Agnosticism’ in *Albion*, vol. 20, no. 4 (Winter, 1988), pp. 648-51.

the basis of Jacobi's work, and deployed this as a central feature of the argument of his Bampton Lectures. Lightman failed to discuss Jacobi (the name appears nowhere in his book on agnosticism), and he also failed to provide anything like a satisfactory discussion of Mansel's debts to Butler and Reid (Butler was mentioned only three times in Lightman's book, and Reid just once). As such, it is possible to suggest that his representation of Mansel as a Kantian was overstretched. Centrally important early sources like Burgon were downplayed by Lightman, potentially because Burgon treated Mansel as a disciple of Bishop Butler and a personalist, rather than as a Kantian (perplexingly Burgon only appears twice in Lightman's book). Indeed, Lightman argued that 'Stephen made a more appropriate biographer [for Mansel] in that he was better equipped than Burgon to understand the agnostic aspect of Mansel's work'.⁸⁰ Perhaps it is not too much to suggest that Lightman was therefore selecting his sources to fit his thesis, and overlooking contrary evidence. Mansel was to be interpreted as a Kantian agnostic, no matter what the primary sources actually suggested.

Against Lightman's reading it is necessary to recall what Mansel actually said about the extent of Kant's influence on him. Goldwin Smith had suggested that Mansel was a Kantian, and to this, Mansel had replied in the following terms:

Mr. Smith proceeds to give what he calls "the true pedigree of the Bampton Lectures," which he traces to my having commenced with the principles of Kant, and gone on where he started aside. This pedigree is... erroneous, whether it is intended to represent the history of the doctrines themselves, or

⁸⁰ B. Lightman, *The Origins of Agnosticism*, p. 197, n. 2.

the history of their growth in my mind. The theological doctrines, which he regards as a deduction from Kant, existed, as every student of divinity knows, centuries before Kant was born... All that Kant did... was to supply a psychological confirmation of conclusions which had been previously held on metaphysical and theological grounds. With that psychological confirmation I partly agree, partly disagree...but in its own history, as well as in relation to my individual studies, it was the supplement, not the source, of the theological convictions with which it is connected.⁸¹

In sum, Mansel had not read Spencer, and neither was Kant his chief inspiration. His “Kantianism” was actually a “Hamiltonian” reading of Kant, which agreed with Jacobi’s criticisms of Kant, and attempted to bring his philosophy in line with Butler and Reid, emphasising personalism and the theology of revelation.⁸² Nevertheless, according to many of his opponents (and it must be remembered they were his opponents, not allies), Mansel was an agnostic and a Kantian.⁸³ The origins of the myth of Mansel’s Kantianism lay with William Whewell, Goldwin Smith, and Mark Pattison.⁸⁴ It became a common place of attacks on Mansel’s position, and quickly

⁸¹H. L. Mansel, *A Second Letter to Professor Goldwin Smith*, pp. 47-8.

⁸² For the argument that Hamilton’s reading of Kant followed Jacobi, and that Jacobi was himself inspired by Reid, see M. Kuehn, ‘Hamilton’s Reading of Kant’ in G. MacDonald Ross and T. McWalter (eds.), *Kant and his Influence* (London: Continuum, 2005), pp. 315-347. According to Kuehn, Hamilton’s ‘reading of Kant was at least as distorted as was that of his predecessors because it was deeply influenced by the interpretation and critique of Kant and Kantianism put forward by Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi... Jacobi himself was deeply influenced by Reid’ (pp. 317-18). On faith and revelation in Hamilton, Jacobi, and Reid, see p. 338 f.

⁸³ Burgon, who knew Mansel well, presumably did not think of Mansel as a Kantian. If he had thought Mansel had championed Kantianism at Oxford, he would have been more than able to say so. He did not. He also contrasted agnosticism with the Manselian doctrine of the personal God who had revealed himself in the Bible. On this, see J. W. Burgon, *Lives of Twelve Good Men*, p. 343 and p. 347.

⁸⁴ William Whewell described Mansel as ‘by much the most zealous English Kantian whose writings I have seen’, in W. Whewell, *Letter to the Author of the Prolegomena Logica* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1852), p. 7; Goldwin Smith wrote ‘Kant is Mr. Mansel’s teacher...Where Kant started aside, Mr. Mansel went straight on. This is the true pedigree of the Bampton Lectures’, in G. Smith, *Rational Religion and the Rationalistic Objections of the Bampton Lectures for 1858* (Oxford: J. L. Wheeler, 1861), p. 38; Mark Pattison wrote that Mansel ‘first introduced Kant into Oxford’, in M.

permeated much of the relevant literature. Later writers sometimes did not question the accuracy of the description. Thus, in 1967, Don Cupitt described Mansel as an ‘ultra-strict Kantian’ (he later offered a more moderate view).⁸⁵ In 1988, Bernard Reardon suggested that Mansel represented a ‘striking example in England of the use of Kantian “agnosticism”’.⁸⁶ In 2006, L. J. Snyder described Mansel as the ‘closest thing to a British Kantian in those days’.⁸⁷ It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that Lightman provided one more example of this trend. He described Mansel as ‘the closest equivalent to Kant which Victorian England could produce’.⁸⁸ He outlined many examples of this thesis, and pursued it in a largely unquestioning fashion (any differences between Mansel and Kant were discussed in just one brief paragraph).⁸⁹

This lack of attention to the problematic question of Mansel’s “Kantianism” was

Pattison, *Memoirs of an Oxford Don* (London: Cassell Publishers, 1988, first published by MacMillan in 1885), p. 91.

⁸⁵ D. Cupitt, ‘Mansel Theory of Regulative Truth’ in *Journal of Theological Studies*, vol. 18 (April, 1967), pp. 104-26, here citing p. 110, n. 2. Cupitt returned to the theme of Mansel studies three years later in his essay, ‘Mansel and Maurice on our Knowledge of God’ in *Theology*, vol. 73 (1970), pp. 301-11. D. W. Dockrill responded to Cupitt in 1970 and argued for a strong link between Mansel and the agnostics Spencer, Huxley, and Stephen (‘The Limits of Thought and Regulative Truths’ in *Journal of Theological Studies*, vol. 21, pt. 2 (October, 1970), pp. 370-87). In a third essay on Mansel from 1971, Cupitt was more moderate on the extent of Mansel’s supposed Kantianism: indeed, Mansel was here discussed as a Butlerian. See D. Cupitt, ‘What was Mansel Trying to do?’ in *The Journal of Theological Studies*, vol. 22 (1971), pp. 544-47. In 1976, Mansel was again discussed in Cupitt’s book *The Leap of Reason* (London: Sheldon Press, 1976), pp. 83-4. According to Gavin Hyman, Cupitt’s own commitment to Kantian epistemology may have inspired his interest in Mansel, and shaped his reading of him. See G. Hyman, *The Predicament of Postmodern Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), p. 45. For further reference, see G. Hyman (ed.), *New Directions in Philosophical Theology: Essays in Honour of Don Cupitt* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2004), p. 5.

⁸⁶ B. Reardon, *Kant as Philosophical Theologian* (London: MacMillan, 1988), p. 180.

⁸⁷ L. J. Snyder, *Reforming Philosophy: A Victorian Debate on Science and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), p. 44.

⁸⁸ B. Lightman, *The Origins of Agnosticism*, p. 32.

⁸⁹ On the differences between Mansel and Kant, see B. Lightman, *The Origins of Agnosticism*, p. 39. Lightman gave a number of examples of scholars who had equated Mansel with Kantianism. In 1914, John Theodore Merz had argued that Mansel ‘renewed attention to the philosophy of Kant which had so far affected English thought mainly in the interpretation of Sir William Hamilton’ (J. T. Merz, *A History of European Thought in the Nineteenth Century*, vol. 4 (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1914), p. 215). In 1931, René Welleck had indicated Mansel’s role in drawing attention to Kant (R. Welleck, *Immanuel Kant in England, 1793-1838* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1931). In 1969, this view was reiterated by Shaw in a German language study of English Kantianism (see G. Shaw, *Das Problem des Dinges an sich in der englischen Kantinterpretation* (Bonn: H. Bouvier, 1969). In 1973, John Hoaglund repeated the point (J. Hoaglund, ‘The Thing in Itself in English Interpretations of Kant’ in *American Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 10 (January, 1973), pp. 1-14).

unfortunate, and represented a weak spot in Lightman's otherwise fascinating, original and important contribution to intellectual history.

In 1990, Timothy Fitzgerald challenged the overall association of Mansel with Kant and agnosticism. Despite regarding Hamilton and Mansel as Spencer's 'predecessors',⁹⁰ Timothy Fitzgerald recognised that 'the questioning of the extent and consistency of Kant's influence on Mansel affects one's view of whether or not, or in what sense, Mansel was Agnostic'.⁹¹ He argued that Mansel's divergence from Kant and his doctrine of revelation suggested that he was not truly an agnostic. He wrote:

despite an appearance of Kantianism in Mansel, his agnosticism is attenuated and jeopardized by his claims that we know that God exists, that this God must have some inconceivable relation with a real, finite world, and that the Self is self-evidently and undeniably a free moral agent with a directly intuited ontological status.⁹²

Mansel also 'identifie[d] the unknowable Unconditioned with the God of Christian Revelation, a Revelation which that God has given to us. Mansel's agnosticism is more appearance than reality'.⁹³ He concluded that 'Mansel rarely if ever holds to this thorough-going agnosticism, and his use of terms such as phenomenal, noumenal, conditioned, and unconditioned slip and slide, partly under the influence of Hamilton.

⁹⁰ T. Fitzgerald, 'Herbert Spencer's Agnosticism' in *Religious Studies*, vol. 23, no. 4 (Dec, 1987), pp. 477-491, p. 478.

⁹¹ T. Fitzgerald, 'Mansel's Agnosticism' in *Religious Studies*, vol. 26, no. 4 (December, 1990), pp. 525-41, p. 526.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 529.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 529.

Both Hamilton and Mansel dissipate Kantian agnosticism...'⁹⁴ Fitzgerald noticed the influence of the Scottish school on Mansel in the form of Hamilton which ultimately meant it is difficult to argue that Mansel was a 'thorough-going' Agnostic in the Kantian sense.

Mansel, Kierkegaard and Barth

Occasionally, one encounters a remark that Mansel represented 'something like Kierkegaard'.⁹⁵ For others, Mansel was a Victorian Anglican forerunner of Karl Barth. Thus, Michael Ramsey likened Mansel's *Limits of Religious Thought* to Barth's *Epistle to the Romans*, and Bernard Reardon observed that the 'point of view... maintained by Mansel in his Bampton Lectures... [was maintained] in our time by Karl Barth'.⁹⁶ Such observations indicate the existence of a counter-tradition of Mansel scholarship that provides an alternative reading to the "Kantian-agnostic" type.

Why should Mansel be likened to Kierkegaard and Barth? There is no evidence that Mansel knew of Kierkegaard's work, and the latter's name does not feature in the surviving catalogue of Mansel's library preserved at St John's College in Oxford. Although Kierkegaard (1813-1855) was a direct contemporary of Mansel, and was a fellow critic of Hegel, no links between the two men can be established. This is unsurprising as Kierkegaard (a Danish Lutheran) only began to receive widespread attention from philosophers at the beginning of the twentieth century. Meanwhile, the

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 540.

⁹⁵ J. C. Livingston, 'British Agnosticism', p. 242.

⁹⁶ According to Ramsey, 'amid the description of the inability of the reason and the conscience to know God, Mansel is telling of how in fact the soul may be held fast in communion with God Himself. The same may be said – and not only by Barthians – of some passages in Karl Barth's exposition of the Epistle to the Romans.' M. Ramsey, *F. D. Maurice and the Conflicts of Modern Theology* (Cambridge:

Swiss Reformed theologian Karl Barth (1886-1968) was born fifteen years after Mansel's death, and made no reference whatsoever to Mansel in his extensive writings. Although Barth was undoubtedly influenced by Kierkegaard and had studied his works, there is no evidence that he had even heard of Mansel. Any affinity or similarity between Mansel on the one hand and Kierkegaard and Barth on the other is, therefore, accidental. Nevertheless, a number of scholars thought it important to suggest some sort of likeness between the three men, and made tantalising comparisons between them. Thus, according to James C. Livingston:

Mansel's rejection of natural theology, his refusal to allow reason the right to determine what Revelation is or must be, and his denial that man has any moral or mystical "point of contact" with God have their historical affinities in his contemporary, Kierkegaard, and his doctrine of the "infinite qualitative distinction" between time and Eternity and later in Karl Barth's "positivism of Revelation".⁹⁷

All three were strong Protestants (albeit of different types); both Mansel and Kierkegaard criticised Hegel; both Mansel and Barth were profound critics of liberal Christianity. All three emphasised the transcendence of God, the priority of faith over knowledge, and the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. In both Mansel and Barth the theme of *freedom* – of divine Sovereignty and human responsibility – was deployed

Cambridge University Press, 1951), p. 80. See also B. Reardon, *From Coleridge to Gore* (London: Longman, 1971), p. 418.

⁹⁷ J. C. Livingston, 'British Agnosticism' in N. Smart, J. Clayton, P. Sherry and S. T. Katz (eds.), *Nineteenth Century Religious Thought in the West*, vol. II (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 231-70, p. 241.

as a central theological concept to account for faith, revelation, and personal accountability for sin.⁹⁸

Edwyn Bevan's Gifford Lectures for the years 1933-34 were published in 1938 under the title *Symbolism and Belief*.⁹⁹ In this book, Bevan included a chapter on 'Mansel and Pragmatism' in which he made the following remark:

Mansel's insistence upon the utter inability of man to raise himself by thought to apprehension of God above the figurative mode in which it had pleased God, Mansel believed, to reveal something of Himself to man in the Scriptures reminds one sometimes of the movement in our own day connected with the name of Karl Barth... The affinity is shown also in the strong dislike of mysticism common to Mansel and the Barthian School.¹⁰⁰

This was very early days for the reception of Barth's theology in Britain: Edwyn Clement Hoskyns' translation of Barth's famous *Commentary on Romans* had only recently been published (in 1933 – the year when Bevan had begun to deliver his Gifford Lectures). As such, Bevan's identification of Barth with Mansel was fascinating: in his mind at least, Barth represented a new theological voice reminiscent of a long dead mid-Victorian Anglican. Barth's growing reputation perhaps meant that the time had arrived when Mansel's work could be revisited and reinterpreted in a new, more positive, light. Mansel's own insistence on the limits of human knowledge of God, and his accompanying insistence on the priority of faith in

⁹⁸ For a summary of Barth's theology see K. Barth, *Dogmatics in Outline* (London: SCM, 2012).

⁹⁹ E. Bevan, *Symbolism and Belief* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1938).

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 324-25.

revelation, now found a fitting context for reappraisal. Bevan's own analysis drew principally on American Pragmatism in an attempt to revitalise interest in Mansel.¹⁰¹

In 1956, the Dean of St Paul's Cathedral, W. R. Matthews, published a 23 page pamphlet on *The Religious Philosophy of Dean Mansel*. Like Bevan, Matthews had begun to see that Mansel was potentially relevant to the theological questions of his own day, for, he claimed, 'the problems raised by Mansel and Maurice are at the centre of contemporary theology'.¹⁰² Mansel's rejection of the natural knowledge of God was, he wrote, as decisive as that of Karl Barth.¹⁰³ Even though Matthews himself was not sympathetic to this position, Barth's influence on twentieth century theology had made Mansel worthy of revaluation. In his later autobiography, Matthews could not resist returning to this theme, likening Mansel to Barth as an exponent of the 'Resort to Revelation Only' approach to Christian theology.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Bevan's starting point was an acknowledgement of the mysterious incomprehensibility of the transcendent God. God's nature was unknowable, yet God had addressed humanity in his revelation (pp. 21-2). The mode of revelation was, therefore, not literal, but symbolic or analogical. Human beings were incapable of judging the metaphysical "truth" of revelation precisely because it exceeded their limits; nevertheless, they could make pragmatic judgements of its "truth", showing how revelation had a positive practical effect on life as it is lived. Bevan drew from American Pragmatism the notion that 'Truth is what works'. As such, 'If, in practice, to act on a belief is found to give the results desired, that belief is so far true' (p. 264). According to Bevan, then, 'in religion symbols are useful simply because, when men act and feel *as if* they were true, they act and feel with the best practical result' (p. 264). Bevan applied this understanding to Mansel, and read his theory of regulative truth in light of Pragmatism. He quoted Mansel, 'Action, and not knowledge, is man's destiny and duty in this life; and his highest principles, both in philosophy and in religion, have reference to this end' (Bevan, p. 290, citing Mansel, *Limits*, fifth edition, 1867, p. 105). This interpretation is particularly astute, and merits further development. For a definition of Pragmatism, see W. James, *Pragmatism* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1981), pp. 25-6. It should be noted that American Pragmatism had roots in Hamiltonian common sense philosophy, and was therefore an evolved form of the philosophical framework Mansel himself championed. For the relationship between Scottish common sense philosophy and American Pragmatism, see D. McDermid, 'Scottish Common Sense and American Pragmatism' in G. Graham (ed.), *Scottish Philosophy in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 205-35.

¹⁰² W. R. Matthews, *The Religious Philosophy of Dean Mansel* (London: Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 6.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

¹⁰⁴ W. R. Matthews, *Memories and Meanings* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1969), p. 295.

One of the most interesting examples of this type of literature, written by H. L. Stewart, appeared in *The Harvard Theological Review* in 1950. In a study entitled ‘The “Reverent Agnosticism” of Karl Barth’, Stewart examined Barth’s treatment of the question of religious knowledge before, in conclusion, likening Barth to Mansel. In other words, Stewart viewed the potential similarities between Barth and Mansel *from Barth’s side*. The study was primarily concerned with Barth, and only incidentally with Mansel; it was an exercise in Barth scholarship which recognised a parallel with Mansel. Towards the end of his essay, Stewart wrote:

Almost a century ago, H. L. Mansel – in his Bampton Lectures at Oxford on “The Limits of Religious Thought” – urged a pious fettering of the human mind, not unlike the vow of intellectual poverty which Barth in his Gifford Lectures at St. Andrews would commend more than half a century later. With a like emphasis on “the Word of God” as an oracle to be submissively received, not critically adjusted into agreement with knowledge from some other source, the Bampton lecturer... bade his listeners cultivate even in the sphere of the great moral values a speculative agnosticism that should be the preliminary of faith.¹⁰⁵

The most recent example of this trend – dated 1997 – is James Woelfel’s discussion of Mansel as a ‘British Kierkegaard’.¹⁰⁶ Woelfel noted previous examples of the association of Mansel’s name with the theology of Barth and the philosophy of Kierkegaard, and sought to analyse the similarities and differences between the three

¹⁰⁵ H. L. Stewart, ‘The “Reverent Agnosticism” of Karl Barth’ in *The Harvard Theological Review*, vol. 43, No. 3, July 1950, pp. 215-232, here citing p. 230.

¹⁰⁶ J. W. Woelfel, *Portraits in Victorian Religious Thought* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1997), pp. 25-33.

men.¹⁰⁷ Woelfel's analysis correctly identified the centrality of the concept of personality to Mansel, and he related this to Kierkegaard's thought: 'The human personality, the individual self, was for Mansel as for Kierkegaard the supreme finite reality and the key to the issues of religion'.¹⁰⁸ Both Mansel and Kierkegaard rejected 'all forms of thought that subordinate[d] the individual to the universal'.¹⁰⁹ For Kierkegaard, the individual faced a practical or ethical task before God, equivalent to Mansel's ideas of duty: this task was faith in God's commands irrespective of contrary evidence, feeling, or judgement. According to Woelfel, Mansel even had 'his own version of Kierkegaard's "teleological suspension of the ethical," although he developed it quite differently'.¹¹⁰ (In this light, Mansel's insistence that human beings do not know the Absolute Good, but have a duty to follow regulative truths of Scripture begins to take a Kierkegaardian colour). Nevertheless, Mansel avoided expressing himself in the language of paradox which Kierkegaard had adopted, and was less extreme in his anti-rationalism.¹¹¹ Overall, Mansel was viewed as a more sober, Anglican equivalent of Kierkegaard, and as a potential ally for the later work of Karl Barth.

Kenneth Freeman

In 1967, Kenneth Freeman published an article on 'Mansel's Religious Positivism', that explored the doctrine of revelation found in the Bampton Lectures.¹¹² Freeman developed his argument two years later in his book, *The Role of Reason in Religion: A*

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., pp. 26-6.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 30.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 30.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 30.

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 32.

¹¹² K. D. Freeman, 'Mansel's Religious Positivism' in *Southern Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 5, no. 2 (1967), pp. 91-102.

Study of Henry Mansel.¹¹³ Freeman's monograph was one of only two books dedicated to Mansel published in the twentieth century, and therefore demands attention here. Freeman wrote it whilst holding a very junior academic position (assistant to an Associate Professor) at Cornell College in the United States. This context may explain some of the content of the book, which arguably reflects particular concerns of Anglo-American philosophy of religion in the 1960s.¹¹⁴ Further, Freeman also drew links between Mansel and American theology in the mid 1960s.¹¹⁵ The overall approach, therefore, was one that viewed Mansel as a figure who could be made relevant to intellectual discussions taking place one hundred years after his death. Mansel was treated as a conversation partner for contemporary concerns. Predictably, Freeman perceived similarities between Mansel, Kierkegaard and Barth. In this account, Mansel was "unique" in his attempt to ground a position similar to that of the other figures in rigorous philosophical argument. Mansel's focus on the limits of thought, and his analysis of epistemology, made him a philosophically acute apologist for fideism:

It is the philosophical character of the Victorian entrenchment, epitomized in the work of Mansel, which gives the period its interest to philosophy of religion. In this it stands in clear contrast to a similar and near contemporary reaction on the part of Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard took offense [sic] at many of the same aspects of German theological thought as did Mansel and his solution is largely the same, yet Kierkegaard for all his fascination remains a poet and

¹¹³ K. D. Freeman, *The Role of Reason in Religion: A Study of Henry Mansel* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969).

¹¹⁴ Thus Freeman referred to Gilbert Ryle (p. 15), A. J. Ayer (p. 23 and p. 83), Bertrand Russell (p. 25), Alfred North Whitehead (p. 36), and I. M. Crombie's ideas of falsification (p. 46 and p. 60). Such references reflect the concerns of twentieth century philosophy in the Anglo-American tradition.

¹¹⁵ K. D. Freeman, *The Role of Reason in Religion: A Study of Henry Mansel*, p. 106.

religious prophet. There is hardly anything in his work which allows of sustained philosophical discussion without serious distortion of the primary material and point of his thought. The same can be said of a contemporary spokesman for a similar position, Karl Barth – there too, it is difficult and possibly absurd to analyze his work as philosophy. Mansel’s uniqueness lies in his attempt to ground the position upon philosophical argument, and as a result the inner workings of the approach are perhaps clearer in Mansel than in any other writer.¹¹⁶

Freeman placed special emphasis on Mansel’s understanding of revelation, and drew particular comparisons with Barth’s theology. In a particularly important passage, he wrote:

Mansel’s... [*position*] is not altogether unlike that of Karl Barth. Mansel’s insistence that the Christian message “must be unconditionally received, not as reasonable, nor as unreasonable, but as scriptural” might well have come from a follower of Barth. Furthermore, what Bonhoeffer called Barth’s “positivism of revelation” is quite similar to Mansel’s own defence of Christianity.¹¹⁷

Such ‘religious positivism’ in Mansel was the chief theme of Freeman’s study. In Freeman’s view, Mansel came ‘to reside finally with the theologians’, as a defender of the freedom of God’s revelation. Mansel’s argument could be summed up in the phrase, ‘In [*the*] impotence of Reason, we are compelled to take refuge in Faith’.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 3.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 9. Freeman here cites Mansel’s *Limits of Religious Thought*, fifth edition (London: John Murray, 1867), p. 127, and D. Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison* (New York: MacMillan, 1953), p. 198.

¹¹⁸ H. L. Mansel, *Limits of Religious Thought*, fifth edition, p. 86.

Freeman did not only draw out potential affinities between Mansel and Barth: he went further than that by recognising Mansel's critical position towards Kant. 'Mansel's attempt to protect God's separateness from man's moral knowledge force[d] him into conflict with Kant'.¹¹⁹ Moreover, Freeman's proto-Barthian version of Mansel was not only anti-Kantian, but also no Spencerian agnostic. 'Mansel was saved from extreme agnosticism by his understanding of revelation'.¹²⁰

Clearly, Freeman's book on Mansel drew on the concerns of theology in the 1960s. The interest in Kierkegaard, Barth, and Bonhoeffer, might be questioned from a strict historical point of view, but it nevertheless consolidated the view that Mansel might have to be taken as a more serious theologian after the rise of Barth's theology of revelation. Freeman's book, running to 117 pages, remains the longest English language study of Mansel written in the twentieth century. It must be considered an essential contribution to Mansel scholarship. Nevertheless, the strengths of Freeman's approach also indicate some of its limits. Freeman seems to have had limited access to much of the Victorian literature on Mansel, and made no reference to archive material. Freeman was unable to place Mansel satisfactorily in his own context, and ignored the political dimensions of Mansel's life and work. Moreover, discussions which one might have assumed Freeman ought to have included in a study of Mansel's philosophical theology – for instance that of Mansel's intellectual debts to Sir William Hamilton – are absent. These are curious omissions, and indicate the restricted scope of Freeman's work.

¹¹⁹ K. D. Freeman, *The Role of Reason in Religion: A Study of Henry Mansel*, p. 83.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

Silvestro Marcucci

In 1969, the same year which saw the publication of Freeman's monograph on Mansel, Silvestro Marcucci, published his own Italian study, *Henry L. Mansel: Filosofia Della Coscienza ed Epistemologia Della Religione*. This book, running to 315 pages, still represents the most complete study of Mansel's philosophy to date. As such, it is essential to describe its contents in some detail.

Marcucci was one of Italy's leading Kant scholars, and he approached Mansel in this light. From at least 1963, when he had published a book on William Whewell, Marcucci had become interested in English philosophy in the nineteenth century. The preface to his study of Mansel indicated that his interest in Whewell had initiated his engagement with Mansel in 1964, and this subsequently framed the parameters of his study, which took almost five years to complete. It is significant that Marcucci's discussion dwelt in large part on Kant and Whewell, who, together with Mill, formed the most frequent topics of his discussion. (In contrast, Jacobi is not mentioned at all – a curious omission in light of my own analysis of Mansel in the following chapter). Marcucci's version of Mansel looked for affinities with Kant, whilst acknowledging that Mansel himself had distanced himself to some extent from Kantianism.¹²¹

Marcucci found in Mansel a form of Oxford Kantianism read through the lens of Scottish philosophy, which could be contrasted with Whewell's distinctive Cambridge Kantianism.

Following a useful biographical sketch and literature survey, Marcucci's book was divided into four chapters. The first chapter outlined his approach to the philosophy of

¹²¹ S. Marcucci, *Henry L. Mansel: Filosofia Della Coscienza ed Epistemologia Della Religione*, pp. 9-10.

consciousness ('Gnoseologia E Filosofia Della Coscienza'), and dwelt on an analysis of Mansel's *Metaphysics* in particular. In Marcucci's account, Mansel's fundamental interest in personalism (though Marcucci never used the term) received a more or less satisfactory treatment: the section on the phenomenology of consciousness ('Fenomenologia della coscienza'), provides a useful summary of this key issue.¹²² Marcucci was careful to indicate some of the peculiarities of the Hamiltonian type of Kantianism that Mansel represented, and drew attention to the issue of "relativity" in this tradition – see the discussion of 'Relatività della conoscenza'.¹²³ The second chapter proceeded to give a thorough treatment of Mansel's contributions to Victorian logic. Dwelling primarily on Mansel's edition of *Aldrich* and the *Prolegomena Logica*, Marcucci's discussion remains the best available analysis of Mansel's work as a logician. The third chapter examined issues of epistemology and metaphysics throughout Mansel's works, and concluded with a useful discussion of Mansel's differences to Hamilton on the issue of causation as the result of an act of freewill.¹²⁴ The fourth and final chapter analysed Mansel's philosophy of religion, and contained lengthy discussions of the controversial exchanges with Maurice and Mill. Marcucci concluded this chapter with an examination of Mansel's understanding of freewill, identifying this topic as the key which unlocked his differences to Mill. Utilitarianism failed to give a satisfactory account of 'causalità e volontà' and the 'libertà del volere'.¹²⁵ Overall, Marcucci placed Mansel in a Kantian philosophical context, and did a real service to the history of philosophy by indicating tensions between Mansel and Whewell, Mansel and Hamilton, and Mansel and Mill. His work is an exemplary study of Mansel's philosophical project, and remains the best study of Mansel of this

¹²² Ibid., p. 42-6.

¹²³ Ibid., pp. 46-8.

¹²⁴ Ibid., pp. 205-12.

¹²⁵ Ibid., pp. 285-90.

type. Nevertheless, it is problematic that Marcucci failed to recognise the importance of Jacobi to Mansel, and this remains a serious omission. Further, Marcucci's study is limited to a narrow analysis of Mansel's philosophical concerns (focused especially on questions of interest to Kant scholars) and failed to explore the religious and political dimensions of Mansel's life and work.

It is interesting to contrast Marcucci's study with that of Freeman, especially since both were published in 1969. Where Freeman looked for affinities with Kierkegaard and Barth, these names appear nowhere in Marcucci's book. Quite clearly, the two scholars were working to two different agendas. Marcucci viewed Mansel as a philosopher; Freeman viewed him as a theologian. These contrasting pictures of Mansel are intriguing, and suggest that a more complete vision of Mansel still yet needs to be drawn. This very point indicates that further study of Mansel is required, and in part justifies the contributions made by my own thesis to this broader project. I intend that my analysis of Mansel as a personalist indebted to elements of Jacobi's philosophy will provide a new basis for understanding him as both a philosopher and a theologian – a Hamiltonian and a proto-Barthian.

Crucially, neither Marcucci nor Freeman located Mansel in his political context. Marcucci knew that Mansel was a high Tory and high churchman, and knew that Disraeli had nominated him to the Deanery of St Paul's, but he did not appear to understand how such facts related to Mansel's life and thought.¹²⁶ Meanwhile, Freeman entirely neglected to mention Mansel's political context. In this thesis, I demonstrate the centrality of Toryism and high churchmanship to understanding

¹²⁶ See S. Marcucci, *Henry L. Mansel*, p. 22.

Mansel. In doing this, I am moving beyond both Marcucci and Freeman, and offering a genuine new contribution to scholarship.

Karl-Dieter Ulke

In 1980, Karl-Dieter Ulke published *Agnostisches Denken im Viktorianischen England*. Ulke's study did not provide a full history of Victorian agnosticism, but limited itself to addressing the agnostic thought of Hamilton, Mansel, and Huxley. Other figures, like Spencer and Leslie Stephen, were referred to only in context of the discussion of these three authors, and Ulke attempted to justify this approach by suggesting that Hamilton, Mansel, and Huxley had exemplary significance in the history of agnosticism.¹²⁷ His discussion treated each author in turn, placing them in a narrative culminating in Huxley's agnosticism (the approach is problematic, since it projects Huxley's term back through history onto the other authors, interpreting them with reference to his thought). This means that Hamilton and Mansel were seen as forerunners of Huxley, and the discussion is shaped and formed by this presupposition. The majority of the book consists of a hundred-and-forty page discussion of Hamilton followed by a twenty-five page discussion of Mansel and a thirty-five page discussion of Huxley. Mansel is thus treated as a stepping stone between the Scottish philosopher and the English Darwinist. Ulke evidently only consulted texts which he believed relevant to writing about Mansel in the context of the history of agnosticism, and it is a curious feature of his work that he does not refer to Mansel's exchanges with Maurice and Goldwin Smith, his biblical commentary, his sermons, his contribution to *Aids to Faith*, or his book on Gnosticism. The result is a useful, if limited, discussion of Mansel.

¹²⁷ K.-D., Ulke, *Agnostisches Denken im Viktorianischen England* (München: Alber, 1980), p. 16.

Despite these reservations, the great strength of Ulke's work was his correct recognition of the importance of Jacobi to Hamilton's philosophical project. Ulke understood Jacobi's debts to the Reidian common-sense tradition, which Hamilton shared, and observed that Hamilton himself followed Jacobi's criticisms of Kant.¹²⁸ Jacobi's epistemology was welcome to Hamilton in his critique of Kant's idealism. Hamilton and Jacobi were both strongly influenced by Reid and stuck with his idea of the immediate knowledge of objects. Both referred back to Reid's mediation of Hume's notion of faith and feeling, and could be identified as "philosophers of faith".

*Jacobis Erkenntnistheorie konnte und mußte Hamilton bei seiner Kritik an Kants "Idealismus" hochwillkommen sein. Hamilton wie Jacobi sind nachhaltig von Thomas Reid beeinflußt und halten mit ihm an der unmittelbaren Gegenstandserkenntnis fest. Hamilton wie Jacobi beziehen sich – nur partiell durch Reid vermittelt – auf den "Glauben" und das "Gefühl" David Humes.*¹²⁹

Ulke's location of Hamilton in the tradition of Jacobi and Reid rather than in the tradition of Kant provided a real advance beyond Marcucci and many other authors. In this, Ulke anticipated Manfred Kuehn's later important work on this topic (although, interestingly, Kuehn nowhere refers to Ulke).¹³⁰ Although Ulke provided a detailed account of Jacobi's influence on Hamilton, he did not extend this to

¹²⁸ On Jacobi and Hamilton, see KD. Ulke, *Agnostisches Denken im Viktorianischen England*, pp. 57f., pp. 124-126, and pp. 130-45.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

¹³⁰ See M. Kuehn, 'Hamilton's Reading of Kant' in G. MacDonald Ross and T. McWalter (eds.), *Kant and his Influence* (London: Continuum, 2007), pp. 315-347; Manfred Kuehn, *Scottish Common Sense in Germany, 1768-1800* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987).

discussion of Jacobi's influence on Mansel himself (a topic hinted at, but not elaborated, by Jan Olof Bengtsson).¹³¹ In his account, Mansel emerged as a figure attempting to protect the sanctity of Christian revelation with reference to agnostic epistemology, but this was not grounded in Jacobi's philosophy of faith.¹³² Likewise, although Ulke described some aspects of Mansel's personalism, he did not ground this in Jacobi's discussion of I-Thou relationships.¹³³ Ulke described Mansel as a fideist, and observed how he argued that the religious unknowable, unlike the philosophical unknowable, was accessible to faith: 'Nach Mansel wird *das religiös Unerkennbare*, anders als das philosophisch Unerkennbare, *im Glauben zugänglich und praktikabel*'.¹³⁴ Nevertheless, he neglected to refer this fideism back to Jacobi, or to discuss Mansel comparatively to Kierkegaard or Barth. As such, although Ulke progressed discussion of Mansel beyond the Kantian framework used by Marcucci, and correctly adopted a Jacobian framework, he did not realise the full potential of this schematic advance. His own adherence to a narrative culminating in Huxley's agnosticism prevented him from exploring the broader scope of Mansel's theistic personalism, and restricted his analysis within specific limits.

Church History and Historical Theology

To complete this survey of literature on Mansel, it is important to note those church historians (and historians of theology) who have provided interesting retrospective views of his work. Of those written in the twentieth century, the most notable include a diverse range of texts, offering quite different pictures of Mansel and his contribution to Victorian thought. Without providing an exhaustive list, the following

¹³¹ See J. O. Bengtsson, *The Worldview of Personalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 240.

¹³² See KD. Ulke, *Agnostisches Denken im Viktorianischen England*, p. 164.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 167-68.

books are indicative of this type of writing. In 1901, Alfred Caldecott described Mansel as a theologian who had resorted to ‘Revelation Only’, and linked him to Spencer’s agnosticism. Caldecott’s discussion is important primarily because he noted that Sir William Hamilton’s own daughter had associated Hamilton ‘with Jacobi rather than with Kant’.¹³⁵ Caldecott understood that Mansel seemed to ‘have a wish to secure Personality’, but failed to give a satisfactory account of his personalism.¹³⁶ Caldecott’s account influenced that of W. R. Matthews (as discussed above).¹³⁷ In 1906, A. W. Benn included an antagonistic discussion of Mansel in his *History of English Rationalism*. Clearly siding with Mansel’s opponents, Benn’s account was flippant, dismissive, and written in an inappropriate and unscholarly tone.¹³⁸ In 1909, the German, Otto Pfleiderer, sided with Maurice against Mansel, whom he described as a sceptic and unwitting agnostic.¹³⁹ In 1938, Rudolf Metz (also German) argued that Mansel ‘gave the Kantian theory of knowledge a... definite turn toward sceptical agnosticism... it was only a short step from Mansel’s revelation-theology to Spencer’s indifference to religion’.¹⁴⁰ A different approach was taken in 1953 by the Anglican writer, G. L. Phillips. Mansel was preferred to Maurice: his ‘cool and dispassionate exposition’ offered ‘light and guidance’. His treatment of faith was ‘completely in line with Christian tradition’.¹⁴¹

¹³⁴ Ibid., p. 174.

¹³⁵ A. Caldecott, *The Philosophy of Religion in England and America* (London: Methuen, 1901), p. 406, n. 1

¹³⁶ Ibid., p. 407.

¹³⁷ W. R. Matthews, *Memories and Meanings*, p. 295.

¹³⁸ A. W. Benn, *History of English Rationalism in the Nineteenth Century*, vol. 2 (New York: Russell and Russell, 1962 [reprint of 1906 edition]). Benn’s language is unsavoury, as illustrated by his remarks, ‘Even the gyps [sic] crowded to St. Mary’s to hear him. His book... was read by many who knew as little about philosophy as a gyp [sic] could know’ (p. 112).

¹³⁹ O. Pfleiderer, *The Development of Theology in Germany Since Kant and its Progress in Great Britain Since 1825* (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1909), p. 327 f.

¹⁴⁰ R. Metz, *A Hundred Years of British Philosophy* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1938), p. 40.

¹⁴¹ G. L. Phillips, *Seeing and Believing* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1953), pp. 65-6.

In 1966, the great Anglican historian Owen Chadwick published his *magnum opus*, *The Victorian Church*. Chadwick's appraisal of Mansel as a philosophical theologian was glowing: the *Limits of Religious Thought* were 'the most instructive lectures of the century'. Mansel was both 'intelligible and interesting'.¹⁴² By contrast, Maurice was dismissed as an incoherent and muddled thinker.¹⁴³ Elsewhere, in an essay on Keble originally written in 1964, Chadwick had described Mansel's Bampton Lectures as 'the most important and clearheaded volume written by an English philosopher of religion' in that period.¹⁴⁴ Chadwick's remarks help explain Reardon's attempt to take Mansel seriously in his 1971 study of Victorian religious thought. According to Reardon, there was 'no denying the brilliance of Mansel's venture'. Reardon added that 'to reread the book today is to encounter a remarkable anticipation of some recent developments in theological thought'.¹⁴⁵ The following year, 1972, saw the American scholar Claude Welch publish his two-volume work on *Protestant Thought in the Nineteenth Century*. The brief discussion of Mansel reintroduced his name to American audiences.¹⁴⁶ Looking back on reviews of his work, Welch later admitted that he 'should have done more with Mansel'.¹⁴⁷ Unfortunately, in 1974, Hamish Swanston perhaps made too much of Mansel. Reading him alongside Hampden, Maurice, and Jowett, Swanston's Mansel emerged as a straw-man in an argument favouring theological liberalism.¹⁴⁸ Close inspection shows Swanston neglected the deep structure of Mansel's theology, and made some

¹⁴² O. Chadwick, *The Victorian Church*, Part I, p. 556.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 349.

¹⁴⁴ O. Chadwick, *The Spirit of the Oxford Movement: Tractarian Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 59.

¹⁴⁵ B. Reardon, *From Coleridge to Gore: A Century of Religious Thought in Britain* (London: Longman, 1971), p. 237. In 2004, Reardon contributed the entry on Mansel in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, drawing on the biographical sources described above.

¹⁴⁶ C. Welch, *Protestant Thought in the Nineteenth Century*, vol. I (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), pp. 253-57.

¹⁴⁷ C. Welch, 'The Problem of a History of Nineteenth-Century Theology' in *The Journal of Religion*, vol. 70, no. 4 (October, 1990), pp. 606-17, p. 612.

unfortunate errors on points of detail.¹⁴⁹ Perplexingly, in contrast to Chadwick's approval of Mansel's clarity and lucidity, Swanston reckoned Mansel's literary style to be 'certainly stodgy'.¹⁵⁰ A quite different approach was taken by Maurice Cowling in his colossal three-volume study of *Religion and Public Doctrine in Modern England*. The discussion of Mansel in the second volume (published in 1985), drew renewed attention to Mansel's Toryism, and his relationship to the political problems of his day. 'Mansel had a tough mind' and was 'a powerful writer'; 'he knew what he was doing, [and] was able to be intellectually aggressive'.¹⁵¹ In the third volume, Cowling revealed that Mansel was one of the few thinkers for whom he had 'anything resembling sympathy'.¹⁵²

Literary Scholarship on Victorian Novels

For the sake of completeness it is necessary to include here brief reference to discussion of Mansel in recent scholarship on Victorian sensation novels. Scholars of Victorian literature have made much use of Mansel's satirical review, 'Sensation Novels', which appeared in the *Quarterly Review* in April, 1863.¹⁵³ Indeed, it is

¹⁴⁸ H. Swanston, *Ideas of Order* (Assen, NL: Van Gorcum, 1974).

¹⁴⁹ H. Swanston arguably takes quotes out of context and occasionally misattributes them. For example, see p. 62 where a remark of Lightfoot's is ascribed to Westcott.

¹⁵⁰ H. Swanston, *Ideas of Order*, p. 72.

¹⁵¹ M. Cowling, *Religion and Public Doctrine in Modern England*, vol. II, p. 72 and p. 77.

¹⁵² M. Cowling, *Religion and Public Doctrine in Modern England*, vol. III, p. 697. On the philosophical and theological importance of Mansel to Cowling, and the assumptions they shared in common, see I. Harris, 'The Anglican Mind of Maurice Cowling' in R. Crowcroft, S. J. D. Green and R. Whiting (eds.), *The Philosophy, Politics and Religion of British Democracy: Maurice Cowling and Conservatism* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2010), pp. 223-69, especially pp. 241-42.

¹⁵³ Examples include W. Hughes, *The Maniac in the Cellar* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980); A. Trodd, 'The Policeman and the Lady: Significant Encounters in Mid-Victorian Fiction' in *Victorian Studies*, vol. 27, no. 4, Summer 1984, pp. 435-460; J. Loesberg, 'The Ideology of Narrative Form in Sensation Fiction', in *Representations*, no. 13, Winter 1986, pp. 115-138; L. Pykett, *The Improper Feminine: The Women's Sensation Novel and the New Woman Writing* (London: Routledge, 1992); L. Pykett, *The Sensation Novel: From the Woman in White to the Moonstone* (Plymouth: Northcote House, 1994); P. Brantlinger, *The Reading Lesson* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998); J. Carnell, *The Literary Lives of Mary Elizabeth Braddon: A Study of Her Life and Work* (Hastings: The Sensation Press, 2000); K. Harrison and R. Fantina (eds.), *Victorian Sensations: Essays on a Scandalous Genre* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2006); M. Rubery, *The Novelty of Newspapers: Victorian Fiction After the Invention of the News* (Oxford: Oxford University Press,

something of a curiosity that the recent *Cambridge Companion to Sensation Fiction* lists no less than twenty-one separate references to Mansel in its index, giving him more discussion than many of the authors of the relevant literature themselves. Much discussion of this type unfortunately amounts to nothing less than a caricature of Mansel, who is often held up as little more than an outraged reactionary, disapproving of popular literature. This is unfortunate, for it fails to locate Mansel's review in the context of his other satirical writing and poetry, and completely fails to grasp his ironic sense of humour. Mansel's own family was heavily involved in the railway industry, and Mansel himself was later an ally of W. H. Smith, whose bookstalls supplied popular literature at railway stations. His remarks on books available at railway stalls and the practicalities of railway travelling, did not amount to highbrow sneering, but ironically referred to everyday aspects of Mansel's own experience.

Methodology

This thesis is driven by the insight that Mansel's philosophical and theological work must be considered in historical and political context. Unlike Marcucci's history of ideas approach to Mansel, which in large views his writing in a political and contextual vacuum, I believe it important to examine the broader historical setting of Mansel's work.¹⁵⁴ For the most part, this is necessitated by contemporary evidence (like that of Fitzjames Stephen's, amongst others) that Mansel's intuitionist philosophy was recognisably "Tory" to readers in the late 1850s and early 1860s.

2009); B. Palmer, *Women's Authorship and Editorship in Victorian Culture: Sensational Strategies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

¹⁵⁴ David Nicholls once observed that 'Writings about God, in English, are concerned almost entirely with abstract philosophical concepts, and generally fail to look critically at the concrete images used of God and at the social context from which these images are drawn' (D. Nicholls, *Deity and Domination: Images of God and State in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 3). Nicholls quoted Gregory Baum to support his statement: 'Theologians often tend to regard the variations of doctrine and theology simply as a development of ideas, without paying sufficient

Quite clearly, in his own day, Mansel's work was being interpreted politically, and this must be accounted for in any worthwhile progressive revisioning and re-examination of his philosophy and theology. Further, however, my contextual approach to Mansel reflects select recent work in historical theology, and particularly in the history of Victorian theology, which increasingly seeks to understand contextual aspects of Victorian thought. Prominent examples of this recent scholarly trend include Peter Nockles remarkable and revisionist study, *The Oxford Movement in Context* (1994), Kirstie Blair's edited volume, *John Keble in Context* (2004), Jeremy Morris' monograph, *F. D. Maurice and the Crisis of Christian Authority* (2005), and John Gibbins exemplary work, *John Grote: Cambridge University and the Development of Victorian Thought* (2007).¹⁵⁵ Such volumes indicate the importance of setting theological thought in social, historical, and political context, suggesting the close relationship between knowledge and social practice, rationality and cultural location. They reveal 'how a sermon [or] a review... might constitute a decisive intercession in a debate over politics',¹⁵⁶ how theology sometimes 'explicitly addressed particular political, social, and ecclesiastical controversies of [the] day',¹⁵⁷ and, in turn, how 'political debate of the period' could be clothed 'in a theological context'.¹⁵⁸ In his detailed discussion of methodology, Gibbins has argued that the work of an author should be 'placed within the shared understandings of a group or tradition, in the social and cultural context of his time, and in a tradition of thought through time'. As such, it becomes necessary to pursue 'the reconstruction of the

attention to the socio-political reality, of which this development is a reflection'. (G. Baum, 'Sociology and Theology' in *Concillium*, vol. 1, no. 10 (January, 1974), p. 23.

¹⁵⁵ P. Nockles, *The Oxford Movement in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); K. Blair (ed.), *John Keble in Context* (London: Anthem Press, 2004); J. Morris, *F. D. Maurice and the Crisis of Christian Authority* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); J. Gibbins, *John Grote: Cambridge University and the Development of Victorian Thought* (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2007).

¹⁵⁶ K. Blair, *John Keble in Context*, p. 14.

¹⁵⁷ J. Morris, *F. D. Maurice and the Crisis of Christian Authority*, p. 9.

¹⁵⁸ P. Nockles, *The Oxford Movement in Context*, p. 8.

Victorian intellectual and cultural world’, since ‘historical reconstruction [is] a precondition of a meaningful philosophical or rational reconstruction’.¹⁵⁹ In this thesis, I will show how such methodological insights can be applied fruitfully to Mansel. The picture of Mansel which emerges is, I believe, historically textured, complex, multi-dimensional, and provides a rich elucidation and elaboration of his work in context.

Part of the challenge of writing a contextual account of Mansel’s theology hinges on Mansel’s own belief that an individual’s beliefs, thoughts, and actions, should not be reductively accounted for with reference to one’s historical, social, or material environment. Mansel simply did not believe that context explained thought; rather, thought transcended social context. Mansel was no determinist. He could not have agreed with Marx and Engels that ‘It is not consciousness that determines life, but life that determines consciousness’, or that ‘Consciousness is... from the start a product of society, and it remains such as long as men exist at all’.¹⁶⁰ A fundamental feature of Mansel’s thought was the priority he gave to individual autonomy and free will. This belief in free will meant that an individual was not determined by context. Belief, thought, action, transcended social context. As such, any contextual theological approach to Mansel of the Marxist or social-determinist type will fail to engage with what he actually believed. This means a nuanced approach to contextual theology needs to be adopted in this study. The point may be methodological, but it is nevertheless acute. It is driven by Mansel’s uncompromising adherence to the notion that human personhood is defined by individual freedom, and that a person is not

¹⁵⁹ J. Gibbins, *John Grote*, p. 6. Gibbins finds support for this approach in R. Rorty ‘The Historiography of Philosophy: Four Genres’ in R. Rorty, J. B. Schneewind and Q. Skinner (eds.), *Philosophy in History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 49-75.

determined by external causes – social, material, contextual or otherwise – but is self-determining, free, transcendent of the world of cause and effect, self-responsible.

At this point it is useful to highlight the centrality of freedom in Mansel's thought. Mansel defined the concept of personhood with reference to the concept of self-determining free will. In the Bampton Lectures he argued that 'Throughout the breadth and height and depth of human consciousness, Personality manifests itself under one condition, that of a Free Will, influenced, though not coerced, by motives'.¹⁶¹ He conceived individual personal freedom in relationship to the infinite and unlimited freedom of God, in whose image and likeness human beings had been created.¹⁶² Indeed, God's infinite freedom expanded the scope of fallen and limited human freedom, and by grace God freed human individuals from their own limits, and freed them from the deterministic chain of necessary cause and effect. Mansel's conception of the transcendent quality of human freedom represented traditional Christian belief informed by St Paul's teaching that Christians had been 'called unto liberty' (Galatians 5:13), and should live 'in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free' (Galatians 5:1). Christianity represented a freedom from bondage, an expansion of the possibilities of human freedom beyond the capacity of natural, fallen man. In Mansel's own terms, 'the freedom and personality of finite and fallible man... are quickened into fresh life and vigour by direct communion with the

¹⁶⁰ K. Marx and F. Engels, *German Ideology*, in R. Bocoock and K. Thompson, *Religion and Ideology* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), p. 13.

¹⁶¹ H. L. Mansel, *Limits of Religious Thought*, fifth edition, p. 14.

¹⁶² On the Victorian Anglican belief that human *free will* was the *image* and *likeness* of Divine free will – the "image of God in man" (Genesis 1:26) – see Pusey's sermon, 'The Will of God the Cure of Self-Will'. 'God... made [man] in the Image of God... He had given to him the Image of His own free-will, that as He Himself doth all things because He willeth, and "whatsoever the Lord pleased, that doth He," and of His own free-will created man, and loved him; so should man have the free-will, freely to choose God and to love Him. What an unutterable, awful gift is that free-will, without which heaven would not be what it is, and hell were not!' (E. B. Pusey, *Sermons for the Church's Seasons from Advent to Trinity* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., 1883), p. 67.

Almighty and Allseeing Personality of God'.¹⁶³ Such was Mansel's theological understanding of free will: human beings were drawn into a supernatural freedom by the grace of God. This freedom itself made religious faith possible, for 'the question of *Free will or No free will*', was, according to Mansel, 'really the question of *Belief or No belief*'. He continued, 'If I am a person capable, within certain limits, of influencing the phenomena of Nature by my personal will, I can believe in a Personal God who can influence them still more'.¹⁶⁴ In saying this, Mansel was simply reproducing the teaching of Christian orthodoxy: as Kitson Clark emphasised in his discussion of freedom and Christianity, Augustine had taught that, 'Man cannot believe otherwise than of his own free will'.¹⁶⁵ Likewise, Thomas Aquinas, following Augustine, affirmed that, 'it is possible for a man to do other things against his will, but he cannot believe unless he is willing... [and] the will cannot be compelled'.¹⁶⁶ Mansel's chief philosophical inspiration, Sir William Hamilton, cited Augustine and Bernard of Clairvaux in order to express in as few words as possible the centrality of freedom in Christian theology: 'If there be not free grace in God, how can He save the world? and if there be not free will in man, how can the world by God be judged?'; 'Abolish free will, and there is nothing to be saved; abolish free grace, and there is nothing wherewithal to save'.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶³ H. L. Mansel, 'Personal Responsibility of Man, as Individually Dealt with by God' in S. Wilberforce (ed.), *Personal Responsibility of Man: Sermons Preached During the Season of Lent, 1868*, in *Oxford* (Oxford: James Parker, 1869), p. 33.

¹⁶⁴ H. L. Mansel cited in J. W. Burgon, *Lives of Twelve Good Men*, p. 360.

¹⁶⁵ G. Kitson Clark, *The Kingdom of Free Men* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), p. 148. (Kitson Clark was referring to Augustine *Tract xxvi in Joan*).

¹⁶⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 2-2, q. 10, art. 8, obj. 3.

¹⁶⁷ Sir W. Hamilton, *Discussions on Philosophy and Literature* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1868), pp. 588-89, citing Augustine, *Ad Valentinum*, Epistle 214, and Bernard, *De Gratia et Libero Arbitrio*, c. i.

Mansel's belief in free will led him to resist the idea that 'actual phenomena of habits' were 'formed by a necessary agent under the laws of an invariable causation'.¹⁶⁸ In the *Prolegomena Logica*, he wrote, 'To speak of the determinations of the will as *caused* by phenomena, in the same sense in which the fusion of metal is *caused* by fire, is to give the lie to consciousness for the sake of theory'.¹⁶⁹ As such, Mansel could not believe that his own social and intellectual environment determined his philosophical worldview. His philosophy, as he understood it, was not determined by his context. How then, should one attempt to understand Mansel in context, whilst preserving his insight that an individual is not determined by context?

The problem is caused by the insistence of some contextual theologians that theology is incapable of transcending context, and is predetermined by its historical and social setting. Thus, Sigurd Bergmann has argued that the 'representatives of contextual theology claim... that every theology is determined by its context', and that the 'sociology of knowledge reveals, above all, that the perception of the reality of individuals and groups always is socially determined'.¹⁷⁰ As far as Mansel was concerned, such a view would have represented a denial of indeterminism, that is, of human freedom itself. For Mansel, Bergmann's view would have been indistinguishable from atheism, insofar as Christian belief was an act of free will not determined by context or anything else. It is important to note that Mansel was an opponent of the Victorian forerunners of social-determinist theorists. Bergmann's approach might be loosely equated with that of Leslie Stephen, who, like Marx, believed that social existence determined consciousness: social developments changed

¹⁶⁸ H. L. Mansel, *Artis Logicae Rudimenta, from the Text of Aldrich; with Notes and Marginal References*, fourth edition, corrected and enlarged (London: Rivingtons, no date), p. lxxvi.

¹⁶⁹ H. L. Mansel, *Prolegomena Logica*, p. 144.

individual minds; individual minds did not cause social developments. As Noel Annan has observed, ‘Stephen concluded that... impersonal forces of history, not ideas, changed men’s minds’.¹⁷¹ As such, society was the progenitor of ideas. In this, Stephen resembled Spencer, since both believed that the theory of evolution would reveal ‘how societies change their structure’.¹⁷² Individual freedom was replaced by a deterministic vision of impersonal biological and sociological necessary causes.

Spencer... was the apogee of the mechanist philosopher. Everything could be explained in terms of force and by the law of conservation of energy all change could be shown to be a process in which less complicated systems gave way to more complicated systems... Brick by brick he constructed his Synthetic Philosophy to demonstrate how animate and inanimate matter, the individual and society, were related to each other and governed by the same laws.¹⁷³

Spencer believed that, ‘an individual human being was primarily a biological unit whose behaviour and feelings were modified by evolution’.¹⁷⁴ ‘When the autonomous individual did make an occasional appearance in Spencer’s writings it was as a biological unit of the human species that was necessarily sacrificed during evolution.’¹⁷⁵ For Spencer, importantly, religion was seen simply to ‘reflect the social structural arrangements of a society’.¹⁷⁶ In this, he too was close to Marx, the

¹⁷⁰ S. Bergmann, *God in Context: A Survey of Contextual Theology* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), p. 5 and p. 8.

¹⁷¹ N. Annan, *The Godless Victorian*, p. 231.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 293.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 208.

¹⁷⁴ M. Francis, *Herbert Spencer*, p. 12.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 258.

¹⁷⁶ J. H. Turner, *Herbert Spencer: A Renewed Appreciation* (Beverly Hills, California: SAGE Publications, 1985), p. 141.

inspiration for aspects of modern contextual theology.¹⁷⁷ The question is, to what extent does the adoption of a contextual theological approach, including the notion that every theology is always necessarily determined by social context, represent the secret adoption of an essentially Spencerian methodological approach to Mansel? The adoption of such an approach would not do justice to Mansel's own worldview.

Quite clearly, it is appropriate to reject the socially deterministic aspects of Bergmann's analysis and definition of contextual theology in this thesis, and instead adopt a softer vision of what contextual theology entails. At one point Bergmann himself states that contextual theology implies 'a sensitivity for and consciousness of the importance of... social and cultural connections' in theology.¹⁷⁸ Taken in isolation from his other definitions of contextual theology, this statement does not itself imply any belief in the deterministic aspects of the sociology of knowledge, and allows for a broader, more open approach to contextual theology.

Rejecting any social-determinist approach to my contextual study of Mansel, I believe it is important for my work to be informed by the concept of individual freedom. I must therefore adopt an historiographical methodology appropriate to this task. As such, I agree with Herbert Butterfield's principle that, 'history deals with the drama of human life as the affair of individual personalities, possessing self-consciousness, intellect, and freedom'.¹⁷⁹ Significantly, Butterfield wrote these words because he thought they expressed something about *Christian* interpretations of history, and it is appropriate to take just such an approach to Mansel as a Christian philosopher-

¹⁷⁷ See especially the first chapter of the *German Ideology*, reproduced in R. Boccock and K. Thompson, *Religion and Ideology* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), pp. 12-14.

¹⁷⁸ S. Bergmann, *God in Context: A Survey of Contextual Theology*, p. 5.

¹⁷⁹ H. Butterfield, *Christianity and History* (New York: Scribner's, 1950), p. 26.

theologian for whom free will was a sacrosanct idea. In this respect, I am allowing Christian doctrine to inform my historical method. As such, this thesis may be viewed as an exercise in historical and contextual *theology*. I am not pretending to write a “neutral” or “objective” account; neither am I being wilfully prejudiced. I am simply bringing particular presuppositions about free will and personal responsibility into play when interpreting the sources. The particular presuppositions selected are simply those which Mansel himself seems to have held, and inevitably arise when reading and interpreting his thought critically. Of course, this means I am adopting a hermeneutic approach to history, similar to that used by John Gibbins in his study of the Victorian philosopher, John Grote (a contemporary critic of Mansel). As Gibbins argues in his detailed discussion of methodology, ‘understanding of a text requires an examination of the mind of its author; its meaning lies, if anywhere, in the author’s purposes, aims and intentions’.¹⁸⁰ Gibbins draws on the work of R. G. Collingwood to inform his approach, and I have decided to adopt similar methodological principles. Moving beyond Gibbins, however, I argue that Collingwood’s philosophy of history should be adopted when understanding Mansel because his work shows promising affinities with this subject matter, and allow for an especially meaningful interpretation of his thought. There are a number of reasons for this, which demand explanation.

First, Collingwood knew Mansel’s work and had even attempted his own reconstruction of Mansel’s philosophical purposes, aims, and intentions. In Collingwood’s view, Mansel was ‘obviously trying to rewrite the *Critique of Pure Reason* and solve the problems of metaphysics from the point of view of a philosophy

¹⁸⁰ J. Gibbins, *John Grote*, p. 6.

of the human mind in the style of Hume or Reid'.¹⁸¹ (If Collingwood is taken to mean that Mansel was a Reidian critic of Kant, then there is some merit in his observation; it should be clarified, however, that Mansel's interpretation of Reid was informed by Anglican theology, Jacobi and early personalism, and that Collingwood neglects these influences). Although Collingwood interpreted Mansel in light of F. H. Bradley's idealism, and criticised him for failing to fulfil the requirements of later idealist philosophy, there is good reason to suppose that Mansel nevertheless provided a spur to Collingwood's thought. The title of Collingwood's 1928 essay, 'The Limits of Historical Knowledge', appears to be a play on Mansel's *The Limits of Religious Thought*, and represents a discussion of what might happen if the historian understood "the past" as Mansel (or at least a Kantianised version of Mansel, lacking Mansel's theistic personalism) understood God.¹⁸² What the past is to the historian, God is to the theologian: not a present object, the Unknown. Collingwood himself attempted to

¹⁸¹ R. G. Collingwood, 'The Metaphysics of F. H. Bradley: An Essay on "Appearance and Reality"' in J. Connelly and G. D'Oro (eds.), *An Essay on Philosophical Method*, revised edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), pp. 227-252, here citing p. 235.

¹⁸² For instance, see Collingwood's remarks on historical scepticism which are expressed in Kantian or Manselian terms: "What really happened" in this sense of the phrase is simply the thing in itself, the thing defined as out of all relation to the knower of it, not only unknown but unknowable... There is a permanent tendency in all thought – it is sometimes called the plain man's realism – to think of the object as a "thing in itself," a thing out of all relation to the knowledge of it... The past simply as past is wholly unknowable... The discovery that the past as such is unknowable is the scepticism which is the permanent and necessary counterpart of the plain man's realism'. R. G. Collingwood, 'The Limits of Historical Knowledge' in *Essays in the Philosophy of History* (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1976), pp. 90-103, here citing pp. 99-100. Collingwood appears to have continued to have been haunted by Mansel in his later work, *The Idea of History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), which includes remarks critical of the idea that 'religion lives either below or above the limits of reflective thought' – an obvious allusion to Mansel (p. 315). Echoing standard idealist criticisms of Mansel, Collingwood here stated that 'The task of religious thought... is to find the relation between [the] two opposed conceptions of myself as finite and God as infinite. The absence of any definite relation, the mere difference of the two, is the problem and torment of the religious mind' (p. 314). As for other idealists, Collingwood clearly imagined that this relation must necessarily be conceptual; he fails to recognise that Mansel thought that this relation was interpersonal, established in the I-Thou relationship of prayer with a God other to the self and other to the self's own concepts. The advantage of Mansel's theistic personalism over Collingwood's idealism is that it preserved the otherness and mysteriousness of God. Collingwood's idealism might be said to risk a potential tendency towards an absolute conceptual unity of divinity and humanity (as found in other idealists), whereas Mansel preserves a dialectical difference between the divine and the human, or what Kierkegaard called the infinite qualitative distinction between God and man. For the dialogical theistic personalist, 'I and Thou stand, as it were, over against each other' (E. B. Pusey, *Sermons for the Church's Seasons*, p. 79-80).

solve this problem in the philosophy of history by developing his own hermeneutic approach.

What the historian wants is a real present. He wants a real world around him (not, of course, a world of things in themselves, unknown and unknowable, but a world of things seen and heard, felt and described); and he wants to be able to see this world as the living successor of an unreal, a dead and perished, past. He wants to reconstruct in his mind the process by which *his* world – the world in those of its aspects which at this particular moment impress themselves on *him* – has come to be what it is... He is trying to know the past; not the past as it was in itself – for that is not only non-existent but unknowable into the bargain – but the past as it appears from its traces in this present: the past of *his* world, or *his* past, the past which is the proper object of *his* historical researches.¹⁸³

This hermeneutic approach to the problem of history means that the historian's present beliefs inform her interpretation of the past. If the historian believes herself to be a free agent, she may believe Mansel to have been a free agent; if the historian believes herself to be determined by social and material causes in her environmental context, she may believe Mansel to have been determined by such factors. As Collingwood explained in his discussion of history and freedom, 'The discovery that the men whose actions he studies are... free is a discovery which every historian makes as soon as he... discovers his own freedom'. As such, 'It is simultaneously with this discovery of his own freedom as historian that he discovers the freedom of

¹⁸³ R. G. Collingwood, 'Limits of Historical Knowledge', pp. 101-02.

man as an historical agent... free from the domination of natural science... free from the domination of nature'.¹⁸⁴ If human beings are free, they are not determined by the world, but choose in freedom how to respond to the world. 'It makes no difference to the historian, as an historian, that there should be no food in a poor man's house'; what matters is reconstructing and understanding what the poor man 'thought of that fact'.¹⁸⁵ 'All history is the history of thought; and when an historian says that a man is in a certain situation this is the same as saying that he thinks he is in this situation. The hard facts of the situation, which it is so important for him to face, are the hard facts of the way in which he conceives the situation'.¹⁸⁶ Mansel believed himself to be free, and he believed his freedom had been granted him by the free grace of God; failure to grasp this point amounts to a failure of understanding Mansel.

When placing Mansel in historical context, then, it is important, as Kitson Clark observed, to be aware that 'what men think about their eternal destiny necessarily and profoundly affects their actions in temporal affairs'.¹⁸⁷ Theology informed his politics, and his political views cannot be understood without taking his religious beliefs seriously. Methodologically, therefore, I must necessarily resist the tendency to reduce religion to politics, a tendency that has haunted some writing on politics and religion after Marx, Spencer, and Durkheim. Hegel observed that primitive cultures constructed ideas of God with reference to their patriarchal tribal leaders: 'They formed their conception of him on the model of the master they knew, the fathers and chiefs of families'. He also noted that the same was equally true in the nineteenth century: 'the ideas of the majority of men in our times of renowned enlightenment are

¹⁸⁴ R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, p. 318.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 315-16.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 317.

¹⁸⁷ G. Kitson Clark, *The English Inheritance* (London: SCM, 1950), p. 10.

no differently constituted'.¹⁸⁸ Karl Marx thought the critical analysis of religion was the historical basis of ideological criticism. Religion came to be seen as nothing but human politics. He wrote, 'the criticism of Heaven turns into the criticism of Earth, the *criticism of religion* into the *criticism of law*, and the *criticism of theology* into the *criticism of politics*'.¹⁸⁹ For Mansel's own intellectual nemesis, Herbert Spencer, 'the origin and subsequent evolution of religion [was] intimately connected to societal social structure'.¹⁹⁰ Spencer's analysis represented 'a political interpretation of religion' in which the 'nature of the religious pantheon and the organization of priests mirror the more general social structure of society'.¹⁹¹ Similarly, for Durkheim, God was 'a figurative expression of... society'. The Divine was only society transfigured and thought of symbolically.¹⁹² For the sociologists, theology was interpreted as a masked representation of political power, and nothing besides. In their views, political leaders exploited religious language in order to reinforce their own positions, or to manipulate religious groups in order to secure greater power. Such sociologists were religious reductionists.

Such reductive interpretations of religion were deployed against Disraeli's Tories in Mansel's lifetime. When Disraeli emerged victorious in the 1868 General Election, Engels himself wrote to Marx, 'The parson has shown unexpected power... if any party has gained strength from the new votes it is the Tories'.¹⁹³ The question of the relationship of religion and power was, therefore, particularly acute in Mansel's day,

¹⁸⁸ G. W. F. Hegel, cited in H. S. Harris, *Hegel's Development: Towards the Sunlight, 1770-1801* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), pp. 31-2.

¹⁸⁹ K. Marx, 'Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law', in K. Marx and F. Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. III (London: International Publishers, 1975), pp. 174-5.

¹⁹⁰ J. Turner, *Herbert Spencer: A Renewed Appreciation*, p. 138.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

¹⁹² E. Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1915), p. 258; E. Durkheim, *Sociologie et Philosophie* (Paris, 1979), p. 75.

and social commentators recognised and acknowledged the fact. Simultaneously, however, people like Mansel genuinely believed in the truth of the Christian religion, and this fact cannot be ignored. Mansel freely “bought into” the Tories defence of the religious and political establishment of the Church of England *as a religious idea*. He believed in it – or, as sociologists of religion might say, showed an ‘elective affinity’ for this particular cultural expression of ‘patterns of belief and value’.¹⁹⁴

To do justice to Mansel’s beliefs, I will avoid any reduction of religion to politics, whilst maintaining the idea that religion informs politics. I take the view that Victorian religion was both genuinely sincere and profoundly political. The two ideas were intimately related, but this in no way meant that the religious beliefs of Victorians can be reduced to politics alone. Real belief in God led people to adopt particular political positions, and this factor of Victorian life found articulate expression in Disraeli’s use of the phrase ‘political religionism’ (discussed in Chapter II, below) to encapsulate the reality of the British religious and political experience. This dimension of Victorian thought has often been remarked upon. Thus, Paul Tillich observed that in the nineteenth century, ‘The Anglican Church put its main emphasis on... questions of political structure and ethical consequences. This [was] its genius, its greatness’.¹⁹⁵ For George Santayana, the Church of England was the primary example of what he meant by ‘political religion’. ‘It is genuinely religious, but the

¹⁹³ Cited in P. Adelman, *Gladstone, Disraeli and Later Victorian Politics* (Harlow: Longman, 1983), p. 82.

¹⁹⁴ R. Boccock and K. Thompson (eds.), *Religion and Ideology*, p. 4 and p. 8.

¹⁹⁵ P. Tillich, *Perspectives on Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Protestant Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1967), p. 6.

occasions that stir the heart and the hopes that it nurses are not only earthly but intensely political'.¹⁹⁶

In summary, I will not view Mansel's thought simply as a development of ideas (that is, as a topic in the history of ideas, or the history of philosophy), but be attentive to the socio-political reality which informed his life and to which he reacted as a free agent. Further, as an historical exercise, my argument will resist religious reductionism, and allow Mansel's beliefs as I have reconstructed them to inform my treatment of his life and thought. To this extent, it is necessary to view this thesis as an exercise in historical and contextual *theology*. I will allow Christian doctrine to inform my historical method, and will focus on seeking to understand the type of reasoning that led Mansel to make particular commitments, theological, as well as political. Thus, if Mansel thought Maurice unconvincing or Mill unsatisfactory, not for analytical or philosophical reasons, but because he thought they inadequately represented his own beliefs on the truth of the Christian religion, or indeed alternative religions, then this is what needs to be brought to light in order to understand his thought. Mansel believed Christianity to be true. If the reason why Mansel thought and acted in particular ways was because he believed in the truth of the Christian religion, it is – as Collingwood would say – 'folly' for the historian not to accept this fact. If 'the modern historian' disbelieves in Christianity, 'that too is only a belief he has accepted in precisely the same way'.¹⁹⁷

This means I will seek to place Mansel's theology in the context of nineteenth century thought and politics, *and under the truth of Christian revelation*. Whilst viewing

¹⁹⁶ G. Santayana, 'Political Religion' in *The Birth of Reason and Other Essays* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), pp. 90-100, here citing p. 99.

theological questions in their socio-political context, and refusing to view them as abstract theological arguments in isolation from historical events, I will nevertheless allow that Mansel explored such questions because of his commitment to Christian truth. Occasionally, this means I will make expository remarks on Christian doctrine in order to explicate Mansel's position. These should not be taken as digressions from the historical or philosophical task, but as a necessary aspect of seeking to understand Mansel. Only by paying proper attention to Christian doctrine can we hope to provide a coherent account of his life and thought. This study is therefore open to synchronic approaches to Christian doctrine, inasmuch as this allows the identification of comparable elucidating examples of theologies similar to Mansel's: revelation-centred, fideistic, and emphasising Divine and human freedom. This allows, for instance, reference to Karl Barth's theology insofar as Barth was a representative of theological views akin to Mansel's. This same principle rules out the approach taken by some scholars (for instance, Karl-Dieter Ulke and Bernard Lightman) which allows philosophical agnostics like Spencer or Huxley to set the agenda when seeking to understand Mansel. If one wants to understand Mansel, it must be remembered that he was a Christian. One must take seriously Mansel's belief in the living God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Structure

The structure used below has been deliberately adopted for two reasons. First, it fulfils 'the methodological prerequisite of providing a historical reconstruction before providing an analytic [in this case, primarily theological]... reconstruction'.¹⁹⁸

Second, because of the demands of contextual historiography, it has been important to

¹⁹⁷ R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, pp. 317-18.

¹⁹⁸ J. Gibbins, *John Grote*, p. 15.

follow a broadly chronological sequence in my narrative, whilst nevertheless allowing particular points of synchronic analysis to further the elucidation and elaboration of key themes and ideas. The broad narrative journey will begin with a general biography (and intellectual biography) of Mansel. This will proceed to an analysis of the political context of his life and ideas, and an analysis of the religious aspects of Toryism in the relevant period. I will then move to discussion of the two key political events that provided the historical setting and motivation for the two major literary controversies of Mansel's life: the theological controversy with Maurice, and the philosophical controversy with Mill. In brief, I take the controversy with Maurice to be an expression of the tensions caused by the 1859 Parliamentary Election at Oxford, and I take the controversy with Mill to be an expression of the tensions caused by the 1865 General Election. These two election events provide the context for the development and reception of Mansel's theological and philosophical work, and provide the historical key for unlocking and understanding his intentions and motivations at the time, and the intentions and motivations of his intellectual opponents. I have deliberately concentrated on these events because they provide a particularly sharp focus on the central theme of this thesis, an analysis of the relationship of politics and theology in Mansel's work, and reveal the significance of context to the development and expression of his thought.

Chapter I provides a biographical account of Mansel's life, including details of his family's hitherto unnoticed and unexamined relationship with Herbert Spencer in the early 1840s (a relationship which would later haunt both men and affect their literary decisions as philosophical authors). I also place Mansel in the intellectual and cultural context of mid-Victorian Oxford. Chapter II explores the historic roots of Mansel's

thought, paying particular attention to the Jacobian and Hamiltonian philosophical tradition that he elected to adopt. Mansel will be placed ‘within the shared understandings of [this] group [and] tradition, in the... cultural context of his time, and in [this] tradition of thought through time’.¹⁹⁹ Chapter III will provide a summary of Mansel’s thought, interpreting and reconstructing him as a theistic personalist. This chapter contains the philosophical and theological core of my study of Mansel, and analyses his “I-Thou” dialogical personalism with reference to key issues of free will, negative theology, and prayer. Further exploring the context of his thought, in Chapter IV, I will examine the initial reception and criticism of his work, showing how his contemporary readers interpreted him in the context of mid-Victorian philosophy and theology. In this chapter I will examine Mansel’s influence on J. H. Newman’s *Grammar of Assent*. I will also explore how he was mis-read by agnostics like Herbert Spencer and indicate ways in which he provided motivation for the reactive development of British Idealism.

Chapter V provides an analysis of Mansel’s political relationships, his partisan Toryism, and his connections with Disraeli, Carnarvon, Salisbury, and others. I shall explore his antipathy towards Gladstone and his role in the Oxford Election of 1859. I will provide a detailed account of important aspects of Mansel’s correspondence with Lord Carnarvon, drawing on previously unexamined and unpublished archive material. This will provide a particularly rich account of Mansel’s engagement with the high Tory tradition that subsequently dominated Conservative leadership in the late Victorian period.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 6.

Chapter VI examines the controversy with Maurice that occurred during the 1859 Election at Oxford described in the previous chapter. I will explore Maurice's criticisms of Mansel with reference to Maurice's own political commitments to Liberalism, and his connections with Carlyle and Gladstone. I will elucidate Mansel's response to Maurice with reference to Mansel's suspicions that Maurice's unorthodox theology was rooted in intellectual debts to German Idealism received via Carlyle. Maurice's heterodoxy centred on his Idealist claim for knowledge of God (which, for Mansel, amounted to the heresy of Gnosticism). Such knowledge was tied to a Carlylean doctrine of certitude in religion which Mansel sought to avoid in favour of the freedom of faith.

In Chapter VII I move on to discussion of how the 1865 General Election provided the context for Mansel's controversy with John Stuart Mill. Once again, criticisms of Mansel were expressions of allegiance to Gladstonian Liberalism, and the debate was motivated by partisan political commitments. On a deeper level, the debate hinged and turned on the religious commitments of Mill and Mansel. Mill's commitment to the Religion of Humanity, a substitute religion promoting an irrational belief in inevitable, necessary progress, clashed with Mansel's principled commitment to Conservative Anglicanism. Mill's religion tended towards a deterministic vision of the universe which diminished individual free will. Once again, Mansel's commitment to the theological idea of free will represented the crux of his disagreement with Mill.

I conclude with a brief summary of the key findings of the thesis, some remarks on how Mansel's reputation has been sidelined, and the potential of the attempt to

recover Mansel as a genuine theological voice anticipating the twentieth century theology of Karl Barth. Displaced from his context, Mansel is revealed to have been ahead of his time as a theologian, promising fruitful recovery as a key Anglican theologian.

Chapter I: Mansel's Theological and Philosophical Ideas in Context:

Biographical Account of Mansel's Life and Work

Family Background

Henry Longueville Mansel was born at Cosgrove in Northamptonshire on the 6th October, 1820, the fourth of eight children, all but two being daughters. As the first son, Mansel was named after his father, the Reverend Henry Longueville Mansel senior (1785-1835), an archetypal country clergyman, and rector of the parish of Cosgrove. H. L. Mansel senior's eldest brother, Captain John Christopher Mansel, had pursued a career as an army officer before becoming the squire of the same parish, and was resident at the family estate of Cosgrove Hall. The Mansels thus fulfilled the familiar stereotype of a Georgian gentry squirearchy, dominating the village as both landowners and churchmen. Meanwhile, two other brothers had served as naval officers: Admiral Robert Mansel commanded HMS Penguin in combat with the French in 1800, and Captain George Mansel died in passage from India in 1808. Their father, Major-General John Mansel (1741-94), had himself achieved distinction in the army, dying in battle in the Flanders Campaign against Revolutionary France. The strong military identity of the family, expressed in service in the army and navy, may not have brought the Mansels extraordinary wealth or aristocratic title, but nevertheless set them definitively within the scope of minor gentry respectability. They encapsulated the traditions of pre-industrial England, adhered to a conservative vision of life, and were loyal to Church and King.

Mansel's father married Maria Margaret Moorsom (1795-1877) in 1815. Burgon attributed to her the 'clearness of understanding', 'quickness of judgment',

‘extraordinary memory’, ‘firm will’, and ‘strong affection’, which Mansel inherited, and she evidently paid close attention to her eldest son’s early education.¹ Her father – Mansel’s maternal grandfather – was Admiral Robert Moorsom (1760-1835), commander of HMS *Revenge* in the Battle of Trafalgar, MP for Queenborough from 1812-1820, and Commander-in-Chief of Chatham Docks. In 1825, when Mansel was just five years old, Admiral Moorsom retired to Cosgrove Priory in order to live near his daughter and her family. From this point, the Mansel and Moorsom families became increasingly close, and this must have had an important personal influence on the young boy. In 1832, Maria’s younger brother, Captain William Scarth Moorsom, who was recently married, joined them. He resided with Admiral Moorsom at Cosgrove Priory for three years, and would later take one of his nieces, Mansel’s sister Katherine, into his household.

According to Burgon, ‘certain obstacles’ (presumably financial) prevented the young Mansel from attending Eton. H. L. Mansel senior had to make use of an old friendship with Philip Wynter (then President of St John’s, Oxford, but previously Curate of Hardingstone, twelve miles to the north of Cosgrove), in order to make arrangements for his son’s education. Wynter had to make an ‘intervention’ in order to set up the boy’s presentation to Merchant Taylors’ School in London, which Mansel entered on the 29th September, 1830.² He was placed in the House of the Reverend J. W. Bellamy, the Headmaster, alongside the Headmaster’s son, James Bellamy (1819-1909). The two boys became lifelong friends, their careers later intertwining at Oxford.

¹ J. W. Burgon, *Lives of Twelve Good Men* (London: John Murray, 1891), p. 323.

² *Ibid.*, p. 326.

Mansel's settled existence was torn apart in 1835. The Cosgrove Church Register records that the Reverend H. L. Mansel senior was buried on the 10th March, quickly followed by Admiral Robert Moorsom on the 21st April. Maria Mansel lost both husband and father, and this had dramatic consequences for the security and prospects of her children. Moving out of Cosgrove Rectory, Mansel's mother led an unsettled existence for two years, moving to Cheltenham, then Buckingham, and then the village of Emberton. In 1838, she moved to London in order to be near Merchant Taylors' School, where Mansel, and his younger brother Robert were studying. The two boys moved in with their mother, whilst census data reveals that at least some of the sisters (like Katherine) were sent to live with their uncles and aunts. This was a troubled time for the family, but during it Mansel published his first book, a collection of poems entitled *The Demons of the Wind* (1838).³ This work of juvenilia, written in the style of Shelley, Scott and Byron, has a melancholy tone, and cannot be counted a great success. Nevertheless, it indicates aspects of Mansel's own feelings at the time, dwelling on topics of death, grief, and the transitoriness of life. Only the last poem, the hymn-like 'Resurgam', sounded a confident note of religious belief in the resurrection.

As was customary, Merchant Taylors' School led to St John's College, Oxford, where Mansel matriculated on the 11th June, 1839. At St John's, Mansel was accepted as a member of a social group, who shared a common religious and political culture. At the time, the College 'represented to a large extent the attitude of the old High Church party'.⁴ Its President, Philip Wynter, was the old friend of H. L. Mansel senior who had been instrumental in Mansel being sent to Merchant Taylors' several years

³ H. L. Mansel, *The Demons of the Wind and Other Poems* (London: J. W. Southgate, 1838).

⁴ C. E. Mallet, *A History of the University of Oxford*, vol. III (London: Methuen, 1927), p. 395.

earlier. Mansel henceforth became a fully-fledged member of Wynter's network, and was dependent on his patronage. College life was close-knit, its community being drawn from a narrow section of English society that was often closely connected and known to Wynter personally. At St John's, Mansel was joined by many others from his old school, including his particular friend, James Bellamy. Both set about distinguishing themselves at the Oxford Union, cutting their teeth at public speaking.⁵ Otherwise, Mansel dedicated himself to study.

Herbert Spencer and Katherine Mansel

Whilst Mansel was an undergraduate, the railway boom exploded on England. His uncle, Captain William Scarth Moorsom, achieved note as an engineer, working with Robert Stephenson on the London and Birmingham Railway, which passed close by Cosgrove.⁶ By 1840, Captain Moorsom had relocated to the small village of Powick, three miles from Worcester, in order to work on a new line. It was here that he employed a young assistant, born in the same year as Mansel, named Herbert Spencer (1820-1903). The period of employment was brief: Spencer was hired in April 1840, and received three months notice of the termination of his contract in January 1841.⁷ Nevertheless, for this short time the Moorsoms acted as a 'substitute' or 'surrogate' family for Spencer, and time spent in their home proved to be an 'idyll' in comparison to Spencer's earlier experiences of his own 'emotionally damaged family'.⁸ During this period, as census records demonstrate, Mansel's sister, Katherine, went to stay

⁵ Ibid., pp. 372-73.

⁶ M. Chrimes, 'Moorsom, William Scarth' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), online edition: January 2008.

⁷ H. Spencer, *Autobiography*, vol. I (London: Williams and Norgate, 1904), p. 156, and D. Duncan, *Life and Letters of Herbert Spencer* (London: Methuen, 1908), p. 29.

⁸ M. Francis, *Herbert Spencer and the Invention of Modern Life* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2007), p. 40.

with her uncle and aunt at Powick.⁹ She can therefore be revealed to be the hitherto unidentified and unnamed niece, described in Spencer's *Autobiography* as 'intelligent, unconventional, amiable, and in various ways attractive'.¹⁰ Spencer became intimate with Katherine Mansel, and his *Autobiography* implies that he had intended to marry her. The revelation that she was already engaged to an undergraduate at Oxford – presumably one of Mansel's student friends – was deeply upsetting to him. Not long after, Spencer was dismissed by Captain Moorsom, and left Powick for good. The situation also proved awkward and potentially embarrassing to Katherine and her family. She did not marry her Oxford fiancé, and eventually a "safe" husband was found for her. After a period, she 'married her cousin, the squire of the parish of which her father had been rector' – that is, John Christopher Mansel, the son of H. L. Mansel senior's eldest brother.¹¹

A recent biography has suggested that Spencer 'never recovered' from his love for Moorsom's niece: 'He always remained distantly in love with the memory of this young woman'.¹² According to one of Spencer's friends, even after fifty years, it 'seemed that he not only felt more deeply than he would admit, but that he still cherished his illusions about her'.¹³ Spencer's romantic intimacy with Mansel's sister haunted him for the rest of his life. It provided an awkward, deeply personal, context for his later strained interpretation of Mansel's philosophical theology. It also suggests an explanatory framework for understanding his otherwise 'apparently

⁹ National Archives, *Census Returns of England and Wales, 1841*, HO107, 1206, Book 1, Powick, Worcestershire, District 9, Folio 23.11, GSU Roll 464213.

¹⁰ H. Spencer, *Autobiography*, vol. I, pp. 167-70.

¹¹ H. Spencer, *Autobiography*, vol. I, p. 170; J. W. Burgon, *Lives of Twelve Good Men*, p. 323, n. 8; National Archives, *Census Returns of England and Wales, 1861*, RG 9, 927, Folio 22.1 (GSU Roll 542722).

¹² M. Francis, *Herbert Spencer*, p. 29.

¹³ 'Two', *Home Life with Herbert Spencer*, new edition (Bristol: J. W. Arrowsmith, 1911), p. 123.

incongruous' use of Mansel's ideas, and his 'constant brandishing' of the Mansel name in print.¹⁴

Life at Oxford

Back in Oxford, Mansel took a double first at the Easter Examinations of 1843, and was rewarded with a fellowship at St John's. From this time onwards, his primary duty was teaching undergraduates. As was fitting for a college fellow, he was ordained deacon in the Church of England at Christmas 1844. The following year he was ordained priest, and emerged as 'a brilliant type of the teachers and churchmen for whom the University had long been famous'.¹⁵ Mansel quickly established himself as one of the best tutors in the University, and, together with Benjamin Jowett, Mark Pattison, and Richard Congreve, has been credited with pioneering the individual tutorial as part of the Oxford system of education.¹⁶ Tuckwell recorded that Mansel's 'coaching for twelve hours a day' was one of the '[well-founded] myths which sprang up round him and Jowett'.¹⁷ Mark Pattison, no natural ally of Mansel, and already recognised as one of the leaders of the Liberal party at the University, was nevertheless of the opinion that Mansel had helped 'to raise the standard of the philosophical examinations to the present high level'.¹⁸ Early students included Disraeli's biographer, Thomas Edward Keibel, who described him as 'established as the leading science coach at Oxford'. According to Keibel, at this time one of

¹⁴ M. Taylor, 'Spencer, Herbert' in W. Mander and A. P. F. Sell (eds.), *Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century British Philosophers*, vol. 2 (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 2002), pp. 1052-58, here citing p. 1054; M. Francis, *Herbert Spencer*, p. 182.

¹⁵ C. E. Mallet, *History of the University of Oxford*, vol. III, pp. 394-5.

¹⁶ H. S. Jones, *Intellect and Character in Victorian England: Mark Pattison and the Invention of the Don* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 37.

¹⁷ W. Tuckwell, *Reminiscences of Oxford*, second edition (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1907), p. 335.

¹⁸ M. Pattison, 'Oxford Studies' (1855), in H. Nettleship (ed.), *Essays by the Late Mark Pattison*, vol. I (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1889), p. 472.

Mansel's favourite pupils was Edward Palin, who was himself to become a fellow of St John's (and was the great-grandfather of the comedian, Michael Palin).¹⁹

Mansel's first academic publication was his 'Dissertation on the Heads of Predicables' (1847), an examination of themes in the Oxford tradition of Aristotelian logic. This was followed by a textbook on logic, a new edition of Aldrich's *Artis Logicae Rudimenta* (1849), an essay on 'The Philosophy of Language' (1850), and an essay on 'Recent Extensions of Formal Logic' (1851). Mansel's first major work, the *Prolegomena Logica: An Inquiry into the Psychological Character of Logical Processes* appeared in 1851. This book proved to be a new departure in English philosophy, and continued to be influential at Oxford for some years. Walter Pater later praised the work for its 'fascinating precision', and described Mansel as an 'acute philosophical writer... whose works illustrate the literary beauty there may be in closeness, and with obvious repression or economy of a fine rhetorical gift'.²⁰

In 1851 and 1852, Mansel coached the young Lord Carnarvon to a first class in Greats, and thus began a twenty year association with a leading Tory politician. (Meanwhile, Mansel's old friend, James Bellamy, tutored Robert Gascoigne Cecil, later Lord Salisbury, the future titan of Victorian Toryism).²¹ From this time, Mansel can be identified as a partisan Tory voice at Oxford, objecting to Lord John Russell's proposals for university reform. He was selected to represent St John's College in providing evidence for the Oxford University Commission of 1852, and advocated a

¹⁹ T. E. Kebbel, *Lord Beaconsfield and Other Tory Memories* (London: Cassell, 1908), p. 310. Edward Palin named one of his sons Richard Mansel Palin in memory of Mansel. The story of Edward Palin's departure from St John's was the subject of Michael Palin's 1991 film *American Friends*.

²⁰ W. Pater, 'Style' in *Appreciations* (London: Macmillan, 1890), pp. 1-36, here citing p. 18.

²¹ W. C. Costin, *History of St John's College* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 252.

total defence of the existing system with no change.²² Following the Commission, Mansel published his satirical poem, *Phrontisterion; or, Oxford in the 19th Century*, a parody of Aristophanes in which the principal targets were Lord Russell's Whig ministry, their proposals for change at Oxford, and German professors. The *Phrontisterion* achieved Mansel some notoriety, and was still popular with undergraduates in the mid-1860s: Edward Stuart Talbot called it an 'exceedingly clever squib';²³ Thomas Kebbel thought it would be 'remembered as long as his logic';²⁴ George Saintsbury claimed that he had learnt it 'pretty well by heart'.²⁵ In the *Phrontisterion* Mansel was scathing of contemporary German philosophy, and the threat of liberal theology. Scene II, set in Downing Street, has Russell receive a chorus of professors who sing:

Professors we,
From over the sea,
From the land where Professors in plenty be;
And we thrive and we flourish, as well as we may,
In the land which produced one Kant with a K
And many Cants with a C.
Where Hegel taught to his profit and fame,
That something and nothing were one and the same.

A chorus of German theologians enters and sings the following, often quoted lines:

²² A. J. Engel, *From Clergyman to Don: The Rise of the Academic Profession in Nineteenth-Century Oxford* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), p. 39. For Mansel's evidence, see *Oxford University Commission* (London: W. Clowes & Sons, 1852), pp. 19-21 and p. 357.

²³ See E. S. Talbot, *Memories of Early Life* (London: Mowbray, 1924), p. 45.

²⁴ T. E. Kebbel, *Lord Beaconsfield and Other Tory Memories* (London: Cassell, 1908), p. 309.

²⁵ G. Saintsbury, *A Second Scrap Book* (London: Macmillan, 1923), p. 84, n. 1.

Theologians we,
 Deep thinkers and free,
 From the land of the new Divinity;
 Where Strauss shall teach you how Martyrs died
 For a moral idea personified,
 A myth and a symbol, which vulgar sense
 Received for historic evidence.
 Where Feuerbach shews how religion began
 From the deified feelings and wants of man,
 And the Deity owned by the mind reflective,
 Is Human Consciousness made objective.
 Presbyters, bend,
 Bishops, attend;
 The Bible's a myth from beginning to end.
 With a bug, bug, bug, and a hum, hum, hum,
 Hither the true theologians come.²⁶

The next year, 1853, Mansel was writing satirical poems for Disraeli's newspaper, *The Press*, at a time when the publication was still under Disraeli's personal control. Mansel also published a criticism of William Whewell's Kantianism, 'The Limits of Demonstrative Science' (1853). This was followed by his first published criticism of F. D. Maurice, 'Man's Conception of Eternity. An Examination of Mr. Maurice's Theory of a Fixed State Out of Time' (1854). Mansel was also developing his career

²⁶ H. L. Mansel, 'Phrontisterion', in *Letters, Lectures, and Reviews* (London: John Murray, 1873), pp. 395-408, here citing pp. 401-02.

in academic politics. In the elections to the new Hebdomadal Council which took place in October 1854, Mansel was returned as a representative of the college Masters.²⁷ He was to retain this position for many years as a representative of the conservative group, and eventually featured in this capacity in Lewis Carroll's poem, 'The Elections to the Hebdomadal Council' (1866). As Carroll was a fellow conservative, he expressed sympathy for Mansel, and satirised his liberal antagonists.

In 1855, at the age of thirty-five, Mansel became the first Waynflete Professor in Moral and Metaphysical Philosophy. On the 12th March, he had written to Alexander Campbell Fraser in Edinburgh requesting a testimonial in support of his candidature for the Chair, and Campbell Fraser duly responded with a glowing reference.²⁸ Having obtained the position, Mansel delivered his Inaugural Lecture in Magdalen College, on 'Psychology the Test of Moral and Metaphysical Philosophy' (1855). Released from his college fellowship, he married Charlotte Augusta Taylor, third daughter of Daniel Taylor of Clapham Common. Burgon was emphatic in the suggestion that the marriage was happy and loving, though childless. For many years the couple resided at number 86-7, the High Street, immediately surrounded by several of the ancient colleges. Secure in Oxford, Mansel's teaching duties diminished and he turned his time increasingly to writing. The first fruit of his labour was a short study, 'On the Philosophy of Kant' (1856).

Mansel's second major work, *Metaphysics, or the Philosophy of Consciousness Phenomenal and Real* (1857), first appeared as an article in the eighth edition of the

²⁷ E. G. W. Bill, *University Reform in Nineteenth-Century Oxford: A Study of Henry Holford Vaughan 1811-1885* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), pp. 191-92.

²⁸ H. L. Mansel to A. Campbell Fraser, 12th March, 1855 (including draft of Campbell Fraser's testimonial), in National Library of Scotland, Campbell Fraser Archive, Box 16, 23.

Encyclopaedia Britannica. When published in book form, Mansel's *Metaphysics* went through four editions, and sealed his place in the history of English philosophy.

Anthony Quinton has described the text as the first example of a 'recognizably professorial professionalism' in philosophy in England.²⁹ Here was philosophy treated as a serious academic subject rather than as an amateur pursuit. By this time, he had been studying German works '[f]or years', and he began to outstrip his contemporaries in philosophical scholarship.³⁰ Liddon later observed that Mansel had been furnished with 'an intellect of that particular type and quality which is more commonly found among gifted men of Scotch or German blood than among Englishmen'.³¹ Mansel was taking an encyclopaedic and comprehensive approach to his subject at a time when knowledge of German philosophy was still relatively simplistic in England. His private library contained sets of the works of F. C. Baur, Jacob Behmen, Feuerbach, Fichte, Hamann, Hegel, Kant, Lessing, Schelling, Schleiermacher, and others.³² As Caldecott observed, 'Mansel... was a hard reader... of a true metaphysical turn of mind'.³³

On the 19th February, 1858, Mansel wrote to Campbell Fraser to say he was 'running a desperate race against time in the preparation of my Bampton Lectures which I begin to deliver in a fortnight'.³⁴ When he wrote this letter, Mansel had to hand Campbell Fraser's brief work, *Rational Philosophy* (1858), which took an approach to

²⁹ A. Quinton, 'English Philosophy' in T. Honderich (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, new edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 247-52, here citing p. 251.

³⁰ F. Meyrick, *Memories of Life at Oxford* (London: John Murray, 1905), p. 90.

³¹ H. P. Liddon, *The Day of Work* (London: Rivingtons, 1871), p. 8.

³² See St John's College archives, 'Catalogue of the Library of the Reverend H. L. Mansel' (MS 276).

³³ A. Caldecott, *The Philosophy of Religion in England and America* (London: Methuen, 1901), p. 409.

³⁴ H. L. Mansel to A. Campbell Fraser, 19th February, 1858, in National Library of Scotland, Campbell Fraser Archive, Box 16, 23.

philosophical theology comparable to his own.³⁵ Mansel could be confident, therefore, that he was writing a work which developed themes already expressed in Hamiltonian circles in Scotland: his general philosophical scheme was not a radical departure from established traditions of British philosophy, and had important parallels elsewhere. The Lectures, *The Limits of Religious Thought* (1858) were duly delivered from the pulpit of St Mary's, and had an immediate impact. Burgon, who was there to witness events, recalled that the 'interest which Mansel's delivery of his Bampton Lectures excited in Oxford was extraordinary'. He recollected the manner of the delivery, including reference to Mansel's 'expressive features' and 'earnest manner'. St Mary's was filled by those eager to hear the Lectures, and undergraduates of the University were remembered to have been 'attentive and enthusiastic listeners'. Burgon reckoned that the subject matter may have gone completely over many of their heads, but this by no means dampened their enthusiasm for the Lectures.³⁶ William Thomson had also been present, and there exists a second-hand, hostile account of his opinion of them, produced from the perspective of Mansel's liberal opponents: '[Thomson] described the crowded audiences eagerly listening to discourses of which it was certain that at least large portions were wholly unintelligible to the great majority of hearers'. In this account, Thomson also described 'the immense popularity which the lectures were nevertheless acquiring'.³⁷ Even Mansel's detractors were forced to admit that the Lectures were a popular success, and despite Burgon's and Thomson's agreement that many of the undergraduates were bewildered, it is certain that at least some students did imagine

³⁵ Campbell Fraser argued that there were limits to knowledge, that no finite analogies were adequate to represent the Infinite, and, faced with no clear solution to this metaphysical problem, offered 'practical guidance' instead. See A. Campbell Fraser, *Rational Philosophy in History and in System: An Introduction to a Logical and Metaphysical Course* (Edinburgh: Thomas Constable, 1858), pp. 98-9.

³⁶ J. W. Burgon, *Lives of Twelve Good Men*, p. 339.

they understood Mansel's message. John Morley attended the Bampton Lectures and called them the 'famous official reply' of Hamiltonianism to Mill; Frederick Harrison remembered 'Dean Mansel's agnostic dialectics' delivered from the University pulpit'.³⁸ From a much later perspective, Chadwick summarised the broadly contemporary accounts and adjudged that, 'Mansel's delivery was superb'.³⁹ Some leading liberals were left bemused: the response from Benjamin Jowett was jovial and dismissive. Lionel Tollemache remembered meeting Jowett 'in the street after one of Mansel's Bampton Lectures'. Jowett had turned to Tollemache and said, 'How much have you learnt about the unconditional?' According to Tollemache, Jowett 'passed on, laughing, without waiting for a reply'.⁴⁰ Conservatives took the opposite view: according to Burgon, Mansel 'achieved a triumph seldom equalled and never surpassed by any Bampton Lecturer'.⁴¹ Lord Carnarvon was of the opinion that with the Bampton Lectures, Mansel 'stepped at once into the foremost rank of modern Theological writers'. Carnarvon was of the view that the Lectures were the 'origin' of Mansel's 'power beyond the walls of the University'. Carnarvon continued to say that, 'From this time he wielded an influence he never lost'.⁴²

On publication, the first reviews of Mansel's Bampton Lectures were very positive: 'The Times gave the Lectures two enthusiastic reviews; the religious papers, especially the orthodox ones, hailed them'.⁴³ As a consequence, the Lectures gained a

³⁷ F. Maurice, *The Life of Frederick Denison Maurice*, vol. II (London: Macmillan, 1885), p. 333.

³⁸ J. Morley, *Recollections*, vol. I (New York: Macmillan, 1917), p. 8 and pp. 12-13; F. Harrison, *The Creed of a Layman* (London: Macmillan, 1907), p. 15.

³⁹ O. Chadwick, *The Victorian Church*, vol. I (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1966), p. 556.

⁴⁰ L. Tollemache, *Benjamin Jowett: Master of Balliol* (London: Edward Arnold, no date), p. 72.

⁴¹ J. W. Burgon, *Lives of Twelve Good Men*, p. 339.

⁴² Earl of Carnarvon, 'Introduction' in Mansel, *The Gnostic Heresies of the First and Second Centuries* (London: John Murray, 1875), p. x.

⁴³ M. Wolff, 'Victorian Reviewers and Cultural Responsibility' in P. Appleman, W. A. Madden, and M. Wolff (eds.), *1859: Entering an Age of Crisis* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1959), pp. 269-289, p. 276.

large readership (unlike most Bampton Lectures, the *Limits of Religious Thought* was unusual in going through five editions in Britain, one in the United States, and one in Denmark). The readership was not restricted to university dons and clergymen, and Mansel reached an audience beyond the narrow confines of the academy. According to G. M. Young, there was even evidence of a working-class market for Mansel.

Young described how:

...in an out-of-the-way part of Durham, a little voluntary club of artisans and labourers was formed to study Watts 'On the Mind', Locke 'On the Understanding', and Dugald Stewart. Their only possible place of meeting was the country-inn, and here they met every Saturday evening. Hearing that Mansel was bringing out his 'Limits of Religious Thought' (1858) they combined to buy it, and no fewer than ten copies were purchased. This by no means easy work was than discussed by these men, chapter by chapter, for some months.⁴⁴

The next year, 1859, was a critical one for Mansel. Gladstone, then sitting as MP for Oxford as an ex-Tory Peelite, crossed the floor and joined Palmerston's Liberals. The Oxford Tories were incandescent, and a by-election was forced. Mansel was ringleader of the Tory challenge, representing Gladstone's opponent, Lord Chandos, as Chair of his election committee. Although Gladstone defeated Chandos, the by-election provided the immediate context of hostile reviews of Mansel's Bampton Lectures from Gladstone's allies in the Church and academy. F. D. Maurice published a hastily written, rambling attack on Mansel's *Limits of Religious Thought*, entitled

⁴⁴ G. M. Young, *Early Victorian England, 1830-1865*, vol. II (London: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 72.

What is Revelation? (1859). Mansel responded with *An Examination of the Rev. F. D. Maurice's Strictures on the Bampton Lectures of 1858* (1859). Maurice replied by preparing a further book which appeared the following January, *Sequel to the Inquiry, What is Revelation?* (1860). The exchange drew much attention in literary journals and reviews. At the time, at least one journal identified the controversy between Mansel and Maurice as the 'great literary event of the year'.⁴⁵ This remark needs to be set in context: 1859 was an important year in the history of English thought and literature. Darwin published *The Origin Of Species*; Mill published *On Liberty*; Ruskin published *The Two Paths*; George Elliot published *Adam Bede*; Dickens published *A Tale of Two Cities*; Tennyson published *Idylls of the King*. For at least some contemporaries, the controversy between Mansel and Maurice appeared as important as any of these other publications.

Mansel's work rate in 1859 was phenomenal. In addition to the by-election and exchange with Maurice, he also found time for two other publications. His essay on 'Modern German Philosophy' (1859) indicated the extent of his criticism of Idealism, and his continued support for Hamiltonian Realism. This was accompanied by the appearance of the first two volumes of the edition of Hamilton's works he had been editing with the assistance of John Veitch of Edinburgh. The 1859 volumes on metaphysics extended to over 1,000 pages, and the 1860 volumes on logic came in at just under 1,000 pages. These were followed, in 1862, by his revision of Hamilton's edition of the works of Thomas Reid in two volumes. This latter publication, prepared alone without the assistance of Veitch, also extended to over 1,000 pages. Mansel was evidently attempting to secure a legacy for the Reidian and Hamiltonian Scottish

⁴⁵ *Literary Churchman*, V (16th December, 1859), p. 451, cited in M. Wolff, 'Victorian Reviewers and Cultural Responsibility' in P. Appleman, W. A. Madden, M. Wolff (eds.), *1859: Entering an Age of*

Common Sense tradition by revising and republishing volume upon volume of the major works of this philosophical school. The extent of his commitment to this labour should not be underestimated: page for page he published far more as an editor than he did as an author, and he obviously believed it to be a necessary task.

Simultaneously, the controversy over his Bampton Lectures continued. One of the leaders of the Liberal party in the University, Goldwin Smith, attacked Mansel with ‘propagandist zeal’ in an inaugural lecture which ‘dismayed even liberals’.⁴⁶ Goldwin Smith alerted colleagues at Oxford to the fact that Herbert Spencer had drawn on Mansel’s work in *First Principles*. This must have cut too close to the bone. Matthew Arnold found Goldwin Smith looking glum, ‘and no wonder, for he passes his life in the most acrimonious attacking and being attacked... in so small a society as that of Oxford, this sort of thing creates much embarrassment and scandal’.⁴⁷ Mansel’s *Letter to Professor Goldwin Smith* appeared in 1861, followed by the *Second Letter to Professor Goldwin Smith* of 1862. At this time he also wrote the entry on ‘Philosophy’ for the third edition of Kitto’s *Cyclopaedia of Biblical Literature* (1862).

The same year, Bishop William Thomson turned to Mansel for assistance in the fallout over *Essays and Reviews* (1860) – the volume of liberal theology which did so much to disturb Victorian churchmen in the mid-century. Thomson organised an orthodox response, and edited the resulting volume of essays under the title *Aids to Faith* (1862). Mansel wrote the first essay, ‘On Miracles as Evidences of Christianity’, and assisted Thomson in the editorial work for the whole volume. *Aids to Faith* sold well, and demonstrated Thomson’s orthodox credentials in advance of

Crisis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1959), pp. 269-89, here citing p. 275.

⁴⁶ W. R. Ward, *Victorian Oxford* (London: Frank Cass & Co., 1965), p. 212.

⁴⁷ Matthew Arnold to his mother, 6th November, 1861, in C. Lang (ed.), *The Letters of Matthew Arnold*, vol. II (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1997), p. 98.

his elevation to the Archbishopric of York later that year. As for Mansel himself, he was clearly a natural opponent of *Essays and Reviews* and its partisan Liberal authors – Benjamin Jowett, Mark Pattison, and Frederick Temple included. It was understood in the University that it was Mansel who had first christened the authors of *Essays and Reviews* as ‘Septum contra Christum’. When this title was reported in *The Times*, it stuck in the academic imagination.⁴⁸

In 1863, Mansel made his one contribution to the newly invigorated debate on the relationship of religion and science after Darwin. On the 20th February, he preached a sermon in St Mary’s, Oxford, later published under the title, *The Spirit, a Divine Person, to be Worshipped and Glorified* (1863). In a gentle and cautious fashion appropriate to the pulpit, Mansel argued that the language of scripture was ‘adapted to the knowledge and intelligence of the age in which it was written’, and might potentially be reconcilable with ‘new discoveries of science’.⁴⁹ It was important to be aware of ‘questions of interpretation, such as that of the literal or figurative meaning of... words’.⁵⁰ Mansel argued that the Holy Spirit had made a ‘gradual and progressive manifestation of God to man’.⁵¹ The one unambiguous message of the Bible was the doctrine of Divine Personality. The same Holy Spirit who inspired the Scriptures also instructed people in their moral duties and obligations to God, and strengthened the witness of human conscience.⁵²

⁴⁸ L. Tollemache, *Old and Odd Memories* (London: Edward Arnold, 1908), pp. 152-53.

⁴⁹ H. L. Mansel, *The Spirit, a Divine Person, to be Worshipped and Glorified* (Oxford: John Henry and James Parker, 1863), pp. 7-8.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 13. This should not be interpreted to mean that Mansel had started to believe in the Whig theory of progress. In 1845, Newman had argued that ‘The method of revelation observed in Scripture... is... a process of development’. (J. H. Newman, *Development of Christian Doctrine* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1890), p. 64).

⁵² H. L. Mansel, *The Spirit, a Divine Person*, pp. 18-19.

In the wake of the good sales of *Aids to Faith*, William Thomson now set about plans for a further publishing venture, the *Speaker's Commentary* on the Bible.⁵³

Thomson's correspondence shows that Mansel was approached to write commentaries on Matthew and Mark in 1863.⁵⁴ From this point onwards Mansel may have at any time been occupied with this potentially enormous project. It was to be left unfinished at his death.

Otherwise, in 1863, Mansel appears to have taken a break from serious academic writing. His essay on 'Sensation Novels' appeared in the *Quarterly Review* in April, and was followed by 'Modern Spiritualism' in the July issue. Both essays represented the re-emergence of Mansel the satirist, and provided fine examples of his entertaining, irony-laden, sense of humour. In May of that year, Mansel – then a delegate at Oxford University Press – also joined a committee overseeing the publication of a series of educational books, to be known as the "Clarendon Press Series". Much to F. D. Maurice's alarm, his own publisher, Alexander MacMillan, worked with Mansel as an advisor to this committee, and personally recommended new editions of Locke, Butler, and Berkeley.⁵⁵ On the 7th November, 1863, Mansel wrote a letter to Campbell Fraser which outlined the progress of plans for these editions. Campbell Fraser had already been identified as a potential editor for Berkeley, and Mansel reported a conversation he had had some time before with Burgon's brother-in-law, the Reverend Henry John Rose, about the Berkeley manuscripts in Rose's possession: some philosophical pieces, letters and private

⁵³ E. Thomson, *The Life and Letters of William Thomson, Archbishop of York* (London: John Lane The Bodley Head, 1919), pp. 126-27.

⁵⁴ E. Thomson, *The Life and Letter of William Thomson*, pp. 233-38; see also 'Notice' in F. C. Cook (ed.), *Holy Bible with Commentary: New Testament*, vol I, *St. Matthew – St. Mark – St. Luke* (London: John Murray, 1878), p. iii.

papers. Mansel proposed to write to Rose about these manuscripts, but wanted to hear from Campbell Fraser before proceeding with a plan which would allow Rose to be named as editor of the letters which he owned. Clearly, Mansel was key to Campbell Fraser gaining access to the Berkeley manuscripts at Houghton Conquest. On the 19th December, Mansel wrote again to say he would meet Campbell Fraser at Rose's rectory at Houghton Conquest in Bedfordshire. Mansel himself would be staying with Rose until Christmas, and Campbell Fraser was invited to join them. In his *Biographica Philosophica* (1904), Campbell Fraser later recorded his memory of meeting Mansel and Rose, together with Burgon at Houghton Conquest, 'the wit of Mansel and the quaint humour of Burgon mingling in the evening with metaphysical discussion'.⁵⁶

The correspondence also implies that Mansel himself had been suggested as a potential editor of the new editions of both Locke and Butler. He wrote to Campbell Fraser that it would be 'rather premature to regard me as the Editor' of these works. 'My time is so occupied for...two years to come, that I could not promise to do anything at present; and perhaps the Delegates may prefer to make more speedy arrangements. Nothing however can be settled on this point before our next meeting'.⁵⁷ As things turned out, Campbell Fraser's edition of Berkeley, commissioned and facilitated by Mansel, was published by the Clarendon Press in 1871, and subsequently went through several editions. It established Campbell Fraser as a Berkeley scholar, and influenced the development of Scottish Idealism. In the

⁵⁵ P. Sutcliffe, *The Oxford University Press: An Informal History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), pp. 16-26.

⁵⁶ A. Campbell Fraser, *Biographica Philosophica* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1904), p. 192. For Burgon's recollection of the visit to Houghton Conquest to examine Berkeley's manuscripts, see *Lives of Twelve Good Men*, p. 360.

course of time, Campbell Fraser also undertook the work of editing Locke, and his edition of the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* eventually appeared through Oxford University Press in 1894 (it was still in print in 1959). Meanwhile, a Clarendon Press edition of Butler's works was published in 1896, edited by William Gladstone. Had Mansel edited the Clarendon editions of Locke and Butler, his name might subsequently have been best remembered as an historian of philosophy, occupied with the labour of producing definitive editions of major philosophical texts for a mid-Victorian readership. That he did not devote his time to such painstaking scholarship had consequences for the way his career developed.

Although, in 1863, Mansel had suggested that his time would be fully occupied for the next two years, 1864 actually proved another quiet period. He published only three items: an essay on 'Freethinking – Its History and Tendencies' in the July edition of the *Quarterly Review*, a short 'Critical Explanation of the Argument of Butler', which appeared as an appendix to Napier's *Lectures on Butler*, and a sermon, *The Witness of the Church to the Promise of Christ's Coming*, preached in Canterbury Cathedral on St Peter's Day. By this stage, Mansel had become examining chaplain to the Bishop of Peterborough, Francis Jeune. He was also becoming more securely established at Oxford. His books were now being recommended as required reading for undergraduates, and Montagu Burrows advised students that references to the *Prolegomena Logica* and the *Metaphysics* would 'often be found in the Examination Papers' for philosophy. Likewise, Mansel's edition of *Aldrich* was recommended for the logic classes.⁵⁸ William Archibald Spooner was just one undergraduate who later

⁵⁷ H. L. Mansel to A. Campbell Fraser, 7th November, 1863, in National Library of Scotland, Campbell Fraser Archive, Box 16, 23.

⁵⁸ M. Burrows, *Pass and Class: An Oxford Guide-Book*, second edition (Oxford and London: J. H. and James Parker, 1862), p. 145 and p. 150.

recalled reading both the *Prolegomena Logica* and the appendices to *Aldrich* for “Greats” in the 1860s.⁵⁹ In 1864, Lewis Carroll could humorously assert that, ‘M is for [Mansel], our Logic-provider’.⁶⁰

Such successes masked the fact that Mansel had now long been under considerable pressure of work. ‘So continuous a strain on his powers was attended by its inevitable result. It was plain that he must take rest. All saw it: his friends anxiously urged it: the physicians pronounced it absolutely necessary’.⁶¹ The breakdown explains Mansel’s faltering productivity at the time. From Easter 1865 he spent nearly three months recovering in Italy with his wife.

Unfortunately, political events overtook the benefits of recuperation. Mill’s *Examination of Sir William Hamilton’s Philosophy* (1865), which included an attack on Mansel, appeared in the run-up to the General Election of that year. Mill’s candidature for the Westminster constituency provided the immediate context for this work, making it a Gladstonian Liberal swipe at the Oxford Tories. For his part, Mansel was busy with Oxford politics. He became ‘the most conspicuous member’ of Gathorne Hardy’s committee, and helped see the Tories to victory over Gladstone.⁶² Mansel was then free to write his official response to Mill, which first appeared in the *Contemporary Review* in January 1866. It was subsequently published as a book under the title, *The Philosophy of the Conditioned* (1866).

⁵⁹ W. Hayter, *Spooner: A Biography* (London: W. H. Allen, 1977), p. 43. For another example see W. Richmond, ‘Introduction’ in H. S. Holland, *The Philosophy of Faith and the Fourth Gospel* (London: John Murray: 1920), p. 4.

⁶⁰ L. Carroll, ‘Examination Statute’ in *Complete Works* (London: Nonesuch Press, 1939), p. 826.

⁶¹ J. W. Burgon, *Lives of Twelve Good Men*, p. 351.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 356.

On the 2nd May, 1866, Mansel delivered a lecture in Magdalen College attacking Mill's denial of free will and criticising Mill's reduction of persons to objects. The lecture was subsequently published as 'On Utility as a Ground of Moral Obligation' (1866). That same month, Mansel's essay 'Philosophy and Theology' appeared in the *Contemporary Review*. Also in May, Wilberforce's collection of the Oxford Lent Sermons for that year was published. Mansel's sermon, 'The Conflict and Defeat in Eden' was included. Ostensibly dealing with the mystery of evil and the sin of Adam's fall, the sermon provided another implicit attack on Mill. Mill in his *Examination*, like Satan in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, preferred hell to heaven.

At the end of 1866, Lord Derby, the Tory Prime Minister nominated Mansel for the Regius Professorship of Ecclesiastical History.⁶³ He was a controversial choice: he was an academic *philosopher*, not an *historian*.⁶⁴ The appointment was primarily political; it was also a substantial promotion, including a Canonry at Christ Church Cathedral, and a residence at the college. The Reverend Canon Professor H. L. Mansel and his wife duly left their home on the High Street and moved in at Christ Church, remaining there until October 1868. Mansel was now in direct daily contact with students at the most aristocratic of the Oxford Colleges. In Lent 1867 he and Liddon provided pastoral care for the young Marquess of Bute, reputedly the wealthiest man in Britain. Bute, who eventually converted to Roman Catholicism, would later provide the inspiration for the main character in Disraeli's *Lothair*. At the time, however, Mansel was instrumental in helping to postpone this prominent

⁶³ See B. A. Knox, 'Filling the Oxford Chair of Ecclesiastical History, 1866: the Nomination of H. L. Mansel' in *Journal of Religious History*, vol. 5, no. 1, June 1968, pp. 62-70.

⁶⁴ See 'The New Ecclesiastical Appointments' in *The Spectator*, 10th October, 1868, p. 1177.

conversion.⁶⁵ Granted the political importance of the British aristocracy, and the sensitivity of the matter for the Establishment, Mansel's involvement indicates that he was being trusted with particularly delicate pastoral tasks. This is good evidence that he took his role as a Cathedral Canon seriously.

In the Lent term of 1868, Mansel delivered his lectures on Gnosticism, subsequently published as *Gnostic Heresies of the First and Second Centuries* (1875). Mansel's *Gnostic Heresies* provided an historical companion to the philosophical position he had developed ten years before in his Bampton Lectures: God was unknown to philosophical speculation, and any claim to know God speculatively was now revealed to be an heretical departure from the historic teaching of the Church. In addition to lectures, preaching duties continued. Mansel's important sermon, 'Personal Responsibility of Man, as Individually Dealt with by God' was published in the volume of Oxford Lent Sermons for 1868. Later that year, following the death of Bishop Francis Jeune, Mansel preached in Peterborough Cathedral. These two sermons were the last things Mansel published in his lifetime.

Dean of St Paul's

Towards the end of 1868 Disraeli nominated Mansel for the Deanery of St Paul's Cathedral. This position was, at the time, worth £2,000 a year, and was one of the most prominent roles in the Church of England. In his time as Dean, Mansel saw a dynamic team of Cathedral Canons assembled beneath him, including Robert Gregory, Henry Parry Liddon, and J. B. Lightfoot (later Bishop of Durham). Mansel oversaw the beginning of reforms at St Paul's, and devoted his energy to fundraising.

⁶⁵ D. Hunter Blair, *John Patrick, Third Marquess of Bute, 1847-1900: A Memoir* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1921), pp. 45-7.

In one year he managed to raise over £35,000 (approximately £35,000,000 today). His tenure at the Cathedral was, however, short. In July 1871, Mansel took a holiday in Cosgrove, and spent a little time working on a review of Campbell Fraser's newly published edition of Berkeley. These notes were his final intellectual work. On the 30th July, aged just fifty, he died in his sleep.

Mansel's early death deprived mid-Victorian England of one of its most prominent philosophical theologians. Had he lived longer, he may have had the opportunity to set up his own school of thought, and thus wielded wider influence. As it stood, after his death, there continued to be interest in his work and a demand for further publications. Two posthumous volumes of his work saw the light of day. His successor as Waynflete Professor at Oxford, Henry Chandler, edited *Letters, Lectures, and Reviews* in 1873; J. B. Lightfoot – the greatest Biblical scholar Victorian England produced – recognised the value of Mansel's historical work and edited the lectures on *Gnostic Heresies* for publication in 1875. Mansel's *Metaphysics* continued to be in demand and went through its fourth edition in 1883. The Bampton Lectures were translated into Danish by N. Teisen, and published under the title *Grænserne for den religiøse Tænkning* in 1888.

Interest in Mansel's character persisted for some time and featured in a number of biographies, memoirs, and other publications after his death. Some of the personal reminiscences are worth reviewing because they give insight into Mansel's personal characteristics. Frederick Meyrick remembered that 'Mansel was a short bullet-headed man', 'an excellent private tutor', and 'a metaphysician and philosopher of first-rate ability'. He added that Mansel was unusual by having a capacity for

‘enlivening his arguments by a wit which is not always the property of a philosopher’.⁶⁶ Mansel had also gained a reputation as a ‘common-room wit and joker’,⁶⁷ a ‘cocky little horse, full of fun and frolic’⁶⁸ and a ‘Tory leader and arch-jobber’.⁶⁹ Leslie Stephen recorded that he was ‘popular in the common-room, where his brilliant wit and memory, stored with anecdotes and literary knowledge, made him a leader of conversation’.⁷⁰ Stephen also noted that Mansel was ‘invariably cheerful, fond of joining in the amusements of children, and a simple and affectionate companion’.⁷¹ Mansel’s reputation as a common-room entertainer was balanced by the serious side of his personality: Goulburn judged that ‘the fun that was in him was in harness’, and it would be wrong to suppose that he was merely a frivolous figure.⁷² George Saintsbury remembered him as one of the four best preachers in Oxford in the 1860s, alongside the illustrious names of Bishop Wilberforce, Pusey, and Liddon.⁷³ (Mansel was select preacher at Oxford from 1860 to 1862 and again from 1869 to 1871). According to Saintsbury, ‘To listen to Mansel was a logical education, with the better if severer rhetoric serving as play-stuff’.⁷⁴ He recalled that, ‘His lectures and sermons were the greatest things for the intellect, and nearly the greatest for the sense of style, that I ever “heard with ears”’.⁷⁵ In contrast, another student, the young Edward Stuart Talbot (closely associated with the Gladstone family), could make little of Mansel’s ‘cold paradoxes’ – but this was probably because he discounted him for

⁶⁶ F. Meyrick, *Memories of Life at Oxford* (London: John Murray, 1905), p. 90.

⁶⁷ F. Maurice, *Life of Frederick Denison Maurice*, vol. II (London: Macmillan, 1885), p. 334.

⁶⁸ W. Tuckwell, *Reminiscences of Oxford*, second edition (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1907), p. 330.

⁶⁹ M. Pattison, *Memoirs of an Oxford Don* (London: Cassell, 1988), p. 91.

⁷⁰ L. Stephen, ‘Mansel, Henry Longueville’ in *Dictionary of National Biography*, edited by S. Lee, vol. XXXVI (London: Macmillan, 1893), pp. 81-3, here citing p. 82.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

⁷² E. M. Goulburn, *Life of Dean Burgon*, vol. II (London: John Murray, 1892), p. 350.

⁷³ G. Saintsbury, *The Earl of Derby* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1892), p. 2.

⁷⁴ G. Saintsbury, *A Second Scrap Book* (London: Macmillan, 1923), p. 102.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 84, n. 1.

his 'partisan political Toryism'.⁷⁶ Overall, most of the reports of Mansel's personality were positive. The playfulness masked a deeper seriousness. As Caldecott observed, 'Mansel personally... was a man of deep religious character, and had hosts of friends who believed that he was opening out a true way to religious peace in perplexed times'.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ E. S. Talbot, *Memories of Early Life* (London: Mowbray, 1924), p. 45.

⁷⁷ A. Caldecott, *The Philosophy of Religion in England and America*, pp. 409-10.

Chapter II: Mansel's Theological and Philosophical Ideas in Context: Historic Roots of Mansel's Thought

Mansel's thought was not developed in a vacuum. He was influenced by a number of key theologians and philosophers, and it is possible to locate him in a tradition of thought through time, extending back through the Scottish Common Sense tradition to earlier roots in Anglican theology. The idea of standing in an intellectual tradition seems to have been of particular importance to Mansel, who, as a conservative, valued the lessons of the past. Campbell Fraser recorded his memory of a conversation with Mansel, in which he had emphasised the 'conservative elements... that were presupposed in his argument'.¹ Elsewhere, Campbell Fraser also observed that both Hamilton and Mansel were intellectually open to philosophical conservatism, and drew into their systems the 'conservative influence' of what Pascal had called '*la nature*'.² Of course, so much might have been expected of Mansel: an emphasis on the past had been a key element of Tory thought since Burke.³ Predictably, Mansel's liberal critics also understood the general point: as Mill had said, 'the difference between a Tory and a Liberal' was that a Liberal was 'a man who looked forward for his principles of Government, and a Tory one who looked backward for his'.⁴ For Mansel, conservatism was not just political, but philosophical. Belief in human fallibility and the limited nature of human reason had made him sceptical of

¹ A. Campbell Fraser, *Biographia Philosophica* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1904), p. 174.

² A. Campbell Fraser, *Thomas Reid* (Edinburgh: Oliphant Anderson and Ferrier, 1898), pp. 151-52.

³ Compare Mansel's appeal to the conservative elements of human nature with Burke's words in the conclusion to his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790): 'In what I did, I should follow the example of our ancestors... A politic caution, a guarded circumspection, a moral... timidity were among the ruling principles of our forefathers... Not being illuminated with the light... they acted under a strong impression of the ignorance and fallibility of mankind. He that had made them thus fallible, rewarded them for having in their conduct attended to their nature. Let us imitate their caution'. (E. Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (London: Penguin, 1986), pp. 375-76).

⁴ Report on Mill's 1865 election speeches in *The Spectator*, 8th July, 1865, p. 740.

progressive and idealist claims for absolute knowledge; instead, he looked to what history had shown to work, and based his philosophy around critical engagement with the intellectual tradition he had received.⁵

In the following I will describe key features of the thought of figures who made significant contributions to Mansel's philosophical theology. Whilst acknowledging that each of the following figures can be critiqued from different philosophical perspectives, the important task for the present study is to establish the outlines of Mansel's inherited intellectual tradition. Rather than offering an analytical account of a series of philosophical problems, therefore, I will seek to understand the historical basis of Mansel's work. This procedure is in line with Collingwood's historical methodology described in the introduction: all philosophical systems have their critical weak-spots, but they nevertheless remain crucial intellectual facts in the historical situation under consideration.

Bishop Peter Browne (c. 1665-1735)

Mansel's *Limits of Religious Thought* contained as many references to Peter Browne as it did to Kant. This is unsurprising, for Mansel later observed that his Bampton Lectures were written 'when I was fresh from the study' of the controversy between Browne, King, and Berkeley.⁶ (It is revealing that Goldwin Smith could go so far as to claim that King and Browne were 'the real authors' of the Bampton Lectures; Mansel only denied this with the counter-claim that Browne was not an original teacher, but

⁵ For a recent discussion of the importance of inherited historical culture or tradition in conservative philosophy, together with the conservative inheritance of the Augustinian belief in fallibility and non-progress, see J. Gray, *Enlightenment's Wake: Politics and Culture at the Close of the Modern Age* (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 158-65. See also A. Quinton, *The Politics of Imperfection: The Religious and Secular Traditions of Conservative Thought in England from Hooker to Oakeshott* (London: Faber and Faber, 1978).

had only faithfully reproduced the orthodox doctrine of Christian tradition).⁷ It is clear that Browne was an important influence on Mansel, being his primary mediating source for the tradition of negative theology and the analogical use of theological language. Some explanation of Browne and his work is therefore necessary.

Browne, an Anglo-Irish clergyman, was Provost of Trinity College, Dublin, from 1699 to 1710; afterwards, he was Anglican Bishop of Cork and Ross until his death in 1735. Under the theological influence of William King, Archbishop of Dublin (1650-1729), Browne wrote two lengthy books on the analogical knowledge of God. The first of these, entitled *The Procedure, Extent, and Limits of Human Understanding* (1728), probably suggested the title of Mansel's own *Limits of Religious Thought*. The second, *Things Divine and Supernatural Conceived by Analogy with Things Natural and Human* (1733) – more usually known simply as Browne's *Divine Analogy* – extended the argument of the first. Browne held that terms like “wisdom”, “knowledge”, and “goodness”, when used of God, were not wisdom, knowledge, and goodness in any human sense, but words pointing towards mysteries that transcended the limits of human understanding. Browne provided a more nuanced, critically aware version of King's doctrine – as earlier represented in the sermon on *Predestination* (1709) – and occasionally distanced himself from the Archbishop's teaching. Although human language fell short of expressing the hidden, ineffable, reality of God, Divine Grace nevertheless directed religion as a perfect influence on ‘Moral Practice’.⁸ As such, theological language served (in Mansel's terms) as a system of regulative truths. Moreover, Browne held that Revelation was the voluntary act of

⁶ H. L. Mansel, *A Letter to Professor Goldwin Smith* (Oxford: Henry Hammans, 1861), p. 9.

⁷ H. L. Mansel, *A Second Letter to Professor Goldwin Smith* (Oxford: Henry Hammans, 1862), p. 40; G. Smith, *Rational Religion* (Oxford: J. L. Wheeler, 1861), p. 37.

God's free agency, and that it called for a free response from fallen humanity. God freely chose to persuade, not compel humanity, for free will could not be violated.⁹

Just like Mansel, Browne held that free will was sacrosanct.

Browne's *Limits of Human Understanding* was contested by Berkeley in the Fourth Dialogue of *Alciphron* (1732), and again in *The Theory of Vision* (1733). Berkeley's own version of Idealism refused to be confined within the scope of Browne's *Limits*, reaching out after more definite knowledge of God. For later Victorian writers, reading Browne and Berkeley after Mansel's Bampton Lectures, there was a temptation to read Mansel back into the earlier controversy. Thus, Leslie Stephen likened Browne to Mansel in his history of *English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, and Campbell Fraser footnoted references to Mansel in the relevant sections of his edition of Berkeley.¹⁰ The historical parallel was fused into their reading of Berkeley, and made the earlier philosopher's Idealism seem relevant to a contemporary Victorian readership. This was perhaps unfair to Mansel, who added to Browne's negative theology a profound focus on theistic personalism lacking in the earlier author. Crucially, one of the sources of this personalism was derived from Browne's contemporary and fellow Anglican bishop, Joseph Butler, whose own work, whilst emphasising human ignorance of God, contained a stronger emphasis on personal identity and personal relationships.

⁸ P. Browne, *Things Divine and Supernatural Conceived by Analogy with Things Natural and Human* (London: William Innys and Richard Maney, 1733), p. 553.

⁹ P. Browne, *The Procedure, Extent, and Limits of Human Understanding* (London: W. Innys and R. Manby, 1737), chapter 11.

¹⁰ See L. Stephen, *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, vol. I (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1881), p. 114; A. Campbell Fraser (ed.), *The Works of George Berkeley*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1901), p. 179, n. 2 and p. 384, n. 1; A. Campbell Fraser (ed.), *Selections from Berkeley* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1874), pp. 231-32, n. 1.

Bishop Joseph Butler (1692-1752)

J. H. Bernard has argued that Butler must have been aware of the controversy between Browne and Berkeley, and that it had stimulated his own reflection in the *Analogy of Religion* (1736).¹¹ Butler's *Analogy* extended the principles discussed in his earlier volume of *Sermons* (1726), and specifically those central to the fifteenth sermon, 'Upon the Ignorance of Man'. This resulted in the "religious agnosticism" of Butler, 'the avowal of a simple reverence in the presence of the unknown'.¹² As Terence Penelhum has explained, 'A fundamental feature of Butler's apologetic is his persistence in reminding us of the limits of our knowledge and understanding'.¹³ The human mind, frail, fragile and limited, did not have the capacity to apprehend the absolute truth of God. In the reality of human experience, it was not possible to claim certainty of knowledge, only probability. In a famous passage from the *Analogy of Religion*, Butler pointed to the relative and limited qualities of human knowledge in contrast with God's comprehension of absolute truth:

Probable evidence, in its very nature, affords but an imperfect kind of information; and is to be considered as relative only to beings of limited capacities. For nothing which is the possible object of knowledge, whether past, present, or future, can be probable to an infinite Intelligence; since it cannot but be discerned absolutely as it is in itself, certainly true, or certainly false. But to Us, probability is the very guide of life.¹⁴

¹¹ J. H. Bernard (ed.), *The Works of Bishop Butler*, vol. I (London: Macmillan, 1900), p. 50.

¹² D. M. MacKinnon, *A Study in Ethical Theory* (London: A. & C. Black, 1957), p. 200.

¹³ T. Penelhum, 'Butler and Human Ignorance' in C. Cunliffe (ed.), *Joseph Butler's Moral and Religious Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 117-39, here citing p. 117; see also T. Penelhum, *Butler* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), pp. 187-207.

According to Butler, only God had knowledge of any given object ‘as it is in itself’; only God *knew* reality: human knowledge was limited and relative. The language used anticipated Kant’s things-in-themselves, but this did not, of course, make Butler a Kantian.

Mansel’s contemporaries could not fail to see the continuities between Butler and the *Limits of Religious Thought*: even Gladstone acknowledged that Butler was ‘a less logical Mansel’, and that Mansel’s Bampton Lectures could be described as ‘Butler’s *Analogy* writ plain’.¹⁵

Mansel’s own use of Butler was an issue of controversy in the mid-Victorian period; Jane Garnett has provided a thorough account of this topic in an important study of the historical reception of Butlerianism.¹⁶ Mansel himself regarded the Scottish philosopher Sir William Hamilton and Butler as two sides of a coin: Hamilton represented the ‘best theoretical exposition of the limits of human thought’, and Butler represented the ‘best instance of the acknowledgement of those limits in practice’. Hamilton’s metaphysics were complemented by Butler’s ethics, and Mansel believed they could be held together in a single philosophical system. If anything, Butler was a more important religious influence than Hamilton, and Mansel made the explicit claim that ‘sound Religious Philosophy will flourish or fade... according as she perseveres, or neglects, to study the works and cultivate the spirit of... Bishop

¹⁴ J. Butler, ‘Introduction’ to *The Analogy of Religion*, in *Works*, vol. I (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1836), p. 3.

¹⁵ L. Tollemache, *Talks with Mr. Gladstone* (London: Edward Arnold, 1898), p. 26.

¹⁶ Jane Garnett, ‘Bishop Butler and the *Zeitgeist*: Butler and the Development of Christian Moral Philosophy in Victorian Britain’ in Christopher Cunliffe ed., *Joseph Butler’s Moral and Religious Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 63-96.

Butler'.¹⁷ Some of Mansel's supporters argued that he was in fact completing Butler's own work. Thus, Burgon stated that Mansel had 'done for his own generation what Butler did for *his*: and this will some day be universally admitted'.¹⁸ So, too, Arthur West Haddan wrote:

We gladly recognise in Mr. Mansel's work another Chapter of Bishop Butler's great argument ably worked out, - a third Part of the Bishop's immortal work. We find there an Analogy between the phenomena of Philosophy and Theology, applied with a masterly hand both to demolish philosophical objections to the latter, and to establish in both the true limits of the sphere of Reason in dealing with them.¹⁹

It is possible that Mansel's personalism reflected aspects of Butler's broader teaching. Butler's important Dissertation, 'Of Personal Identity' provided a subtle account of personhood – in reaction to Locke – that proved influential on later British philosophers. Butler's idea of 'immaterial personal substance' provided the ground for his broader theories of morality, religion, and knowledge; take away his understanding of personal existence, and the rest of his philosophy would be shaken to its foundations.²⁰ More important in theological terms, however, were Butler's three sermons, the twelfth 'Upon the Love of Our Neighbour', and the thirteenth and fourteenth 'Upon the Love of God'. These sermons, read in order, came immediately before his sermon 'Upon the Ignorance of Man', and thus provided the context for his reflections on negative theology. If God was to be loved, God had to be loved as a

¹⁷ H. L. Mansel, *Limits of Religious Thought*, fifth edition, pp. xlix.

¹⁸ J. W. Burgon, *Lives of Twelve Good Men*, p. 341.

¹⁹ A. W. Haddan, *Remains* (Oxford and London: James Parker, 1876), p. 458.

person. ‘Butler’s apologetic incorporated the fundamental truth that ultimately knowledge of God, like knowledge of human friends, is transcendental’.²¹ As J. H. Bernard observed, ‘love is a condition of knowledge in that sphere also’.²² When Mansel emphasised that God was encountered as a person to a person, he was arguably being consistent with the Butlerian tradition of Anglican thought.

Thomas Reid (1710-1796)

Thomas Reid is best remembered as the initiator of the Scottish Common Sense school of philosophy, which was developed in response to Hume’s scepticism. Reid’s overriding concern was his attempt to overcome what he saw as the weaknesses of philosophy based on rational doubt. Before Hume, Descartes had thought it important to try to doubt everything in order to establish the truth of anything. Having doubted the reality of the external world on the basis that it might be nothing but a dream, he found that he could not doubt his own existence because at least he was thinking: I think therefore I am. But this meant that real existence had to be demonstrated rationally: ideas grounded existence, and existence became a type of idea. Descartes thereby renewed the tradition of Continental Idealism. Unfortunately, Berkeley had begun the process of questioning personal identity itself, doubting the existence of the immaterial self, the “I” on which Descartes had built his system. And after Berkeley, Hume positively wrecked the idea of personal identity by observing that the self was never perceived as an individual thing and might as well just be a bundle of perceptions. European philosophy was left in a quandary: reason could doubt the reality of the external world, and reason could doubt the reality of the self. As such,

²⁰ See B. Tennant, *Conscience, Consciousness and Ethics in Joseph Butler’s Philosophy and Ministry* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2011), p. 112.

²¹ Jane Garnett, ‘Bishop Butler and the Zeitgeist’, p. 93.

²² J. H. Bernard, ‘The Knowledge of God’ in *From Faith to Faith* (London, 1895), pp. 24-28.

Idealism could not rationally demonstrate the certainty of anything. Idealism led to scepticism. Reid tried to approach the problem differently, and developed a doctrine of Realism in opposition to Idealism and scepticism. The response to Hume was much like that of Dr Johnson's: Hume was dared to kick a rock to find out if it was real or not. Whatever stopped him from doing so, it was not reason, but something else. Reid, reacting to Hume, tried to identify what this something else was.

At the same time, however, it is important to remember, as William Davis has recently observed, that the 'rough formulation' of some of Reid's principal doctrines had already been worked out *before* Hume's *Treatise* was published in 1739-40. As a young man, Reid had read Berkeley, but had become concerned that Berkeley's Idealism ended in scepticism. Reid turned to the study of Berkeley's critics, and in 1738 made notes on Browne's *Procedure, Extent, and Limits of Human Understanding*. According to Davis, Browne 'undermined Reid's confidence in Berkeley'. In other words, as far as Reid was concerned, Browne had won the debate with Berkeley and had to be taken seriously: analysis of the limits of thought exposed what was wrong with Idealism.²³ Reid also made notes on Butler's *Analogy* and Dissertation 'On the Nature of Virtue'. From the latter he took Butler's teaching on 'conscience, moral reason, moral sense, or divine reason' and adopted it for his own ends.²⁴ Study of Butler's teaching on personal identity also provided a solution to Berkeley's scepticism on this issue.²⁵ *Before* he had read Hume, then, Reid – the Scottish Presbyterian minister – had engaged positively with Anglican philosophical

²³ W. C. Davis, *Thomas Reid's Ethics: Moral Epistemology on Legal Foundations* (London: Continuum, 2006), p. 27.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 27-28. See also T. Cuneo, 'Reid's Moral Philosophy' in T. Cuneo and Rene Van Woudenberg (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Reid* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 243-66.

theology, and his later philosophy would continue to bear the stamp of Browne and Butler.

Reid's three chief works were *An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense* (1764), the *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (1785), and the *Essays on the Active Powers of the Human Mind* (1788). In them, Reid responded to Hume's scepticism by developing his philosophy of common sense, for which self-evident truths were apprehended by the intuition. In Reid's scheme of intuitionist philosophy, the teachings of common sense could not be doubted.

Reid spoke of common sense as an amorphous body of ill-defined, yet self-evident, principles which guide our judgment in the normal course of life.

They are ill-defined because they are habitual and pervasive; we become aware of them only when they are challenged, as they were by empiricism.

However, once brought to our attention they are seen as the most obvious truths: the self-evident "is the province, and the sole province, of common sense."²⁶

One should not think that Reid was advocating a simplistic anti-rationalist philosophy which refused to allow sceptical reason to question common sense; rather he was attempting to find a path away from scepticism by observing the limits of sceptical reason in the way people actually live their lives. In his *Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense*, Reid shifted his focus away from "rational

²⁵ See M. A. Stewart, 'Reid and Personal Identity: A Study in Sources' in J. Houston (ed.), *Thomas Reid: Context, Influence, Significance* (Edinburgh: Dunedin Academic Press, 2004), pp. 9-28, especially pp. 15-20.

²⁶ J. Coates, *The Claims of Common Sense* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 15.

analysis” of reason, towards “psychological analysis” of how the mind responded to the five senses, indicating that reason was grounded in something other than reason itself. This represented a new methodological approach to the mind. As Kuehn has observed, this approach could not provide the philosopher with ‘*absolute certainty*’; neither was it intended to. Reid ‘had clearly understood that the method of psychological analysis and reliance upon common sense cannot give any ultimate justification... [for] any attempt to supply it would necessarily lead to scepticism’.

For Reid all we can do is *describe* the way in which the mind works, but not show why it necessarily must work in the way in which it does. We can exhibit the kind of principles we rely on, but we cannot show why we have the principles we have. All that can be said is that they are *facts*.²⁷

Reid’s psychological method might not satisfy an Idealist, but it was not intended to. Reid held that Idealism led to scepticism. Instead, the psychological method of Reid’s *Inquiry* consisted of a description of how the simplest constituent elements of the human mind, the five external senses, actually operated. Initially avoiding more complex ideas, Reid made observations on smell, taste, hearing, touch, and seeing. Almost one hundred years later, Mansel was reproducing this method. Indeed, Mansel’s *Metaphysics* represented an attempt to re-write Reid’s *Inquiry* for a mid-Victorian audience. When Mansel wrote, the word “psychology” still held this older, philosophical sense in line with Reid’s general method: “psychology” was defined as ‘the philosophy of the phenomena of consciousness’.²⁸ Mansel followed Reid’s lead closely, covering the same ground of the five senses, applying the same method in an

²⁷ M. Kuehn, *Scottish Common Sense in Germany, 1768-1800* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2004), pp.242.

attempt to solve the problem of scepticism. Likewise, Mansel's *Prolegomena Logica* followed the same course: it carried the distinctly Reidian subtitle, *An Inquiry into the Psychological Character of Logical Processes*.

For Reid himself, this path away from scepticism was informed by a Christian faith, which, like that of Browne and Butler emphasised the limits of human understanding, and the ignorance of man. In many ways, Reid offered a *theological* solution to a *philosophical* problem, and may perhaps be better regarded as a theologian than a philosopher. God, the necessary First Cause of the world, definitely existed but transcended human knowledge. Human life was fundamentally mysterious: human knowledge did not extend far, and there was much of which 'we are perfectly ignorant'. In his recent study of Reid, Nicholas Wolterstorff has drawn attention to the Christian underpinnings of Reid's epistemology, writing of 'Reid's epistemological piety'.

The epistemological piety appropriate to this picture of reality and our place therein will incorporate a blend of humility and active gratitude, says Reid. Humility because we are unable to dispel the darkness... active gratitude, because the power we have is in fact "one of the noblest gifts of God to man"... the most fundamental component of Reidian epistemological piety [is] trust... [This trust is] *rationaly ungrounded*. Yet we are so constituted – or so ruled – that we do in fact trust its reliability. Ungrounded trust, trust without reasons for trusting, that's what is deepest in Reidian piety... According to the Reidian, that's what's deep in the piety of all humanity...

²⁸ H. L. Mansel, *Metaphysics*, p. 33.

acknowledging that fact, and acknowledging the darkness which that fact implies, and not railing against the mystery but accepting it humbly and gratefully.²⁹

Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi (1743-1819)

Manfred Kuehn has convincingly demonstrated Jacobi's reliance on the philosophy of Thomas Reid. In his definitive study of the influence of the Scottish Common Sense school in Germany, Kuehn observed that 'it is beyond doubt that Jacobi's thought is highly dependent on that of Reid'.³⁰ Jacobi had read Reid's *Inquiry* around 1785, and the *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* in 1786. Thereafter, key features of his philosophical writings bore the imprint of Reidianism. Indeed, 'Anyone who knows the works of Reid and his Scottish followers will find little new in Jacobi's epistemology. For it is thoroughly dependent upon Reid not only in its broad outlines but also in many of its details'.³¹ In particular, Jacobi's theory of 'immediate cognition and natural faith is almost identical to Reid's'.³² George Di Giovanni, following Kuehn, has observed that 'Reid's influence on Jacobi should have been obvious to everyone, given the wide acceptance of Scottish common-sense realism in Germany'.³³

In Reid, common sense included those principles 'which the constitution of our nature leads us to believe'.³⁴ In other words, common sense was natural belief. But the

²⁹ N. Wolterstorff, *Thomas Reid and the Story of Epistemology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 260-61.

³⁰ M. Kuehn, *Scottish Common Sense in Germany, 1768-1800*, p. 143.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 165.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 166.

³³ G. Di Giovanni (trans.), 'Introduction' in F. H. Jacobi, *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel 'Allwill'* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), p. 30.

³⁴ T. Reid, *Inquiry into the Human Mind*, 2.6 in Hamilton (ed.), *The Works of Thomas Reid*, vol I, sixth edition (Edinburgh: MacLachlan and Stewart, 1863), p. 108.

source of natural belief was held to be *mysterious*. In some cases – as illustrated by Reid’s discussion of personal identity – *conception* of the immaterial self and *belief* in the immaterial self happened simultaneously, conjured up ‘by a natural kind of magic... we do not know how’.³⁵ Jacobi stressed the “magical” elements of Reid’s philosophy of faith. Thus, in Jacobi, the apprehension of external reality (through either sense or reason) was, as Hamilton later observed, ‘vaguely characterised as *revelations, intuitions, feelings, beliefs, instincts*’. Reid (and Hume) had spoken of belief, but the German word *Glaube* could be employed to mean both belief and faith. Jacobi consciously extended the meaning to also include *Offenbarung*, revelation.³⁶ Thus Jacobi argued that ‘we have a revelation of nature that not only commands, but impels, each and every man *to believe*, and to accept eternal truths through faith’.³⁷ According to Wilhelm von Humboldt, Jacobi had explained to him that, ‘perception occurs, as Reid has said quite correctly, *by a sort of revelation*’.³⁸

Predictably, Jacobi found himself accused of fideism, and religious fanaticism. He denied this, arguing that the alternative, Idealism, led to scepticism. For Jacobi, revelation of reality was immediate. The reality of the existence of external objects, and the reality of the existence of the self, occurred at once.

I experience in one and the same indivisible moment that I exist and that objects external to myself exist; and in this moment my soul is as passive with regard to the object as it is passive with regard to itself. No representation, no

³⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. I, 5.3, p. 122.

³⁶ Sir W. Hamilton (ed.), ‘On the Philosophy of Common Sense’, in *The Works of Thomas Reid*, vol. II, seventh edition, revised by H. L. Mansel (Edinburgh: MacLachlan and Stewart, 1872), pp. 793-94.

³⁷ F. H. Jacobi, ‘Concerning the Doctrine of Spinoza (1785)’ in G. Di Giovanni (ed.), *Jacobi: The Main Philosophical Writings*, p. 231.

³⁸ Cited in M. Kuehn, *Scottish Common Sense in Germany, 1768-1800*, p. 144.

inference mediates this twofold revelation. Nothing in the soul steps between the reality external to the soul and the reality within the soul. Representations are not yet existing; they originate only afterwards in reflection, as shadows of things which were present.³⁹

As Kuehn has observed, ‘For Reid and Jacobi, “sensible revelation” or “inspiration” and “natural belief” or “faith” are indeed only two different sides of one and the same problem’. External reality, and the internal reality of the self, were apprehended together. ‘The reality which reveals itself in external sensation does not need any other witness, since it is itself the strongest witness of all reality’.⁴⁰

If Jacobi held that the “I” and the external world emerged simultaneously, by revelation, so also did the reality of other “Thous”. Indeed, “Thou” and “I” revealed one to the other, together with the world. Jacobi’s revelatory Realism therefore led to personalism.

Through belief we know that we have a body, and that, external to us, there are found other bodies, and other intelligent existences. A truly miraculous [marvellous] revelation! For we have only a sensation (Empfinden) of our body... and... are at the same time, aware or percipient... of – what is wholly different from mere sensation, or a mere thought – we are aware or percipient of other real things, and this too with a certainty, the same as that with which

³⁹ Cited in *Ibid.*, p. 165; Cf. Jacobi, *The Main Philosophical Writings*, p. 277.

⁴⁰ M. Kuehn, *Scottish Common Sense in Germany, 1768-1800*, p. 165.

we are percipient of our own existence; for without a *Thou* an *I* is impossible.⁴¹

Jan Olof Bengtsson has provided a thorough exposition of this aspect of Jacobi's philosophy in his important book, *The Worldview of Personalism*. Bengtsson has drawn attention to Jacobi's use of "I – Thou" language, placing Jacobi at the head of a broad Continental tradition which stretched all the way to Buber and beyond. For Jacobi himself, 'the higher reality in man and beyond him is also a reality of reciprocal relation between the higher human personality and the personal God'.⁴² Common sense, natural belief, was based on revelation, but revelation required a Revealer, a "Thou" who grounded the reality of "I" in personal relationship to Himself. Jacobi's God was transcendent, a Creator distinct from creation, yet engaged in personal relationship with human persons: 'God was another concrete reality... not exhausted by the exclusively human and worldly historical realm'. Further, 'Although Jacobi tends to view God as personal in a sense similar to that in which humans are personal, the "Thou" of God is for him of course also different from the "Thou" of other men'.⁴³ This difference – the "Otherness" of God – was to prove important. Jacobi's theistic personalism was to have a direct influence on Mansel's later writings.

One other key aspect of Jacobi's thought was his emphasis on freedom. If personal relationship grounded reality, and persons were *free*, then freedom was essential to the deep structure of Jacobi's philosophy. Freedom made possible genuine personal

⁴¹ F. H. Jacobi, 'Concerning the Doctrine of Spinoza', first edition (1785), pp. 163-64. Cited by W. Hamilton in 'On the Philosophy of Common Sense', pp. 793-94; Cf. Jacobi, *The Main Philosophical Writings*, p. 231.

⁴² J. O. Bengtsson, *The Worldview of Personalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 73.

relationship (for without freedom, how can relationship be entered into?) It was in freedom that the “Thou” was recognised as an “Other”, relativising and limiting the “I”. In an important passage, Jacobi explained that freedom made one aware of one’s own limits, because freedom enabled one to meet another beyond the self:

the concept of freedom, as a true concept of the unconditioned... makes it necessary for the human soul to strive for a knowledge of the unconditioned that lies beyond the conditioned. Without the consciousness of this concept [of freedom] no one would know about the limitations of the conditioned that they are *limitations; without the positive perception or feeling of reason of something Higher than the world of sense the understanding would never move outside the circle of the conditioned*, and would not even have achieved the *negative* concept of the unconditioned.⁴⁴

Freedom could choose to reach out to the unconditioned, and thus provided the true basis of the reach into the unknown represented by negative theology: no freedom, no negative theology. No freedom, no awareness of limits to attempt to reach beyond.⁴⁵

Sir William Hamilton (1788-1856)

Hamilton has sometimes been considered a kind of Kantian, but this interpretation of his work has been challenged. Thus, Kuehn has argued that Hamilton’s ‘views were

⁴³ Ibid., p. 82.

⁴⁴ Cited in J. O. Bengtsson, *The Worldview of Personalism*, p. 76.

⁴⁵ For a twentieth-century example of a personalist philosophy echoing Jacobi’s argument at this point, see some aspects of E. Levinas’ *Totality and Infinity* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969). Levinas remarked that the ‘idea of Infinity *is revealed*, in the strong sense of the term... Infinity is not the “object” of a cognition (which would be to reduce it to the measure of the gaze that contemplates), but is the desirable, that which arouses Desire, that is, that which is approachable by a thought that at each instant *thinks more than it thinks*’ (p. 62). ‘The strangeness of the Other, his very freedom! Free

far less influenced by Kant than has traditionally been supposed'. Indeed, the 'fundamental features' of his thought 'are better explained' with reference to 'anti-Kantian' philosophy in Germany.⁴⁶ Kuehn convincingly demonstrated that Hamilton's chief debt to German thought was to Jacobi, whom he read as a disciple of Reid. In actual fact, Hamilton's first commitments were always primarily to the Scottish Reidian tradition, and Jacobi was drawn into Hamilton's philosophy as an example of an intelligent champion of Reid's thought. Kuehn was not the first to observe that Hamilton was essentially a Reidian. In 1958, Anthony Quinton had already argued that 'Hamilton's vaunted Kantianism' was 'thoroughly superficial', and that he ought to be placed in the tradition of Reid.⁴⁷ Further, in 1980, Karl-Dieter Ulke had provided a thorough, yet largely ignored, discussion of Hamilton's adoption of Jacobi's criticism of Kant in his study of Victorian agnosticism.⁴⁸ Crucially, there is good evidence that at least some of Hamilton's Victorian contemporaries were aware of Hamilton's debts to Jacobi. John Veitch knew that although Hamilton had taken some technical phraseology from Kant, his 'positive doctrine' actually 'most nearly approached... Jacobi'.⁴⁹ In an article on her father in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Hamilton's own daughter had argued that his philosophy should be associated 'with Jacobi rather than with Kant'.⁵⁰ Even James McCosh, who thought Hamilton owed more to Kant than he actually did, could observe that Jacobi taught Hamilton 'that there was a faith element as well as a rational element in the human

beings alone can be strangers to one another. Their freedom which is "common" to them is precisely what separates them' (pp. 73-4).

⁴⁶ M. Kuehn, 'Hamilton's Reading of Kant' in G. MacDonald Ross and T. McWalter (eds.), *Kant and His Influence* (London: Continuum, 2005), pp. 315-47, here citing p. 317.

⁴⁷ A. Quinton, 'The Neglect of Victorian Philosophy' in *Victorian Studies*, vol. I, no. 3 (March, 1958), pp. 245-54, here citing p. 252.

⁴⁸ K.-D. Ulke, *Agnostisches Denken im Viktorianischen England*, (München: Verlag Karl Alber Freiburg, 1980), pp. 124-46.

⁴⁹ J. Veitch, *Hamilton* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1882), p. 26.

⁵⁰ See A. Caldecott, *The Philosophy of Religion in England and America* (London: Methuen, 1901), p. 406, n. 1.

mind', and that it was to Jacobi that 'we may trace those appeals which Hamilton is ever making to faith, but without specifying what faith is'.⁵¹ These contemporary voices, although not referred to by Kuehn in his discussion of Hamilton, help make his argument all the more compelling and convincing:

Hamilton's view represents a fairly straightforward adaptation of Jacobi's theory of faith and its corresponding critique of Kant. Nor need it be a surprise that Hamilton is so dependent on Jacobi, since the latter was not only one of the most important transitional figures in German philosophy during the period between Kant and Hegel, but also someone who was most deeply influenced by Reid's philosophy. He was one of a small group of anti-rationalist "philosophers of faith" who were more or less orthodox Christians and who thus found themselves in opposition to the ideals of the enlightenment philosophers.⁵²

Nowhere is this seen more clearly than in Hamilton's Dissertation 'On the Philosophy of Common Sense':

But reason itself must rest at last upon authority; for the original data of reason do not rest on reason, but are necessarily accepted by reason on the authority of what is beyond itself... Thus it is, that in the last resort, we must, perforce, philosophically admit, that belief is the primary condition of reason, and not reason the ultimate ground of belief... our knowledge rests ultimately on a testimony which ought to be implicitly believed, however unable we may be

⁵¹ J. McCosh, *The Scottish Philosophy: From Hutcheson to Hamilton* (London: Macmillan, 1875), p. 426.

explicitly to demonstrate, on rational grounds, its credibility... thus... Reid, Stewart... and... most emphatically... Jacobi.⁵³

Hamilton was conscious of Jacobi's intellectual debts to Reid. In his Dissertation 'On the Philosophy of Common Sense', Hamilton observed that 'Reid was an especial favourite with Jacobi; and through Jacobi's powerful polemic we may trace the influence of Scottish philosophy on the whole subsequent speculation of Germany'.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, it appears that Hamilton understood that there were important differences between Reid and Jacobi. As Bengtsson has observed, 'Jacobi differed from Reid in holding that we have immediate knowledge of objects in our perceptions, that our knowledge is not primarily of ideas of objects'.⁵⁵ Hamilton, remaining more faithful to Reid, believed all knowledge of objects to be mediated by mental representations informed by the senses, supported by a mysterious Divine assistance. It is crucial that Hamilton derived this notion primarily from Reid, not Kant. Whereas Kant had suggested there could be no knowledge of things-in-themselves – and was therefore criticised by Jacobi for being an Idealist incapable of apprehending the *reality* of external objects (a position leading to scepticism) – Hamilton's own type of *natural realism* held that we have mediate knowledge of objects, yet also have a mysterious faith in the "realness" of their reality.⁵⁶ Hamiltonian realism therefore allowed knowledge of things to be relative and conditioned, and yet avoided the problem of idealism. Thus, although God, mysterious intuition, faith, rendered the realness of reality, Hamilton was also able to

⁵² M. Kuehn, 'Hamilton's Reading of Kant', p. 338.

⁵³ Sir W. Hamilton (ed.), *The Works of Thomas Reid*, vol. II, 7th edition, pp. 760-61.

⁵⁴ Sir W. Hamilton, 'On the Philosophy of Common Sense' in Sir W. Hamilton (ed.), *The Works of Thomas Reid*, vol. II, 7th edition, p. 793.

⁵⁵ J. O. Bengtsson, *The Worldview of Personalism*, p. 76, n. 34.

develop a theory of the extent to which human knowledge was relative to the knower, conditioned by her own perceptual and mental limitations. Hamilton expounded this doctrine in his ‘Philosophy of the Unconditioned’. Reason could be ‘shown to be weak, but not deceitful’, and ‘by a wonderful revelation... in the very consciousness of our inability to conceive aught above the relative and finite, [we are] inspired with a belief in the existence of something unconditioned beyond the sphere of all comprehensible reality’.⁵⁷

This raises the question of whether Hamilton was a philosopher or a Christian theologian. In ‘On the Philosophy of Common Sense’, Hamilton was explicit that he agreed with Augustine’s dictum, ‘We *know*, what rests upon *reason*; we *believe*, what rests upon *authority*’. Hamilton explained this remark, saying, ‘But reason itself must rest at last upon authority; for the original data of reason do not rest on reason, but are necessarily accepted by reason on the authority of what is beyond itself’. Anticipating Karl Barth’s twentieth-century retrieval of Anselm’s definition of theology as “faith seeking understanding” – *fides quaerens intellectum* – Hamilton argued, ‘We are compelled to surrender the proud *Intellige ut credas* of Abelard, to content ourselves with the humble *Crede ut intelligas* of Anselm’.⁵⁸

In a letter to Henry Calderwood dated 26th September, 1854, Hamilton outlined what might have served as his response to later charges that he was an agnostic:

⁵⁶ For Jacobi’s criticism of Kant, based on Reid’s criticism of Hume, arguing for Realism as opposed to Idealism see M. Kuehn, *Kant: A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 326.

⁵⁷ Sir W. Hamilton, ‘Philosophy of the Unconditioned’, in *Discussions on Philosophy and Literature* (New York: Harper, 1868), p. 22.

⁵⁸ Sir W. Hamilton, ‘On the Philosophy of Common Sense’, p. 760; compare K. Barth, *Fides Quaerens Intellectum* (London: SCM Press, 2012).

the sphere of our belief is much more extensive than the sphere of our knowledge; and, therefore, when I deny that the Infinite can by us be *known*, I am far from denying that by us it is, must, and ought to be, *believed*. This I have indeed anxiously evinced, both by reasoning and authority... Assuredly, I maintain that an infinite God cannot be by us (positively) comprehended. But the Scriptures and all theologians worthy of the name, assert the same. Some indeed of the latter, and, among them, some of the most illustrious Fathers, go the length of asserting, that “an understood God is no God at all,” and that, “if we maintain God to be as we can think that he is, we blaspheme.” Hence the assertion of Augustin: “Deum potius ignorantia quam scientia attingi.” [God is apprehended by ignorance rather than knowledge].⁵⁹

Further, in Hamilton’s ‘Conditions of the Thinkable Systematized’ (which Mansel was to quote at the beginning of the Bampton Lectures), Hamilton drew out the theological dimension of his philosophy.

The philosophy of the Conditioned is indeed pre-eminently a discipline of humility; a “learned ignorance,” directly opposed to the false “knowledge which puffeth up.” I may indeed say with St. Chrysostom:—“The foundation of our philosophy is humility.” —(Homil. de Perf. Evang.) For it is professedly a scientific demonstration of the impossibility of that “wisdom in high matters” which the Apostle prohibits us even to attempt; and it proposes, from the limitation of the human powers, from our impotence to comprehend what, however, we must admit, to show articulately why the “secret things of God”

⁵⁹ Sir W. Hamilton, *Lectures on Metaphysics*, vol. II, eds. H. L. Mansel and J. Veitch (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1859), pp. 530-31.

can not but be to man “past finding out.” Humility thus becomes the cardinal virtue, not only of revelation but of reason. This scheme proves moreover, that no difficulty emerges in theology, which had not previously emerged in philosophy.⁶⁰

These theological themes were to become central to Mansel’s project.

It is possible to establish the fact that Hamilton and Mansel were, for a time, in contact: Hamilton described the young Mansel as ‘a very able logician’ and an ‘ingenious critic’, who had aided him on a point ‘in the history of logic’.⁶¹ After Hamilton’s death in 1856, Mansel was one of his leading disciples in the mid-Victorian period. This was despite the fact that Mansel himself had never attended Hamilton’s lectures in Edinburgh, and was not one of his immediate students. Nevertheless, over the course of his career, Mansel worked closely with two of Hamilton’s old students, John Veitch (1829-94) and Alexander Campbell Fraser (1819-1914); together they can be seen to have comprised a relatively close network of Hamiltonians (as we have seen, Mansel drew on Fraser’s brief work, *Rational Philosophy* (1858) when writing his Bampton Lectures). This Hamiltonian network – a network of both personal friendships and intellectual exchange – provided the immediate context for Mansel’s own work. Mansel was not working in isolation, but was supported by Campbell Fraser, Veitch, and other likeminded Hamiltonians, all of whom shared a broad sympathy for his project.

⁶⁰ Hamilton, *Discussions on Philosophy and Literature* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1868), p. 588.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 129, n., p. 688, and p. 694.

Located in this mid-Victorian context, in a Hamiltonian philosophical network that shared a common commitment to Realism and the common sense tradition, the intentions of Mansel's work become easier to comprehend. As Mansel was located in Oxford rather than Edinburgh, it is unsurprising that he sought to provide a reading of Hamilton which would be accessible to Anglican clergymen in particular. As such, Mansel drew together Butler and Hamilton in the construction of a philosophical theology that emphasised – following Bishop Browne – the limits of human reason. Mansel recovered from the Anglican tradition those Anglican roots that lay behind Reid's Scottish, Presbyterian philosophy, and re-wrote Hamilton for an English readership.

Chapter III: The Content of Mansel's Philosophical Theology

Having drawn the historic intellectual context around Mansel – from Browne and Butler, through Reid and Jacobi, to Hamilton and his students – we can now go on to examine and interpret the positive content of Mansel's philosophical theology.⁶² In the following I will show what Mansel held in common with the intellectual tradition he inherited, and indicate areas where he made a new contribution by placing special emphasis on what I have decided to call his "theistic personalism".⁶³ This term needs some explanation.

In summary, Mansel was a personalist because of the prominence given in his thought to Jacobi's "I – Thou" philosophy; he was a theistic personalist because he insisted that God was Personal, transcendent of the world, yet freely engaging with human

⁶² The term "philosophical theology" is used here only because it was Mansel's own term for the project undertaken in the *Limits of Religious Thought*. In the 'Preface to the First Edition', Mansel described his Lectures as an attempt to show 'what limitations to the construction of a philosophical Theology necessarily exist in the constitution and laws of the human mind' (Fifth Edition, p. xlv). Mansel appears to have used the term interchangeably with 'religious philosophy' (p. 1) and 'philosophy of Religion' (p. 23, and p. 90). On this see K.-D. Ulke, *Agnostisches Denken im Viktorianischen England* (München: Alber, 1980), p. 164, n. 25.

⁶³ Whilst I acknowledge that Mansel himself never used the term "personalism", my use of the term to describe his position is justified by a number of factors. Mansel was interested in "personality" and "person to person" or "*I and Thou*" relationships, and has thus featured in Bengtsson's *Worldview of Personalism*, as an early Victorian forerunner of personalist philosophy. I acknowledge, of course, that "personalism" is not a unified philosophical tradition, but rather a diverse movement extending through philosophers as different as the American personalists, and figures like Martin Buber, and Max Scheler. I follow John F. Crosby, who has defined "personalism" as a philosophy which is 'concerned with the mystery of human persons', particularly with reference to 'how God relates to us'. This distinctive theistic personalism, inspired in Crosby's case by Christian theology, provides a useful framework for approaching Mansel. I will be interpreting Mansel's "personalism" in a manner similar to Crosby's own interpretation of Newman's "personalism", projecting this later category back onto Victorian theological writers. Crosby's own definition of "personalism" is broad:

there is a common denominator to the various personalisms... they are all united in opposing both liberal individualism and collectivism. In other words, all the personalist thinkers resist turning persons into autonomous selves and then detaching them from all bonds of solidarity, and they resist no less the opposite error of absorbing the individual person into the social whole, as if the individual were nothing but a part of the community to which it belongs.

beings in a fundamental interpersonal relationship that grounded all other personal relationships, and gave definition to human personhood. Mansel's theistic personalism was realist: it held that God was a Real Person, free, strange, mysterious, "Other" to the human "I". As such, he criticised Feuerbach's anthropomorphic personalism, which rendered God as a mere idea projected by the human "I". Mansel's realist theistic personalism was, therefore, dialogical (like Buber) and dialectical (like Barth). As God's Real "Otherness" meant that the "I" was not everything, God provided the *limits* of human personhood in order that there might be *relationship* between God and humanity. God was *different*, an independent, transcendent, free person; as such, God was mysterious, unknown, escaping the limits of human speculative and practical reason.

Mansel's theistic personalism has been obscured by descriptions of him as a Kantian. This is very unfortunate. It must be remembered that many of the earliest writers to link Mansel with Kant were partisan liberals and personal opponents who perhaps deliberately wanted him to be misunderstood. It was Herbert Spencer, who, in 1862, labelled Mansel a 'Kantist'.⁶⁴ It was Mansel's opponent in University politics, Mark Pattison, who claimed, in 1885, that Mansel had 'first introduced Kant into Oxford'.⁶⁵ And it was Goldwin Smith who claimed, in 1861, that 'Kant is Mr. Mansel's teacher' (remarks made, it must be remembered, in the course of what Matthew Arnold described as 'a bitter personal attack' on Mansel).⁶⁶ If there was any doubt that

J. F. Crosby, *Personalist Papers* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2004), pp. ix-x and p. 3. See also, J. F. Crosby, *The Personalism of John Henry Newman* (Washington D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2014).

⁶⁴ H. Spencer, *First Principles* (London: Watts & Co., 1937), p. 52.

⁶⁵ M. Pattison, *Memoirs of an Oxford Don* (London: Cassell, 1988), p. 91.

⁶⁶ G. Smith, *Rational Religion and the Rationalistic Objections of the Bampton Lectures for 1858* (Oxford: J. L. Wheeler, 1861), p. 38; C. Y. Lang (ed.), *The Letters of Matthew Arnold*, vol. II, p. 98.

Mansel did *not* regard Kant as his teacher, it ought to have been dispelled in Mansel's own response to Goldwin Smith:

Mr. Smith proceeds to give what he calls "the true pedigree of the Bampton Lectures," which he traces to my having commenced with the principles of Kant, and gone on where he started aside. This pedigree is... erroneous, whether it is intended to represent the history of the doctrines themselves, or the history of their growth in my mind. The theological doctrines, which he regards as a deduction from Kant, existed, as every student of divinity knows, centuries before Kant was born... All that Kant did... was to supply a psychological confirmation of conclusions which had been previously held on metaphysical and theological grounds. With that psychological confirmation I partly agree, partly disagree...but in its own history, as well as in relation to my individual studies, it was the supplement, not the source, of the theological convictions with which it is connected.⁶⁷

Clearly, Mansel refuted the charge that he was a Kantian. Confusingly, this did not prevent the spread of the scholarly myth that he was. T. H. Green (another Liberal) dismissed Mansel for extracting his position 'from Kant', and saw little critical difference between his 'agnosticism' and that of Herbert Spencer.⁶⁸ The caricature of Mansel as a Kantian was reproduced by James McCosh in 1875, and by Pringle-Pattison in 1885.⁶⁹ Problematically, it spread even more extensively in twentieth century scholarship. Thus, in 1967, Don Cupitt described Mansel as an 'ultra-strict

⁶⁷H. L. Mansel, *A Second Letter to Professor Goldwin Smith* (Oxford: Henry Hammans, 1862), pp. 47-8.

⁶⁸T. H. Green, *Works*, vol. 3, p. 128.

Kantian’ (he later offered a more moderate view).⁷⁰ In 1987, Lightman described Mansel as ‘the closest equivalent to Kant which Victorian England could produce’.⁷¹ In 1988, Bernard Reardon suggested that Mansel represented a ‘striking example in England of the use of Kantian “agnosticism”’.⁷² In 2006, L. J. Snyder described Mansel as the ‘closest thing to a British Kantian in those days’.⁷³ A whole tradition of scholarship has overemphasised Mansel’s reliance on Kant, and failed to grasp the fact that Mansel was not a Kantian, but a theistic personalist.

It is important to recall that all along other scholars disagreed with this dominant tradition, and drew more attention to Mansel’s personalism. Mansel’s personal friends and allies knew that the ‘doctrine of *Personality*’ was the ‘central position’ of his philosophy.⁷⁴ On top of this, some of Mansel’s critics *also* acknowledged this dimension of his thought. Comparing Mansel to Spencer in the 1880s, Frederic Harrison observed that, ‘Mansel’s idea of deity is personal, whilst Mr. Spencer’s Energy is not personal. That is strictly accurate’.⁷⁵ Likewise, even whilst describing

⁶⁹ J. McCosh, *The Scottish Philosophy* (London: Macmillan, 1875), p. 292; A. Seth Pringle-Pattison, *Scottish Philosophy* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1907), pp. 180-87.

⁷⁰ D. Cupitt, ‘Mansel Theory of Regulative Truth’ in *Journal of Theological Studies*, vol. 18 (April, 1967), pp. 104-26, here citing p. 110, n. 2. Cupitt returned to the theme of Mansel studies three years later in his essay, ‘Mansel and Maurice on our Knowledge of God’ in *Theology*, vol. 73 (1970), pp. 301-11. D. W. Dockrill responded to Cupitt in 1970 and argued for a strong link between Mansel and the agnostics Spencer, Huxley, and Stephen (‘The Limits of Thought and Regulative Truths’ in *Journal of Theological Studies*, vol. 21, pt. 2 (October, 1970), pp. 370-87). In a third essay on Mansel from 1971, Cupitt was more moderate on the extent of Mansel’s supposed Kantianism: indeed, Mansel was here discussed as a Butlerian. See Cupitt, ‘What was Mansel Trying to do?’ in *The Journal of Theological Studies*, vol. 22 (1971), pp. 544-47. In 1976, Mansel was again discussed in Cupitt’s book *The Leap of Reason* (London: Sheldon Press, 1976), pp. 83-4. According to Gavin Hyman, Cupitt’s own commitment to Kantian epistemology may have inspired his interest in Mansel, and shaped his reading of him. See G. Hyman, *The Predicament of Postmodern Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), p. 45. For further reference, see G. Hyman (ed.), *New Directions in Philosophical Theology: Essays in Honour of Don Cupitt* (Hants: Ashgate, 2004), p. 5.

⁷¹ B. Lightman, *The Origins of Agnosticism*, (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1987), p. 32.

⁷² B. Reardon, *Kant as Philosophical Theologian* (London: Macmillan, 1988), p. 180.

⁷³ L. J. Snyder, *Reforming Philosophy: A Victorian Debate on Science and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), p. 44.

⁷⁴ J. W. Burgon, *Lives of Twelve Good Men*, p. 347.

⁷⁵ F. Harrison, *The Philosophy of Common Sense* (New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1907) p. 365.

Mansel as an ‘English Kantian of the older school’, J. R. Illingworth quoted Mansel extensively in the first of his Bampton Lectures for 1894, *Personality: Human and Divine*. Mansel here provided an example of the argument that personality was the gateway of all knowledge.⁷⁶ Quite clearly, some intelligent readers of Mansel *did* recognise the potential of this element of his thought, and knew that it represented something different to either Spencer or Kant. Much more recently, careful scholarly attention to Jacobi’s influence in Britain has helped remove the veil of Kantianism from Mansel, and allowed for the development of a much more accurate picture of Mansel’s own personalism. In 1990, Giuseppe Micheli observed that Jacobi’s criticism of Kant, which was ‘not idealistic, but... religious and fideistic’ had anticipated ‘in some ways the work which Mansel was to accomplish at Oxford half a century later’.⁷⁷ Finally, more recently, in his important book, *The Worldview of Personalism* (2006), Jan Olof Bengtsson remarked on Mansel’s lengthy quotations of Jacobi in the *Limits of Religious Thought*, and correctly identified Mansel’s work as a restatement of ‘some central personalist themes’. Bengtsson saw that Mansel ‘clearly transmitted Jacobian insights to Britain’.⁷⁸ In particular, Bengtsson drew attention to the fact that Mansel had included references to the “I – Thou” passages from Jacobi, and made use of them to support what happen to be key turning points in his argument.⁷⁹ Bengtsson’s fleeting observations were, unfortunately, only made in passing, and he could have provided a fuller account of Mansel’s debt to Jacobian personalism. Nevertheless, they suggest the promise of pursuing this line when revisioning Mansel’s own philosophical theology.

⁷⁶ J. R. Illingworth, *Personality: Human and Divine* (London: Macmillan, 1913), pp. 26-7. Ironically, although Illingworth labelled Mansel a Kantian, inspection of the text cited by Illingworth reveals Mansel’s debts to Jacobi, not Kant. Mansel’s endnotes to the passage cited by Illingworth include extensive references to Jacobi. How could Illingworth not notice this?

⁷⁷ G. Micheli, ‘Early Reception of Kant in England, 1785-1805’ in G. MacDonald Ross and T. McWalter (eds.), *Kant and His Influence* (London: Continuum, 2005), pp. 202-314, here citing p. 304.

In the following sections I will provide a thematic exposition of Mansel's thought, starting with his use of "I – Thou" passages from Jacobi, and developing from this an account of his concept of personhood, including discussion of freewill, God, negative theology, prayer, personal relation, relativity, and ignorance of the Absolute.

"I-Thou"

In the *Metaphysics*, Mansel argued, 'consciousness of Personality is... an Ontology in the highest sense of the term, and cannot be regarded as the representation of any ulterior reality'. The problem with Kant, as far as Mansel was concerned, was that he failed to uphold an ontology of personality: Kant, said Mansel, denied 'the existence of an immediate consciousness of self' and thus had to be rejected.⁸⁰ 'The personal self' wrote Mansel, was 'a substance'. 'This one presented substance, *myself*, is the basis of the other notions of substance which are thought representatively in relation to other phenomena'. The personal self, was therefore, the primary reference for substance: 'Beyond the class of conscious beings I have only a negative idea of substantiality'.⁸¹

Later, when summarising his own *theological* position, Mansel stated that his starting point was belief in a personal God. 'The primary and essential conception of God, imperatively demanded by our moral and religious consciousness, is that of a *person*'.⁸² God was no abstract idea or impersonal moral law: 'God reveals himself,

⁷⁸ J. O. Bengtsson, *Worldview of Personalism*, p. 17.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 240.

⁸⁰ H. L. Mansel, *Metaphysics*, pp. 367-68.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 265-66.

⁸² H. L. Mansel, *The Philosophy of the Conditioned* (London: Alexander Strahan, 1866), p. 141.

not as a Law, but as a Person'.⁸³ The 'manifestation of God to man' was 'as a Person to a Person'.⁸⁴

In his Lent sermon for 1868, Mansel used the key phrase, 'the *I* and the *Thou*'.⁸⁵

There were few precedents for the use of this phrase in English. In an early sermon on the text of Matthew 26:39, 'Not as I will, but as Thou', Pusey had taught, '*I* and *Thou* stand, as it were, over against each other... Give but thy will to God, and *I* and *Thou* become one'.⁸⁶ In a different context, Coleridge had argued that 'there can be no *I* without a *Thou*, and that a *Thou* is only possible by an equation in which *I* is taken as equal to *Thou*, and yet not the same'.⁸⁷ Pusey's inspiration was Scripture; Coleridge's inspiration was Jacobi, confusingly blended with Schelling.⁸⁸ Mansel, who was a more faithful disciple of Jacobi than Coleridge, almost certainly derived the phrase from the German philosopher.

Mansel used Jacobi to support his own distinctive statements of theistic personalism. He made nine references to Jacobi in the *Limits of Religious Thought* (compared to seven references to Kant). Examination of these references reveals that Mansel *always* quoted Jacobi with approval (*including Jacobi's criticisms of Kant and Jacobi's*

⁸³ H. L. Mansel, *Limits of Religious Thought*, fifth edition, p. 14.

⁸⁴ H. L. Mansel, *Limits of Religious Thought*, fifth edition, p. 91.

⁸⁵ H. L. Mansel, 'Personal Responsibility of Man' (Oxford: James Parker, 1869), p. 43.

⁸⁶ E. B. Pusey, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. I (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1852), p. 375.

⁸⁷ S. T. Coleridge, 'An Essay on Faith' in *Aids to Reflection* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1904), p. 343.

⁸⁸ On Coleridge's personalism, see J. O. Bengtsson, *Worldview of Personalism*. Coleridge personally annotated a copy of Jacobi's 'Concerning the Doctrine of Spinoza', in which Jacobi had introduced the "I – Thou" theme (Bengtsson, p. 17, n. 48). However, Coleridge followed Schelling in rejecting Jacobi's avoidance of pantheism, and introduced a non-Christian association of God with the world (p. 116). The pantheism of Schelling and Coleridge, that separated them from Jacobi, was associated with their philosophical idealism (p. 83). Jacobi had been a Reidian realist and personalist; Schelling and Coleridge were idealists and personalists. Idealist personalisms were weaker than realist personalisms because they downplayed the real Otherness of the "Thou", existing beyond the mere *idea* of the "Thou".

criticism of Schelling's pantheistic personalism).⁸⁹ Crucially, six of the nine references to Jacobi occurred when Mansel discussed personality in Lecture III. This means that a cluster of references to Jacobi occurred exactly at the point when Mansel was discussing the key aspect of his doctrine.

Mansel argued that the Infinite God was beyond the limits of human thought, yet maintained that God should still be spoken of as a Person, by analogy with human personality. Indeed, it was essential to attribute personality to God in order to allow the analogical predication of other classical attributes of God held by traditional theism:

The various mental attributes which we ascribe to God, Benevolence, Holiness, Justice, Wisdom, for example, can be conceived by us only as existing in a benevolent and holy and just and wise Being, who is not identical with any of his attributes, but the common subject of them all; – in one word, in a *Person*.⁹⁰

In an important passage, he wrote:

We dishonour God far more by identifying Him with the feeble and negative impotence of thought which we are pleased to style the Infinite, than by remaining content within those limits which He for His own good purposes has imposed upon us, and confining ourselves to a manifestation, imperfect

⁸⁹ See for example, Jacobi's criticism of Kant in Lecture III, Note 29 (*Limits of Religious Thought*, fifth edition, pp. 259-60. Cf. Jacobi, *Werke*, vol. III, p. 176). For Jacobi's criticism of Schelling see Lecture II, Note 32 (*Limits of Religious Thought*, fifth edition, p. 225-26. Cf. Jacobi, *Werke*, vol. III, p. 391).

indeed and inadequate, and acknowledged to be so, but still the highest idea that we can form, the noblest tribute that we can offer. Personality, with all its limitations, though far from exhibiting the absolute nature of God as He is, is yet truer, grander, and more elevating, more religious, than those barren, vague, meaningless abstractions in which men babble about nothing under the name of the Infinite. Personal, conscious existence, limited though it be, is yet the noblest of all existences of which man can dream; for it is that by which all existence is revealed to him: it is grander than the grandest object which man can know; for it is that which knows, not that which is known.⁹¹

Mansel supported this with references to Thomas Aquinas and Jacobi. He quoted Thomas' argument that personality could be attributed to the Unknown God analogically:

Person signifies that which is most perfect in all nature, or a subsistence in a rational nature. Hence, since all which belongs to perfection, must be attributed to God because his essence contains in itself all perfection, – it is fitting that this name *person*, be used of God, yet not in the same way in which it is used of creatures, but in a more excellent way; just as other names are ascribed to God, which are put by us upon created beings.⁹²

Mansel placed this text from the *Summa Theologia* alongside a text from Jacobi:

⁹⁰ H. L. Mansel, *Limits of Religious Thought*, fifth edition, p. 59.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 60-1.

⁹² Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologia* 1.29.3; Cf. Mansel, *Limits of Religious Thought*, fifth edition, pp. 253-54.

A being without self-being is entirely and universally impossible. But a self-being without consciousness, and again a consciousness without self-consciousness, without substantiality and at least an implied personality, is just as impossible... and so God is not... if he is wanting in the fundamental quality of Spirit, self-consciousness, substantiality and personality
 [Substantialität und Persönlichkeit].⁹³

A universe of nature, blind, unconscious, and determined by necessary causes, would be devoid of value. But human personality, conscious, knowing the world, wondering at it, represented a whole sphere of existence which transcended the physical universe. Personality was therefore the most perfect thing in existence, and as such, ought to be attributed to God. In support of an argument about the higher value of thought and knowledge over mere nature, Mansel quoted a long passage from Jacobi which had previously been used by Sir William Hamilton in his *Lectures on Metaphysics*:

Nature conceals God: for through her whole domain Nature reveals only fate, only an indissoluble chain of mere efficient causes without beginning and without end, excluding, with equal necessity, both providence and chance. An independent agency, a free original commencement, within her sphere and proceeding from her powers, is absolutely impossible. Working without will, she takes counsel neither of the good nor of the beautiful; creating nothing, she casts off from her dark abyss only eternal transformations of herself, unconsciously and without an end; furthering with the same ceaseless industry decline and increase, death and life, – never producing what alone is of God

⁹³ Lecture III, Note 23 (*Limits of Religious Thought*, fifth edition, p. 254. Cf. Jacobi, *Werke*, vol. III, p. 240).

and what supposes liberty, – the virtuous, the immortal. *Man reveals God*: for Man by his intelligence rises above nature, and in virtue of this intelligence is conscious of himself, as a power not only independent of, but opposed to, nature, and capable of resisting, conquering, and controlling her. As man has a living faith in this power, superior to nature, which dwells in him, so has he a belief in God, a feeling, an experience of his existence. As he does not believe in this power, so does he not believe in God: he sees, he experiences naught in existence but nature, – necessity, – fate.⁹⁴

Mansel proceeded to outline the relevance of his personalist philosophical theology to actual religious experience of relationship with God. ‘It is by consciousness alone that we know that God exists, or that we are able to offer Him any service’, he wrote. ‘It is only by conceiving Him as a Conscious Being, that we can stand in any religious relation to him at all’. Mansel was clearly uninterested in developing any philosophical theology unrelated to actual religious life; belief in God was incomplete without belief in duty owed to God. The analogical predication of personality in God was ‘a representation of Him... demanded by our spiritual wants, insufficient though it be to satisfy our intellectual curiosity’.⁹⁵

Mansel believed that personality was the gateway to knowledge. All philosophy and theology had to proceed from a starting point in personalism. In an important passage, he wrote:

⁹⁴ H. L. Mansel, Lecture III, Note 24, *Limits of Religious Thought*, fifth edition, pp. 254-55. Cf. Jacobi, *Werke*, vol. III, p. 425. Cf. Hamilton, *Lectures on Metaphysics*, vol. I, ed. H. L. Mansel and J. Veitch, pp. 40-41.

⁹⁵ H. L. Mansel, *Limits of Religious Thought*, fifth edition, p. 61.

It is from the intense consciousness of our own real existence as Persons, that the conception of reality takes its rise in our minds: it is through that consciousness alone that we can raise ourselves to the faintest image of the supreme reality of God. What is reality, and what is appearance, is the riddle which Philosophy has put forth from the birthday of human thought; and the only approach to an answer has been a voice from the depths of the personal consciousness: "I think; therefore I am". In the antithesis between the thinker and the object of his thought, – between myself and that which is related to me, – we find the type and the source of the universal contrast between the one and the many, the permanent and the changeable, the real and the apparent. That which I see, that which I hear, that which I think, that which I feel, changes and passes away with each moment of my varied existence. I, who see, and hear, and think, and feel, am the one continuous self, whose existence gives unity and connection to the whole. Personality comprises all that we know of that which exists: relation to personality comprises all that we know of that which seems to exist. And when, from the little world of man's consciousness and its objects, we would lift up our eyes to the inexhaustible universe beyond, and ask, to whom all this is related, the highest existence is still the highest personality; and the Source of all Being reveals Himself by His name, I AM.⁹⁶

In support of this argument Mansel referred to Jacobi's exposition of Exodus 3:14, "Ich bin, der ich bin":

⁹⁶ Ibid., pp. 61-62.

I am, that I am. This decisive utterance establishes all. Its echo in the human soul is the revelation of God in it. What makes man man, i.e., makes him the image of God, is called *Reason*. This begins with the – I am... Reason without personality is non-entity, the like non-entity with that original cause, – which is All and not One, or One and None, the perfection of the imperfect, the absolutely Undetermined – called God by those who will have no knowledge of the true God, but yet shrink from denying Him – with the lips.⁹⁷

Although it was essential to think of God as personal, Mansel made the crucial move of further rendering the personal God as someone “Other” to the self, a genuine, real “Thou” who stood over and above the “I”. Because God was personal, God was not the same as “I”, but different: different because a free “Thou”. And because God was different and free, God was not known. This did not mean that there could be no relationship with God; it simply meant that God was related to as to something unknown. In revelation, God proclaimed his own otherness and unknowability. As Thomas Aquinas had taught, ‘In this life what God is is unknown to us by the revelation of grace; and so [by revelation] we are joined to him as to something unknown’.⁹⁸ Or, as Levinas would later declare: ‘The strangeness of the Other, his very freedom! Free beings alone can be strangers to one another. Their very freedom which is “common” to them is precisely what separates them’.⁹⁹ Mansel’s own deployment of negative theology, therefore, only served to reinforce his Realistic dialectical personalism. God’s otherness, God’s unknowability, was a condition of

⁹⁷ See H. L. Mansel, Lecture III, Note 26, *Limits of Religious Thought*, fifth edition, p. 256. Cf. Jacobi, *Werke*, vol. III, p. 418.

⁹⁸ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologia* 1.12.12 ad 1, trans. D. Turner in ‘The Darkness of God and the Light of Christ: Negative Theology and Eucharistic Presence’ in *Modern Theology*, vol. 15, no. 2 (April, 1999), p.145.

⁹⁹ E. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), pp. 73-74.

genuine relationship with God, a relationship conceived necessarily as something different to knowledge. If there were limits to human thought, this was because limits allowed engagement with God as an “Other” beyond those limits. Mansel, as a personalist, was more interested in relationship than knowledge; unlike Hegel, he thought that limits of thought could be understood positively, as a condition of relationship with God.¹⁰⁰ From the human side, ‘Personality, as we conceive it, is essentially a limitation and a relation’.¹⁰¹ ‘Personality is... a limitation; for the thought and the thinker are distinguished from and limit each other’. On the Divine side, however, personality was rendered inconceivable and mysterious, lying beyond the limits of human thought: ‘Infinite Person... denotes an object inconceivable under the conditions of human thought’.¹⁰² In both senses, God lay beyond the human.

In the *Limits of Religious Thought*, Lecture III, Note 33, Mansel cited Jacobi’s doctrine, ‘Ein Gott, der *gewusst* werden könnte, wäre gar kein Gott’ – ‘A God, who could be *known*, were no God at all’. Mansel observed that these words were ‘little more than a translation’ of Augustine, *Sermo*. 117, ‘De Deo loquimur; quid mirum si non comprehendis? Si enim comprehendis, non est Deus’ – if you comprehend, it is not God.¹⁰³ Likewise, in Lecture VII, Note 10, Mansel cited Jacobi in support of the argument that there was no knowledge of the Good in itself, and that all one had was a remote foreboding of the Good. The moral standards of God could not be judged by

¹⁰⁰ See Mansel’s criticisms of Hegel on this point in Lecture II, Note 37 in *Limits of Religious Thought*, fifth edition, p. 229.

¹⁰¹ H. L. Mansel, *Limits of Religious Thought*, fifth edition, p. 59.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 60.

¹⁰³ H. L. Mansel, *Limits of Religious Thought*, fifth edition, p. 262. Cf. Jacobi, *Werke*, vol. III, p. 7.

the same standards as the actions of human beings.¹⁰⁴ This was a consequence of respect for God's real (not merely ideal) freedom and "Otherness".

It is our duty, then, to think of God as personal; and it is our duty to think that He is infinite. It is true that we cannot reconcile these two representations with each other; as our conception of personality involves attributes apparently contradictory to the notion of infinity. But it does not follow that this contradiction exists anywhere but in our own minds: it does not follow that it implies any impossibility in the absolute nature of God. The apparent contradiction, in this case... is the necessary consequence of an attempt on the part of the human thinker to transcend the boundaries of his own consciousness. It proves that there are limits of man's power of thought; and it proves no more.¹⁰⁵

Free Will

For Mansel, the concept of "person" was defined primarily with reference to the concept of "free will". He made this explicitly clear in the *Limits of Religious Thought*: 'Throughout the breadth and height and depth of human consciousness, Personality manifests itself under one condition, that of a Free Will, influenced, though not coerced, by motives'.¹⁰⁶ As Mansel considered consciousness of personality to be an ontological reality in the highest sense, and defined such consciousness of personality with reference to free will, free will must be identified as one of the essential elements of his thought. Being – real personal being – meant

¹⁰⁴ H. L. Mansel, *Limits of Religious Thought*, fifth edition, p. 303. Cf. Jacobi, *Werke*, vol. III, p. 35 and p. 37.

¹⁰⁵ H. L. Mansel, *Limits of Religious Thought*, fifth edition, p. 63.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 14.

consciousness of free will. An individual's consciousness that they were free, not determined by the world of nature, set them apart from the world, and "individuated" them, made them an individual person. This does not mean that Mansel prioritised Will over Being, for he clearly considered Will *to be* Being.

Indeed, considered *theologically*, both Will and Being were identical in God (as Thomas Aquinas had argued), and by free will, God had chosen to create the world of beings *ex nihilo*. The being of the world thus depended upon God's Will, which was God's Being. Further, according to Christian doctrine, the human beings God created shared in God's own image and likeness by possessing free will; by free will they fell; by God's free will – God's grace – the fallen were saved. Without free will, the edifice of Christian theology crumbled to nothing. As Bernard of Clairvaux had taught, 'Abolish free will, and there is nothing to be saved; abolish free grace, and there is nothing wherewithal to save'.¹⁰⁷ Mansel, then, for good theological reasons, regarded free will as fundamental to the Christian worldview.

Mansel's own position is represented in his sermon on the *Personal Responsibility of Man, as Individually Dealt with by God*, in which man is said to be different to animals because 'he is a person and not a thing... in a personal and individual relation to a personal God'.¹⁰⁸ His understanding of human freedom was, in other words, derived from relationship to the unlimited freedom of God. Moreover, God's freedom, expressed in God's gracious action in the world, actually *expanded* the scope of fallen human freedom: 'the freedom and personality of finite and fallible man... are quickened into fresh life and vigour by direct communion with the Almighty and

¹⁰⁷ Bernard of Clairvaux, *De Gratia et Libero Arbitrio*, c. i, cited by Sir W. Hamilton, *Discussions on Philosophy and Literature*, p. 589.

Allseeing Personality of God'.¹⁰⁹ What did Mansel mean by this? The implication seems to be that human beings were drawn into a supernatural freedom by the grace of God. They became *more free* than mere human freedom, unassisted by God, would allow. The 'fresh life and vigour' of human freedom came as a result of their being opened up to God's own transcendent freedom. For human beings this expanded freedom, this new freedom, was expressed in the freedom of faith, the freedom to believe in God, and the freedom to believe in the miraculous works of God, which would otherwise be impossible in mere nature. In the freedom of faith, they were more free than before, living, as St Paul said, 'in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free' (Galatians 5:1).

This position is a reflection of Jacobi's doctrine of the creative freedom of God, described in *David Hume on Faith*. In the Preface to this work, Jacobi wrote:

By beholding God man produces in himself a pure heart and a certain spirit; outside himself, the good and the beautiful. *Creative freedom*, therefore, is no fictional concept. Its concept is one of a *power of providence and miracles*, of which man becomes aware in his rational personality through himself, a power that must be present in God in superabundance if nature derives from Him, and not He from nature – a night figure of fantasy that the daylight of science banishes.

¹⁰⁸ H. L. Mansel, 'Personal Responsibility of Man, as Individually Dealt with by God', p. 33.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 43-44.

Omnipotence without providence is blind fate. Providence cannot however be separated from freedom. For what would freedom be, without knowing and willing? And what, a will that comes after the deed, or only accompanies it?¹¹⁰

Mansel presupposed Jacobi's position that there was 'an irreducible difference between the domain of nature and that of freedom'.¹¹¹ In an important letter, Mansel wrote:

I believe that the real basis of the whole controversy against the prevalent Materialism of the present day lies in the question of the *Human Will*. Once concede the will of Man is free; and no Philosophy, say what it may of fixed laws, can ever really upset the truths dictated by man's religious instincts. This is why I look on the philosophy of such people as Mr. Mill as so utterly mischievous; because the question of *Free will*, or *No free will*, is really the question of *Belief* or *No belief*.¹¹²

Mansel extended his theological belief in free will into his discussion of miracles in *Aids to Faith*. A miracle was a wonderful action of God's free will on nature; as such, the essence of any analysis of the occurrence of miracles had to be an analysis of the possibility of free will and personality in a theological context. In his definitive statement on miracles, Mansel wrote:

¹¹⁰ F. H. Jacobi, *The Main Philosophical Writings*, p. 556.

¹¹¹ G. Di Giovanni, 'Introduction' in F. H. Jacobi, *The Main Philosophical Writings*, p. 14.

¹¹² H. L. Mansel, Letter to the Earl of Carnarvon 25th February 1866, cited in J. W. Burgon, *Lives of Twelve Good Men* (London: John Murray, 1891), p. 360.

Deny the existence of a free will in man; and neither the possibility of miracles, nor any other question of religion or morality, is worth contending about. Admit the existence of a free will in man; and we have the experience of a power, analogous, however inferior, to that which is supposed to operate in the production of a miracle, and forming the basis of a legitimate argument from the less to the greater... We are conscious of this power in ourselves; we experience it in our everyday life; but we experience also its restriction within certain narrow limits, the principle one being that man's influence upon foreign bodies is only possible through the instrumentality of his own body. Beyond these limits is the region of the miraculous. In at least the great majority of the miracles recorded in Scripture, the supernatural element appears, not in the relation of matter to matter, but in that of matter to mind; in the exercise of a personal power transcending the limits of man's will. They are not so much *supermaterial* as *superhuman*.¹¹³

Mansel was not alone in this argument. Years later, when Newman suggested that miracles amounted to 'no more' than an action of God's free will, only exceeding the limits of human free will, he asked Wilfrid Ward if he had heard the argument before. Ward replied that 'Mansel in his Bampton Lectures [gave] substantially the same argument... and Mill in his religious essays, from the opposite standpoint, to some extent, admits its validity'. Newman replied, 'That relieves me... I feared that if none had thought of it, it was not very probable it could be sound'.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ H. L. Mansel, 'On Miracles' in W. Thomson (ed.), *Aids to Faith* (London: John Murray, 1862), pp. 3-40, here citing pp. 19-21.

¹¹⁴ W. Ward, *The Life of John Henry Cardinal Newman*, vol. II (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1913), p. 494.

Negative Theology and Analogy

It should be becoming apparent that Mansel had *two* different yet related reasons for thinking that God cannot be known.

First, Mansel had defined personality ‘as we conceive it’ as ‘essentially a limitation and a relation’.¹¹⁵ ‘Our whole consciousness manifests itself as subject to certain limits, which we are unable, in any act of thought, to transgress’.¹¹⁶ Personal relation would be impossible without limitation, for if “I” and “Thou” were not *really* different from each other, and were not therefore two different circumscribed and limited things, they could not encounter each other as real “Others”. ‘The first testimony of consciousness’, wrote Mansel, ‘is to the distinct existence of *self* and *not-self*’. He held that any philosophical system which subsumed the self into a larger whole – like Pantheism, or the Idealist philosophies of Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel – accomplished ‘nothing more than an intellectual suicide’. His recommendation to Fichte and the others was to ‘Try Dualism’.¹¹⁷ A God ‘with no attribute of personality’ would be ‘merely the world magnified to infinity’, and Schleiermacher’s ‘feeling of absolute dependence’ would be only ‘the annihilation of our personal existence in the Infinite Being of the Universe’.¹¹⁸ In part, therefore, something of God could not be *known*, because God was a real, “Other” person, distinct from the self, *free*, and therefore *mysterious*. The self in relation to God, had to be *limited* to be capable of personal relationship with God. The limitations of human personality – that is, the limitations *on the human side* – were the condition of the possibility of personal

¹¹⁵ H. L. Mansel, *Limits of Religious Thought*, fifth edition, p. 59.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

¹¹⁷ H. L. Mansel, ‘Modern German Philosophy’ in *Letters, Lectures, and Reviews* (London: John Murray, 1873), pp. 189-211, here citing pp. 210-11.

¹¹⁸ H. L. Mansel, *Limits of Religious Thought*, fifth edition, p. 83.

relationship with God. This personalist argument for the mysteriousness of God had nothing whatsoever to do with Kant.

Second, Mansel received from the mainstream orthodox tradition of Christian thought the belief that God, in the words of the Athanasian Creed in *The Book of Common Prayer*, was ‘The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible: and the Holy Ghost incomprehensible’. Mansel’s Idealist critics – who, following Maurice, demanded that ‘God *can* be known’¹¹⁹ – appeared to him to be, in *theological* terms, heretics. Specifically, they were Gnostic heretics, and Mansel heavily implied this point in his lectures on the *Gnostics Heresies*. This book, though often ignored in scholarship on Mansel, must be viewed as a natural companion piece to the *Limits of Religious Thought*. Following F. C. Baur’s *Die Christliche Gnosis* (1835), which had discussed Schelling’s and Hegel’s debts to early Gnostic texts, Mansel also observed the continuity between Egyptian Gnosticism, and the Idealism of Schelling and Hegel, the modern German philosophers.¹²⁰ The lectures had been delivered in the Hilary term of 1868, shortly after the publication in 1867 of the fifth edition of the *Limits of Religious Thought*, which had itself included new prefatory material written concurrently with *Gnostic Heresies*. In the new ‘Testimonies of Theologians’, now attached to the beginning of the Bampton Lectures, Mansel outlined the extent and depth of orthodox adherence to negative theology, or Christian agnosticism. Fourteen early Church Fathers, from Clement of Alexandria, through Athanasius, the three Cappadocian Fathers, and Augustine, to John of Damascus, were quoted as authoritative witnesses to the *via negativa*. They were followed by similar illustrations from the scholastic period (including the key witness of Thomas Aquinas), plus no

¹¹⁹ F. D. Maurice, *The Epistles of St. John* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1890), p. 344.

¹²⁰ H. L. Mansel, *Gnostic Heresies* (London: John Murray, 1875), p. 147.

less than twenty-one Anglican theologians making the same point (including, of course, Hooker and Butler). Once again, these traditional arguments for ignorance of God had nothing to do with Kantian philosophy.

The need to affirm that God was both personal *and* infinite led to the celebrated paradox that lay at the heart of Mansel's theology. Mansel was not ashamed of this paradox: indeed, he believed it to be an inevitable consequence of Christian theology. Personality was necessarily limited; infinity was necessarily unlimited. God, to be God, was both. It did not matter that 'we cannot reconcile these two representations with each other', and it was quite possible that the 'contradiction' existed only 'in our own minds'. 'The apparent contradiction', said Mansel, was 'the necessary consequence of an attempt on the part of the human thinker to transcend the boundaries of his own consciousness'.¹²¹ Further, the 'apparent contradiction' arose not because of *knowledge* of God, but because of the content of Christian *belief* in God.

We may believe *that* a thing is, without being able to conceive *how* it is. I believe *that* God is a person, and also *that* He is infinite; though I cannot conceive *how* the attributes of personality and infinity exist together. All my knowledge of personality is derived from my consciousness of my own finite personality. I therefore believe in the coexistence of attributes in God, in some manner different from that in which they coexist in me as limiting each other: and thus I believe in the fact, though I am unable to conceive the manner.¹²²

¹²¹ H. L. Mansel, *Limits of Religious Thought*, fifth edition, p. 63.

¹²² H. L. Mansel, *Philosophy of the Conditioned* (London: Alexander Strahan, 1866), p. 127.

As Mansel had argued, human beings had ‘a range of belief which is beyond the range of knowledge’. Faced with the ‘apparent contradiction’ of the Christian doctrine of God, Mansel insisted that ‘We... cannot *know*... Yet we are compelled to *believe*’. He referred to this as ‘the method of Faith’, or ‘the philosophy of faith’.¹²³ Like Anselm, like Karl Barth, Mansel saw that theology began with faith.

A philosophy which professes to be the handmaid of theology, and to be indebted for her highest truths to Divine revelation, not to human speculation, must necessarily assume a negative office in dealing with those truths which, by her own confession, are derived from and established by a higher authority. Her office is not to prove such truths, but to defend them; not to exhibit them as conclusions which reason is competent to establish, but to maintain them as positions which reason is not competent to overthrow... Philosophy thus employed does not indeed build the fortress which she defends; but she has no need to do so, for the fortress is built already.¹²⁴

At one point, Mansel stated that the key aspects of his thought could be grasped with reference to three principal doctrines. These were, ‘1. That the Absolute Nature of God is unknown to man’; ‘2. That conceptions derived from human consciousness do not represent the Absolute Nature of God’; ‘3. That God is revealed in Scripture by means of relative conceptions, accommodated to man’s faculties’.¹²⁵ Taken together, these three doctrines required careful attention to the use of analogical language in Christian theology. Negative theology has always necessitated awareness of the analogical status of Christian language: all human utterance falls short of the Divine,

¹²³ H. L. Mansel, ‘Philosophy and Theology’ in *Letters, Lectures, and Reviews*, p. 347.

¹²⁴ H. L. Mansel, ‘Philosophy and Theology’ in *Letters, Lectures, and Reviews*, p. 340.

and the language of praise and worship celebrates this fact. Theology does not end in silence, but acknowledges that God exceeds the capacity of human language, and rejoices that God is more than can be thought or said. When the word ‘person’ was used of God, it was stretched beyond its normal definition. In the fifth and final edition of the *Limits of Religious Thought*, Mansel illustrated the importance of analogy by including no less than seven pages of direct, uninterrupted, quotation from Bishop Browne’s *Divine Analogy*. Browne’s account explained how *all* theological language was founded upon analogy.

For Mansel, ‘human personality’ could not be assumed to be ‘an exact copy of the Divine’; it was ‘only... that which is most nearly analogous to it among finite things’.¹²⁶ As such, he wrote:

...behind this positive conception of God as a Person there yet remains a mystery which in our present state of knowledge we are unable to penetrate – the mystery of a personality which is absolute and infinite, and therefore not identical with our relative and finite personality, though the latter among finite things is that which is most nearly analogous to it and its fittest representative in human thought and human speech.¹²⁷

The ‘intellectual attributes of God, though analogous to those of man, cannot be regarded as identical with them’.¹²⁸ This was because the ‘analogy’ included in itself ‘a difference as great as possible, – an infinite difference – a difference not of degree,

¹²⁵ H. L. Mansel, *Limits of Religious Thought*, fifth edition, p. xx.

¹²⁶ H. L. Mansel, *Philosophy of the Conditioned*, p. 144.

¹²⁷ H. L. Mansel, *Limits of Religious Thought*, fifth edition, p. xiii.

¹²⁸ H. L. Mansel, ‘Philosophy and Theology’ in *Letters, Lectures, and Reviews*, p. 353.

but of kind'.¹²⁹ Mansel had, in his own way, and in his own words, discovered, independently of Kierkegaard, Kierkegaard's celebrated "infinite qualitative distinction" between God and humanity.

Although Divine personality was infinitely different in kind from human personality, Mansel nevertheless clung to the concept. God was spoken of as 'a Being having at least so far the attributes of Personality, that He can show favour or severity to those dependent upon Him, and can be regarded by them with the feelings of hope, and fear, and reverence, and gratitude'.¹³⁰ God, therefore, contained within himself something like human personality, as revealed by Mansel's "at least". From whence did this come? Mansel's answer was not philosophical, but *religious*. 'Let Philosophy say what she will, the fact remains unshaken. It is the consciousness of the deep wants of our human nature that first awakens God's presence in the soul: it is by adapting His Revelation to those wants that God graciously condescends to satisfy them'.¹³¹ God the Son, 'for our sakes became poor', 'took upon Him the form of a servant', and was incarnate in Jesus Christ. This was 'that blessed miracle of Divine Love and Mercy, by which the Son of God, of His own free act and will, took man's nature upon Him for man's redemption'.¹³² 'The witness which Christ offers of Himself either proves everything, or it proves nothing'.¹³³

Mansel's belief in the reality of revelation "grounded" analogy in God's free act as the revealer. Although human language was 'inadequate' it could 'yet dimly indicate

¹²⁹ Ibid., p. 352.

¹³⁰ H. L. Mansel, *Metaphysics*, p. 376.

¹³¹ H. L. Mansel, *Limits of Religious Thought*, fifth edition, p. 116.

¹³² Ibid., p. 115.

¹³³ Ibid., p. 177.

some corresponding reality in the Divine Nature'.¹³⁴ Mansel supported this with reference to Newman's *University Sermons*, which he cited in a footnote to the fifth edition of the *Limits of Religious Thought*:

Let then the Catholic dogmas, as such, be freely admitted to convey no true idea of Almighty God, but only an earthly one, gained from earthly figures... Still there may be a certain correspondence between the idea, though earthly, and its heavenly archetype, such that the idea belongs to the archetype, in a sense in which no other earthly idea belongs to it, as being the nearest approach to it which our present state allows.¹³⁵

Although the analogies were, insofar as they were expressed in human language, inadequate, they nevertheless "belonged to the archetype", "belonged to the revealer". Mansel argued that a Christian believer should be 'content to know so much of God's nature as God Himself has been pleased to reveal; and, where Revelation is silent, to worship without seeking to know more'.¹³⁶ Mansel believed the only knowledge of God was knowledge of revelation, accepted in the humility of faith.

Prayer

According to Mansel, 'the very core and centre of... religious life' was prayer. Genuine prayer was described as an address to the Father, an attempt at interpersonal communication 'the I and the Thou'. Mansel taught that 'the freedom and personality of finite and fallible man never so truly assert themselves, as when... they are

¹³⁴ Ibid., pp. 181-82.

¹³⁵ H. L. Mansel, *Limits of Religious Thought*, fifth edition, p. 182-83, n.; Newman, *University Sermons*, pp. 341-42.

¹³⁶ H. L. Mansel, *Limits of Religious Thought*, fifth edition, p. 185.

quicken into fresh life and vigour by direct communion with the Almighty and Allseeing Personality of God'.¹³⁷

'With the first development of consciousness there grows up, as part of it, the innate feeling that our life, natural and spiritual, is not in our own power to prolong or to sustain; that there is One above us on whom we are dependent, whose existence we learn, and whose presence we realise, by the sure instinct of Prayer'.¹³⁸ Prayer was personal dialogue, and Mansel's worldview was an extension of this personal dialogue.¹³⁹ 'If there is no Person to pray; if there is no Person to be obedient; - what remains but to conclude that He to whom prayer and obedience are due... is a shadow and a delusion likewise'.¹⁴⁰ Mansel, foreshadowing Buber, was a dialogical personalist. The 'sure instinct of prayer' was the root of religious and moral consciousness. In the 'feeling of [personal, not absolute]¹⁴¹ dependence' and the 'sense of moral obligation', 'relation towards God', people could regard themselves 'as *Persons related to a Person*'. For Mansel, 'it is important... that it is only through this consciousness of personality that we have any ground of belief in the existence of a God'.¹⁴²

“ O Thou that hearest prayer, unto Thee shall all flesh come”... He... Himself taught us how to pray. He tells us that we are dependent... and how is that dependence manifested? Not in the annihilation of our personality; for we appeal to Him under the tenderest of personal relations, as the children of Our

¹³⁷ H. L. Mansel, 'Personal Responsibility of Man', pp. 43-4.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 376 and H. L. Mansel, *Limits of Religious Thought*, p. 120.

¹³⁹ There is scope here to explore Wittgensteinian criticisms of Mill's construction of selfhood. Mansel and Wittgenstein would both agree that a linguistically mediated 'Thou' takes precedence over 'I'.

¹⁴⁰ H. L. Mansel, *Limits of Religious Thought*, fifth edition, p. 131.

¹⁴¹ See criticism of Schleiermacher on "absolute dependence" see H. L. Mansel, *Metaphysics*, pp. 375-6, n.

¹⁴² H. L. Mansel, *Limits of Religious Thought*, fifth edition, p. 130.

Father who is in heaven... in this manifestation of God to man... as a Person to a Person, we see the root and foundation of that religious service... All are brought by one common channel into communion with that God to whom they are related by so many common ties. All are called upon to acknowledge their Maker, their Governor, their Sustainer, their Redeemer; and the means of their acknowledgement is Prayer.¹⁴³

The 'sure instinct of prayer' related the human being to God *actively*; it would be wrong to think Mansel thought about attempted apprehension of the infinite in static terms, for prayer was a *dynamic* relationship. He was not 'staring at reality' (as Mark Francis has suggested), but addressing God.¹⁴⁴ If 'reality "out there"' was known through belief, this was no reflection of philosophical 'weakness' or 'moderation'. The goal had never been to 'provide knowledge about the nature of God' (again, Mark Francis),¹⁴⁵ but to address God as "Thou". In his *Letter to Professor Goldwin Smith* (1861), Mansel had provided two examples of how human recognition of human finitude and fallibility could lead to human reaching-out-after a supposed unknown perfect being. Hooker provided a positive example; Jacobi provided a negative example.

According to Hooker, whom Mansel quoted, the human being 'doth covet... somewhat above the capacity of reason, somewhat divine and heavenly, which with hidden exultation it rather surmiseth than conceiveth'. This covetousness was not derived from knowledge; neither did it lead to knowledge. The covetousness was an

¹⁴³ Ibid., p. 133.

¹⁴⁴ M. Francis, *Herbert Spencer and the Invention of Modern Life* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), p. 163.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 163-4.

expression of intellectual desire for the unknown God: ‘somewhat it seeketh, and what that is directly it knoweth not, yet very intensive desire thereof doth so incite it, that all other known delights and pleasures are laid aside, they give place to the search of this but only suspected desire’.¹⁴⁶ This Christianised version of Platonic *Eros* provided a spur towards the Divine in Mansel’s thought.

In the *Letter to Professor Goldwin Smith*, Mansel compared Hooker’s words with a passage from Jacobi which had also been quoted in the Bampton Lectures. Jacobi did not present a positive form of Platonic *Eros*, but rather a negative sense of dissatisfaction with human imperfection as a motive for reaching-out-after divine perfection.

Just as certainly as I do possess reason, so certainly do I *not* possess along with it the perfection of life, I do *not* possess the fulness of the good and the true; and just as certainly as I do *not* possess this, *and know it*, just so certainly do I *know* there is a *higher* Being, and in Him I have my origin... I acknowledge, then, that I do not know the *Good in itself*, the *True in itself*, also that I have only a remote *foreboding* of it.¹⁴⁷

These references to Hooker and Jacobi show that Mansel should not be regarded as a forerunner of Herbert Spencer or T. H. Huxley. His supposed “agnosticism” was supplemented by a Platonistic or mystical element, which reached beyond the limits of the material world, and engaged with God as a mysterious person. Mansel’s attitude was religious, not materialist.

¹⁴⁶ H. L. Mansel, *A Letter to Professor Goldwin Smith* (Oxford: Henry Hamman, 1861), p. 21.

Personal Relation

In order to understand the depth of Mansel's personalism, it is vital to grasp that the individual "I" did not precede the "Thou", but only emerged as an "I" with reference to the "Thou". There could be no "I" without "Thou", and the "I" was shaped and defined with reference to "Thou". For Mansel, this encounter with the "Thou" was, at its fullest, prayer. Prayer shaped and formed consciousness of the human self: 'Prayer is essentially a state in which man is in active relation towards God; in which he is intensely conscious of his personal existence and its wants; in which he endeavours by entreaty to prevail with God'.¹⁴⁸

Mansel was aware that this idea could be supported with reference to Jacobi.

Elsewhere, he cited another key text from Jacobi (Lecture VIII, Note 26): 'ohne göttliches Du sey kein menschliches Ich, und umgekehrt' – 'without the Divine *Thou*, there is no human *I*, and without the human *I*, there is no Divine *Thou*'.¹⁴⁹ As Di Giovanni has explained, the individuation of personality required an individual to stand 'in a significant relation to another individual through determinations that establish each on its own and apart from the other'.¹⁵⁰ Of course, Mansel did not believe, as Jacobi suggested, that the Divine "Thou" depended on the human "I"; for Christian theology, the Divine "Thou" was actually constituted by the interpersonal relations of the Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But he certainly did think that "I" only fully emerged with reference to the Divine "Thou" in prayer. Here, Mansel effectively turned Feuerbach on his head: the human "I" was some sort of

¹⁴⁷ H. L. Mansel, *The Limits of Religious Thought*, fifth edition p. 330; cf. H. L. Mansel, *Letter to Professor Goldwin Smith*, p. 21.

¹⁴⁸ H. L. Mansel, *The Limits of Religious Thought*, fifth edition, p. 84.

¹⁴⁹ H. L. Mansel, *Limits of Religious Thought*, fifth edition, p. 337. Cf. Jacobi, *Werke*, vol. IV, p. xlii.

projection of the Divine “Thou”, which is only to say that the human being was created in the image of God.¹⁵¹

This religious aspect of Mansel’s thought was reflected in his more formal philosophical writings. In his *Metaphysics*, Mansel provided an account of how consciousness of personality arose *as a relation*. It was not just, as he had explained in the *Limits of Religious Thought*, that ‘Consciousness is... only possible in the form of a *relation*’.¹⁵² More than that, as he explained in the *Metaphysics*, consciousness ‘of personality, of freedom, of responsibility’ was ‘given to us as a relation’.¹⁵³ If consciousness could not be conceived without relation, it was impossible to give a positive definition of personality in isolation, unrelated to anything else. As such, it was unnecessary for him to provide a strict definition of consciousness “in itself” beyond emphasising its intuitive and relative features:

This Personality, like all other simple and immediate presentations, is indefinable; but it is so because it is superior to definition... It... is revealed to us in all the clearness of an original intuition, of which description and comparison can furnish only faint and partial resemblances.¹⁵⁴

The language of “revelation” might suggest that Mansel was once again drawing on Jacobi, but it should be clear that the real source was Hamilton, who had developed a more thoroughgoing sense of the relativity of knowledge, even knowledge of the self.

¹⁵⁰ G. Di Giovanni, ‘Introduction’ to F. H. Jacobi, *The Main Philosophical Writings*, p. 77.

¹⁵¹ Mansel was a consistent critic of Feuerbach, and considered him as merely an example of philosophical ‘deification of humanity’. See *Limits of Religious Thought*, fifth edition, pp. 205-06.

¹⁵² H. L. Mansel, *Limits of Religious Thought*, fifth edition, p. 52.

¹⁵³ H. L. Mansel, *Metaphysics*, p. 181.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

Mansel went on to say that, ‘Relation is the law of consciousness, and relation is the end of philosophy: for philosophy is only the articulate expression of consciousness’.¹⁵⁵

Theory of Relativity

In an endnote to the fifth Bampton Lecture, Mansel reproduced Jacobi’s criticisms of Kant’s phenomenalism. Kant was criticised for reducing ‘knowledge of the personal self’ to a phenomenal level only, and for ‘dogmatically asserting that the thing in itself *does not* resemble the phenomenon of which we are conscious’.¹⁵⁶ Against Kant, Mansel insisted that ‘personal existence is identical’ with an individual’s own ‘consciousness of that existence’. Knowledge of the self was not phenomenal, but real. Mansel proceeded to develop his point by discussing the extent and limits of the scope of phenomenal, as opposed to real, knowledge, and this led him to an examination of McCosh’s criticisms of Hamilton’s ‘theory of the relativity of all knowledge’. Mansel insisted that Hamiltonian philosophy did *not* equate “appearance” with “related” knowledge, nor “reality” with “unrelated” knowledge. Relativity did not imply mere “appearance”, for there could be knowledge that was both “relative” and “real”. Presumably, what Mansel had in mind was that things like intuitive knowledge of person to person relationship, for instance, could be *both* “relative” and “real”, *not* a matter of mere phenomenal appearance. Mansel’s discussion indicates the extent to which he had adopted a critically realistic position over against Kant, and suggests that Hamiltonian philosophy had a more nuanced approach to “relativism” than is sometimes allowed.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 182.

¹⁵⁶ H. L. Mansel, *Limits of Religious Thought*, fifth edition, p. 278.

This point is significant, because it challenges the way in which Mansel was sometimes interpreted by other philosophers. As early as 1865, John Grote criticised Mansel and Hamilton for “relativism” (and in doing so, used the word “relativism” for the first time in history). For John Grote, relativism suggested that knowledge did not bring ‘real contact with the thing we know’ but appeared only ‘as something between us and it, either altering its *real* reality to accommodate it to us, or forming some screen or barrier between us and it’. Grote described this as a ‘Kantoidic doctrine’: the error of philosophers who spoke about things in themselves by presupposing ‘an unknown and unknowable substratum of things’.¹⁵⁷ But, as we have seen, Mansel was no Kantian, but a critical realist working in the tradition of Reid, Jacobi, and the common sense school in general. Grote’s criticism is therefore questionable. More acute than Grote, perhaps, was Collingwood’s criticism of Mansel and Hamilton in his 1933 essay on Bradley’s *Appearance and Reality*. Collingwood argued that phenomenalism was, in some sense, self-subverting because it was self-relativising. He argued that Hamiltonian psychology could not secure the status of real knowledge, and was merely another instance of phenomenal knowledge. ‘Doubtless this is a strange and confused notion’, wrote Collingwood. He continued:

knowledge is a mere modification of the substance mind, therefore, if we can know the mind itself, we understand knowledge; but to say this is to forget that whatever knowledge we can possess of the mind will itself be, ex hypothesis, phenomenal and not, as the argument assumes, real.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁷ J. Grote, *Exploratio Philosophica*, part I (Cambridge: Deighton, Bell & Co., 1865), p. xii, p. 240, and p. 176.

¹⁵⁸ R. G. Collingwood, ‘The Metaphysics of F. H. Bradley: An Essay on *Appearance and Reality*’ in *An Essay on Philosophical Method*, new edition (Oxford: Clarendon, 2005), p. 234.

Put simply, the point was that Hamilton had been wrong to identify psychology as the pre-eminent ‘philosophical science’, and that Mansel had been wrong to identify personality with ontology.¹⁵⁹ Psychology only provided more phenomenal knowledge, and thus amounted to mere appearance, not reality. The data of psychology was itself relative, and could provide no secure ground for ontology. The implication of Collingwood’s argument, in other words, was that relativism was itself wholly subject to relativity. Hamilton and Mansel had not noticed how they had undermined their own position. He argued that F. H. Bradley’s idealistic philosophy had set out with the intention to criticise their philosophy, attempting to find a more secure basis for metaphysics which escaped the relativism of phenomenalism. (Indeed, Collingwood argued that the very title of Bradley’s *Appearance and Reality* had been borrowed from Mansel; the exact phrase ‘appearance and reality’ was used by Mansel in the same note to the Bampton Lectures in which he spoke of the ‘theory of the relativity of all knowledge’).¹⁶⁰ Were these criticisms fair?

On the one hand, it is important to recall Kuehn’s observation that Reid’s psychological method was never meant to render the kind of ‘*absolute* certainty’ demanded by an Idealist. For Reid, ‘all we can do is... exhibit the kinds of principles we rely on, but we cannot show why we have the principles we have’.¹⁶¹ On the other hand, one should also recall Wolterstorff’s argument that Reid’s epistemology should be interpreted *theologically* as a philosophical equivalent to *trust* in God. It was God who grounded Mansel’s ontology; his philosophy was really theology. Mansel believed that personality could be equated with ontology, because personality emerged in relation to the Divine “Thou”, and was created in the image of God.

¹⁵⁹ See Sir W. Hamilton, *Lectures on Metaphysics*, vol. I, p. 43.

¹⁶⁰ H. L. Mansel, *Limits of Religious Thought*, fifth edition, p. 279.

Relativity was a secondary feature of personalism, consequent to the limits by which a person was defined over against the other “Thou”; such relativity did not subvert the primary ontological content of theistic personalism. Read Mansel as a personalist, and relativity can be seen as a feature of interpersonal relatedness, constituted in meeting with the “Other”. The mind of the knower could reflect on its own limits, and yet was ‘compelled to believe in the existence of real things’.¹⁶² Although consciousness was ‘only possible in the form of a *relation*’, it nevertheless rendered real knowledge.¹⁶³ As far as Mansel was concerned, the language of relativity did not end in self-relativisation; the way he used the term, relativity represented a common sense approach to epistemology. The ‘theory of Relativity’, he wrote, ‘is... the mean between the extremes of Idealism and Materialism’.¹⁶⁴

Rejection of the Absolute

God was an infinitely different kind of person to the self. He was encountered, not known; believed, not conceived; revealed in an address to the world in Christ, which was yet mysterious. If God was believed rather than known, this was because ‘To know God as He is, man must himself *be* God’.¹⁶⁵ As far as Mansel was concerned, this was the problem with Maurice, and the problem with Maurice’s claim to know goodness itself. Whewell also missed the mark in his sermon preached in criticism of Mansel’s Bampton Lectures: Whewell thought that if natural theology was impossible, so too was revealed religion. ‘If we *cannot* know anything about God,

¹⁶¹ M. Kuehn, *Scottish Common Sense in Germany, 1768-1800*, pp. 241-42.

¹⁶² H. L. Mansel, *Philosophy of the Conditioned*, p. 69.

¹⁶³ H. L. Mansel, *Limits of Religious Thought*, fifth edition, p. 52.

¹⁶⁴ H. L. Mansel, *Philosophy of the Conditioned*, p. 73.

¹⁶⁵ H. L. Mansel, *Metaphysics*, p. 384.

revelation is in vain'.¹⁶⁶ The point for Mansel was not that we know things about God, but that God is encountered as an *I* encounters *Thou*. Mansel argued that if natural theology meant the demonstration of 'attributes of those notions only which we have constructed for ourselves, it follows that a demonstrated God is a creature of human imagination'.¹⁶⁷ Such a God would be ideal, but not a real *Thou*.

For Mansel, God was the Infinite, but not the Absolute. The Infinite was unlimited; the Absolute, by contrast, was the totality of all Being. Thought regarding the Infinite was radically open to unlimited possibilities; totalitarian thought represented a closed system. Lecture II examined the idea of the Absolute, and could potentially be read as a challenge to Idealism. Mansel said that 'the fundamental position of Rationalism' was 'that man by his own reason can attain to a right conception of God'.¹⁶⁸ This knowledge would have to be certain and unquestionable, and took such knowledge either from the 'absolute and essential nature of God' or from 'intellectual and moral qualities, which must exist in all their essential features in the divine nature as well as in the human'.¹⁶⁹ The Absolute was defined as 'that which exists in and by itself, having no necessary relation to any other being'.¹⁷⁰ Elsewhere, the Absolute was defined as '*free from relation*'.¹⁷¹ If the Absolute was free from relation, the Infinite was free from limitation. The Absolute was not a part of reality relating to other realities, but was 'nothing less than the sum of all reality' (Mansel associates this with

¹⁶⁶ W. Whewell, *William Whewell, DD: An Account of his Writings with Selections from His Literary and Scientific Correspondence*, vol. I, ed. Todhunter (London: MacMillan, 1876), p. 341. See M. Francis, *Herbert Spencer*, p. 162.

¹⁶⁷ H. L. Mansel, 'Limits of Demonstrative Science', in *Letters, Lectures, and Reviews* (London: John Murray, 1873), pp. 105-6.

¹⁶⁸ H. L. Mansel, *Limits of Religious Thought*, fifth edition, p. 70.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

¹⁷¹ H. L. Mansel, *Philosophy of the Conditioned*, p. 66.

Hegel).¹⁷² As such, the Absolute could be equated with Pantheism. As the sum of all reality, the ‘Absolute, it may be said, may possibly be conscious, provided it is only conscious of itself’.¹⁷³ Mansel’s criticism is that this allows no possibility of *I-Thou* relationship. Hegel was rejected as ‘incompatible with the belief in a personal God, and a personal Christ, and a supernatural revelation’.¹⁷⁴

We feel that the name of Him whom we worship... the Divine Personality of our Father in Heaven is not a thing to be pitted... against the lifeless abstractions and sophistical word-jugglings of Pantheism. We feel that, though God is indeed, in His incomprehensible Essence, absolute and infinite, it is not as the Absolute and Infinite that He appeals to the love and the fear and the reverence of His creatures. We feel that the life of religion lies in the human relations in which God reveals Himself to man, not in the divine perfection which those relations veil and modify, though without wholly concealing. We feel that the God to whom we pray, and in whom we trust, is... the God who is “gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth Him of the evil [Joel ii. 13].”¹⁷⁵

Limits of Ethical Knowledge

Mansel’s Idealist critics tended to argue that God’s nature could be recognised in their own God-given sense of morality. Their own knowledge of the Absolute Good allowed them to sift the essential from the non-essential parts of Biblical revelation, to sort the wheat from the chaff. Mansel of course believed in the existence of moral

¹⁷² H. L. Mansel, *Limits of Religious Thought*, fifth edition, p. 76.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 88-9.

sense, but argued that no mortal moral system directly, immediately, and accurately represent the Goodness which was identical with God's own essential Being. As such, he argued that 'God's essence was unknowable to human perceptions, and human morality was only a pale shadow of divine morality'.¹⁷⁶ Human moral sense was fallible, and might lead one astray. Further, God might comprehend the morality of facts incomprehensible to humanity. What might appear evil to us, could potentially be justified in God's sight. One had to face ethical decisions cautiously and self-critically, humbly admitting that in the reality of human moral experience, people tend to get things wrong.

In the *Limits of Religious Thought*, Mansel had argued his point succinctly:

That there is an Absolute Morality, based upon, or rather identical with, the Eternal Nature of God, is indeed a conviction forced upon us by the same evidence as that on which we believe that God exists at all. But *what* that Absolute Morality is, we are as unable to fix in any human conception, as we are to define the other attributes of the same Divine Nature.¹⁷⁷

Conviction of the existence of God's essential Goodness, despite the mystery of evil in the world, appears to have been forced on the individual by the very sense of one's own fallibility. If Goodness could not be associated with the world, nor society, nor the self, and yet one still felt beholden to some greater Good, then that Good must be a transcendent mystery, reached out after, but not apprehended. In this, Mansel followed Jacobi, who in *Jacobi to Fichte*, had argued thus:

¹⁷⁶ M. A. Crowther, *Church Embattled: Religious Controversy in Mid-Victorian England* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles Limited, 1970), p. 63.

Just as certainly as I do possess reason, so certainly do I *not* possess along with it the perfection of life, I do *not* possess the fulness of the good and the true; and just as certainly as I do *not* possess this, *and know it*, just so certainly do I *know* there is a *higher* Being, and in Him I have my origin... I acknowledge, then, that I do not know the *Good in itself*, the *True in itself*, also that I have only a remote *foreboding* of it.¹⁷⁸

This passage from Jacobi was so important to Mansel that he quoted it twice: once in the *Limits of Religious Thought*, in support of the passage from Lecture VII given above, and once in the *Letter to Professor Goldwin Smith*.¹⁷⁹

Mansel's frank admission of the limits of ethical knowledge at least faced the brute fact of evil in the world, and refused to conjure it away – as the Idealists tended to – by supposing it necessary to the inevitable progress of the world-soul towards a perfect future. The pantheists made evil a part of God; Mansel refused this option. Instead he left evil a mystery. Mansel's ethical theory was therefore rather like Butler's ethical theory, which, as Donald MacKinnon once observed, served 'as a reminder to men that they are men and not God'.¹⁸⁰ Unlike the Idealists, Mansel believed he could be wrong. This was a humble position. All one could do was obey the dictates of individual conscience, whilst nevertheless acknowledging that conscience can be wrong.

¹⁷⁷ H. L. Mansel, *Limits of Religious Thought*, fifth edition, p. 145.

¹⁷⁸ F. H. Jacobi, *The Main Philosophical Writings*, pp. 514-15.

¹⁷⁹ H. L. Mansel, *Limits of Religious Thought*, fifth edition, p. 145; H.L. Mansel, *Letter to Professor Goldwin Smith*, p. 21.

Mansel did not argue for a straightforward Divine-command theory of ethics. Although he believed that conscience should be followed as if there were a Lawgiver, the Divine Law was shrouded in cloud. His sermons, ‘The Spirit, a Divine Person, to be Worshipped and Glorified’ (1863), and ‘Personal Responsibility of Man as Individually Dealt with by God’ (1868), show how he identified the faculty of individual conscience – even fallen and fallible conscience – with the working of the Holy Spirit, and argued that even the Bible had to be interpreted with reference to the light of conscience, even though it provided only a pale shadow of Divine Morality.

Granted the fallibility and limits of conscience, Mansel was prepared to accept that God’s actions could in certain circumstances appear, in human terms, almost unethical. In a remarkable passage, reminiscent of Kierkegaard’s famous paradox of the “teleological suspension of the ethical” in *Fear and Trembling* (1843), Mansel wrote, ‘we are not justified in regarding the occasional suspension of human duties, by the same authority which enacted them, as a violation of the immutable principles of morality itself’.¹⁸¹ In other words, just fifteen years after Kierkegaard had formulated his celebrated paradox of faith, Mansel had independently arrived at the same point.

Mansel discussed ‘those doctrines of the Christian Faith which are sometimes regarded as containing something repugnant to the Moral Reason of man’. Chief of these was the ‘Atoning Sacrifice of Christ’, then recently attacked as immoral by J. A. Froude in *Nemesis of Faith*, and by Francis Newman in *Phases of Faith*.¹⁸² As Boyd Hilton has argued in *The Age of Atonement*, Mansel ‘tried to counter moral objections

¹⁸⁰ D. M. MacKinnon, *A Study in Ethical Theory* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1957), p. 236.

¹⁸¹ H. L. Mansel, *Limits of Religious Thought*, fifth edition, p. 148.

to sacrifice, whether Christ's or Isaac's, on the Butlerian grounds that Divine morals are different from and unknowable by humans'.¹⁸³ Once again, therefore, Mansel's philosophical ethics was actually a *theological* ethics, shaped and formed by Christian doctrine. His account of the limits of ethical knowledge was actually driven by belief in the mystery of the Atoning sacrifice of Christ crucified. This ultimate theological paradox, the saving work of Christ's sacrifice on the cross, informed his sense of ethical mystery. Mansel was heavily criticised for his position, but it only confirmed that his theology submitted itself to the truth of the Christian gospel: 'For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God... Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men' (1 Corinthians 1:18 and 25).

¹⁸² Ibid., p. 148.

¹⁸³ B. Hilton, *The Age of Atonement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 290.

Chapter IV: Mansel's Theological and Philosophical Ideas in Context: Initial Reception

Having outlined Mansel's biography, charted the intellectual tradition he received, and thus set Mansel's philosophical theology in context, it is now possible to complete the task of locating Mansel's thought in its historical setting by considering some of the main ways in which his work was received by his contemporaries. What did people of Mansel's own day take him to mean? How was he interpreted in his own historical context? Such questions are important because they complete the task of setting Mansel within a broader intellectual society that shared a common language, a common culture, and a similar understanding of the traditions and challenges of British philosophy and theology in the mid-Victorian period.

As we shall see, different individuals responded to Mansel in a variety of ways, and it is noticeable that his main supporters were (with some noticeable exceptions, like Walter Pater) theological conservatives, and his main critics liberal or progressive philosophers. Mansel's work provided inspiration for key developments in Victorian theology, and simultaneously provided the background for new developments in philosophy. Without Mansel, it is likely that Newman would not have written the *Grammar of Assent* (1870), or Liddon his Bampton Lectures on *The Divinity of Our Lord* (1867); similarly, without Mansel, British Idealism may not have taken the shape it did. A number of Idealists developed their thought in *reaction* to Mansel, and features of their writings would be inexplicable without reference to his *Metaphysics* and *Limits of Religious Thought*. Overall, one can discern that party political allegiance was often associated with positive or negative responses to Mansel:

partisan Tories tended to be favourable to him; partisan Gladstonians tended to be critical of him.

In the following I will outline four main types of response to Mansel, temporarily leaving to one side the responses of Maurice and Mill. These will be treated separately in later chapters because of the extraordinary *political* dimensions of their work. Here I will first discuss responses by Mansel's friends and natural allies, Tory high churchmen at Oxford, pupils, and a number of other independent figures who agreed with his position. Second, I will look at post-Tractarian and Roman Catholic responses to Mansel, including such figures as William George Ward and John Henry Newman. Third, I will consider "agnostic" responses to Mansel, including discussion of Herbert Spencer, T. H. Huxley, Leslie Stephen, and Frederic Harrison. Fourth, I will consider Idealist responses to Mansel, indicating ways in which British Idealism was formulated in reaction to his thought. The breadth of responses to Mansel are indicative of the impact he had on mid-Victorian intellectual debate: for better or worse, Mansel became a controversial figure whose thought stimulated that of others. For a period, his name recurred time and again in serious literary journals, and became a noticeable feature in that definitive phenomena of Victorian media, periodical literature. Even when he was passionately disagreed with, it was apparent that his work could not be ignored and had to be taken seriously.

Positive Responses (Oxford Tories and Alexander Campbell Fraser)

The first thing to say is that there is clear evidence that many believed Mansel to be a champion of Christian truth. In 1870, a prestigious group including the Archbishop of Canterbury (Tait), the Archbishop of York (Thomson), and – perhaps more

importantly – Lord Salisbury and Lord Shaftesbury, met to form the Christian Evidence Society. The Society gave a stamp of approval to Mansel’s works, recommending them for use in defence of the faith, and promoting their wider circulation amongst the population.

The society... promoted lectures and publications against the Church’s enemies (especially Mill and Spencer), open-air discussions, and classes of children who were taught the evidences of Christianity. The classes included studies of standard works by Mansel, Paley, Butler, Edward Garbett and Archbishop Whately. Prizes were offered as an incentive.¹

Beyond this, it is quite simple to identify the type of academic, intellectual, and literary figures likely to support Mansel’s position. Mansel’s immediate social and intellectual network at St John’s College, Oxford, can be defined with some precision. As C. E. Mallet described the College in his *History of the University of Oxford*, St John’s ‘represented to a large extent the attitude of the old High Church party’.² Poll books show that St John’s was Tory and anti-Gladstone. It was also anti-Tractarian when the Tractarians looked to Gladstone as a political ally. In the 1840s, when Mansel was an undergraduate, the college President, Philip Wynter, had led the condemnations of Ward and Newman, and had further sought to condemn Pusey’s controversial sermon on the Eucharist. Mansel’s ecclesiastical environment was, therefore, Tory, high church, and orthodox. He should be counted as an exemplary church and state conservative, a “high and dry” *classical* Anglican.

¹ M. A. Crowther, *Church Embattled: Religious Controversy in Mid-Victorian England*, (Newton Abbott: David and Charles Limited, 1970), p. 217.

In his definitive study of the varieties of Anglican high churchmanship in the period, Peter Nockles has outlined key features of the old high church position. Noticeably, Mansel's home county of Northamptonshire 'had a high concentration of High Churchmen in the pre-Tractarian era', and it is easy to fit him into this context.³ Many of Mansel's immediate circle of friends, like Bellamy (his school friend from Merchant Taylors'), Burgon (his biographer), and Burgon's brother-in-law, Henry John Rose, were "high and dry" churchmen, and together such men formed the wider intellectual and political network in which Mansel should be located. The Anglican orthodox shared a belief in church establishment, and, as such, shared Disraeli's vision of Young England in the 1840s; for Burkean reasons, they were as opposed to Liberalism as they were to Dissent and the Church of Rome, and tended to associate Englishness with Church-of-Englandism. As another Disraelian churchman, the poet's nephew, Christopher Wordsworth, put it: 'Church and State are two different names of the same thing'.⁴

By the 1860s, the younger "high and dry" churchmen had become middle-aged Disraelians (Disraeli was at the time emphasising Tory commitment to church establishment). Disraeli, of course, made Mansel Dean of St Paul's in 1868, and it is noticeable that a number of other churchmen promoted by Disraeli shared positive views of Mansel's philosophical theology. Chief of these was Burgon himself, whom Disraeli made Dean of Chichester in 1876. Mention should also be made of William Connor Magee, whom Disraeli made Bishop of Peterborough in 1868, and who had

² C. E. Mallet, *A History of the University of Oxford*, vol. III (London: Methuen, 1927), p. 395.

³ P. Nockles, *The Oxford Movement in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 18.

⁴ C. Wordsworth, *Theophilus Anglicanus* (London: Rivingtons, 1869), p. 236. For further discussion of the history of the high church Tories, see S. C. Carpenter, *Eighteenth Century Church and People* (London: John Murray, 1959), pp. 71-86; J. C. D. Clark, *English Society, 1688-1832* (Cambridge:

previously worked hard ‘at an analysis of the conscience with Butler, Mansel, Kant, and others’.⁵ Robert Gregory, sent by Disraeli to St Paul’s as a Cathedral Canon in 1868, was a natural supporter. Goulburn (Burgon’s biographer), who had been made Dean of Norwich under the Derby administration of 1866, was clearly another ally of Mansel. Of those ecclesiastical Tories *not* promoted by Disraeli but who were nevertheless natural allies of Mansel, one may include Thomson, who, besides working closely with Mansel on *Aids to Faith*, also described Gladstone as ‘at heart a despot’, and Lord Beaconsfield as the ‘last [great] Statesman among us’.⁶ Such examples provide evidence that Mansel was likely to be received positively by church and state Tories in the 1860s and 1870s. Other members of the Tory group at Oxford who supported Mansel’s intellectual position included the naval historian, Montagu Burrows, Newman’s ex-curate from St Mary’s, Arthur West Haddan, and a number of Mansel’s old pupils with partisan Tory commitments, like George Saintsbury.⁷

In addition to such figures, Mansel also had allies amongst the Scottish Hamiltonians. Alexander Campbell Fraser sensitively explained and defended aspects of Mansel’s thought to a later generation in his *Biographia Philosophica* (1904). Patrick Proctor Alexander provided a spirited defence of Mansel in his book, *Mill and Carlyle* (1866). Other defenders acted quite independently. Of particular interest is Lucy F. March Phillipps’ *The Battle of the Two Philosophies* (1866), which demonstrated how a female amateur philosopher could side deliberately and consciously with Mansel against Mill. Others wrote anonymous pamphlets: *Is Theism Immoral?* (1877) was a

Cambridge University Press, 1985); W. Gibson, *The Church of England, 1688-1832* (London: Routledge, 2001), especially pp. 216-40.

⁵ J. C. MacDonnell, *The Life and Correspondence of William Connor Magee*, vol. I (London: Isbister and Company, 1896), p. 108. See also p. 62.

⁶ E. Thomson, *The Life and Letters of William Thomson* (London: John Lane The Bodley Head, 1919), pp. 260-61.

later example of this type of publication in defence of Mansel. This type of evidence demonstrates that although Mansel could count on a positive reception from representatives of his own high church Tory network, support also came from other circles as well. Although partisan allegiance to Disraeli tended to go hand in hand with approval of Mansel's philosophical theology, others also found sense in what he had to say. One of the most striking examples of this was the literary critic, Walter Pater (1839-94), who had arrived as an undergraduate at Oxford in 1858, and took his BA in 1862. Pater's first publication, an essay on Coleridge in the *Westminster Review*, January 1866, reflected Manselian themes. 'Modern thought is distinguished from ancient', wrote Pater, 'by its cultivation of the "relative" spirit in place of the "absolute"'. Pater criticised Coleridge for not adopting the relative spirit, but instead opting for the Idealism of Schelling. Pater's questions were Manselian: 'Are absolute principles attainable? What are the limits of knowledge?' He took Mansel's work and applied it to ethics and aesthetics:

The relative spirit, by its constant dwelling on the more fugitive conditions or circumstances of things, breaking through a thousand rough and brutal classifications, and giving elasticity to inflexible principles, begets an intellectual *finesse* of which the ethical result is a delicate and tender justice in the criticism of human life.⁸

Pater was concerned with what relativism meant for personal identity, and became preoccupied with the 'elusive inscrutable mistakeable self'. In a remarkable passage in his essay on 'Style' (1888), Pater associated a strong sense of personal identity with

⁷ See M. Burrows, *Autobiography* (London: Macmillan, 1908), pp. 227-28; A. P. Forbes, *Remains of the Late Rev. Arthur West Haddan* (London: James Parker, 1876), pp. 458-63.

genuine artistic creation and appreciation. For beauty to be beauty it had to affect the *real* personal self, and Pater illustrated this point with reference to Mansel:

An acute philosophical writer, the late Dean Mansel (a writer whose works illustrate the literary beauty there may be in closeness, and with obvious repression or economy of a fine rhetorical gift) wrote a book, of fascinating precision in a very obscure subject, to show that all the technical laws of logic are but means of securing, in each and all of its apprehensions, the unity, the strict identity with itself, of the apprehending mind. All the laws of good writing aim at a similar unity or identity of the mind in all the processes by which the word is associated to its import.⁹

Good style presupposed Manselian psychology, a real unified self creating and appreciating beauty. Though Pater seems for a while to have abandoned Christianity in favour of art, he nevertheless continued to make use of Mansel's philosophical psychology to inform his aesthetic criticism.¹⁰ In later life, drawn back to Anglicanism, he carried with him a Manselian sense that faith did not imply the certainty of knowledge, and wrote eloquently on this theme in his review of Robert Elsmere.¹¹

⁸ W. Pater, 'Coleridge' in *Appreciations* (London: Macmillan, 1890), p. 65 and pp. 104-05.

⁹ W. Pater, 'Style' in *Appreciations*, pp. 18-19.

¹⁰ On Pater and Mansel see C. A. Runcie, 'Walter Pater's Poetics of Enactment' in *Literature and Aesthetics*, vol. 3 (1993), pp. 83-95; J. B. Bullen, 'Pater, Mill, Mansel and the Context of the Conclusion to *The Renaissance*' in *Nineteenth-Century Contexts: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, vol. 21, (1999), pp. 1-15.

Post-Tractarian and Roman Catholic Responses (William George Ward and John Henry Newman)

The ex-Tractarians were not natural sympathisers with the orthodox high church network. They were critical of church establishment if it meant Erastianism, and tended, until the mid-1860s, to be political supporters of Gladstone. Nevertheless, as acute and sensitive theologians, many of the group approved of Mansel's work. The most prominent of these was Keble himself, who was enthusiastic about the Bampton Lectures. In a letter dated 23rd September, 1860, he wrote to George Moberly, 'I am looking over Mr. Mansel's book: is it not a treasure?'¹² When Keble died in March 1866, and plans were put in place for the foundation of Keble College, Mansel, together with Pusey, was nominated to serve on the original committee.¹³ Mansel was on good terms with Pusey, having served with him on the Hebdomadal Council from 1854. Liddon later recorded that Pusey and Mansel 'always cordially co-operated' in University politics.¹⁴ Although no Puseyite, Mansel was obviously adjudged theologically sound. He was entrusted with the education of Pusey's nephew, Lord Carnarvon, and seems to have grown closer to Pusey in the 1860s. In 1866, Pusey even took the unusual step of reproducing a long letter from Mansel on the topic of miracles in his sermon for Septuagesima Sunday, 1866. Pusey recommended Mansel in print as a Christian philosopher with an 'acute mind'.¹⁵ Little wonder, then, that Pusey's disciple, Henry Parry Liddon, became a philosophical follower of Mansel. Carpenter described Liddon as holding fast to a 'Manselian source of illumination',¹⁶

¹¹ On Pater and Christianity see M. Cowling, *Religion and Public Doctrine in Modern England*, vol. III (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 115-22.

¹² C. A. E. Moberly, *Dulce Domum: George Moberly, his Family and Friends* (London: John Murray, 1911), p. 163.

¹³ C. E. Mallet, *A History of the University of Oxford*, vol. III, p. 427.

¹⁴ H. P. Liddon, *Life of E. B. Pusey*, vol. III (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1894), p. 405.

¹⁵ E. B. Pusey, *The Miracles of Prayer: A Sermon Preached before the University* (Oxford: John Henry and James Parker, 1866), p. 33.

¹⁶ S. C. Carpenter, *Church and People, 1789-1889* (London: SPCK, 1933), p. 525.

Richmond stated that Liddon ‘adhered to the Manselian doctrine’;¹⁷ Russell implied that Mansel provided the theological content to Liddon’s sermons: Liddon knew how to communicate what some found obscure in the other man’s work.¹⁸

Liddon’s great contribution to mid-Victorian theology was made in his own Bampton Lectures for 1866, published as *The Divinity of Our Lord* in 1867. Although concerned with Christology rather than philosophical theology, it is difficult to conceive the book could have been written without presupposing Mansel’s work. Mansel had been uniquely equipped in knowledge of Kantian, post-Kantian, and Hegelian philosophy at Oxford, and Liddon, following Mansel’s lead, made detailed reference to the same material. Like Mansel, Liddon rejected Pantheism and asserted that God was not an impersonal Being, with no real existence apart from the world or human ideas. ‘We know that His Existence is, strictly and in the highest sense, Personal’.¹⁹ According to Liddon, the ‘primal truth’ of Christianity was that ‘a Personal God really exists’. He argued that the doctrine of the Incarnation was the fulfilment of this ‘primal theistic truth’.²⁰ God had proclaimed that he was ‘Himself a free Intelligent Agent’; ‘The Christian Church believes that God has really spoken’.²¹ Liddon represented the ‘orthodox reaction of the nineteenth century’, insisting on the priority of revelation in Christian theology.²² In this, he followed Mansel, and Liddon’s Bampton Lectures may be viewed as the application of Mansel’s doctrine to Christology in order to develop a full account of the doctrine of Revelation in Trinitarian terms. The Manselian-Liddonian doctrine was evidently influential on

¹⁷ W. Richmond, ‘Introduction’ in H. S. Holland, *The Philosophy of Faith and the Fourth Gospel* (London: John Murray, 1920), pp. 3-12, here citing p. 6.

¹⁸ G. W. E. Russell, *Dr. Liddon* (London: A. R. Mowbray & Co., 1905), pp. 38-9.

¹⁹ H. P. Liddon, *The Divinity of Our Lord* (London: Rivingtons, 1888), p. 30.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 453-55.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 269 and p. 449.

other high church figures. Mansel's successor as Dean of St Paul's, R. W. Church, emphasised that God was known *only* through the intercourse and communication of *prayer*, and likened this to personal relationship with 'fellow men'. Such interpersonal knowledge of God, was definitively *not* knowledge *about* God – for this knowledge would be impossible:

God is always hidden... we gaze up into the empty air or the thick darkness, we address our words to the eternal silence. That is to say, in this as in all other things, we walk by faith and not by sight. By faith only, not by sight, can we attain to, or enjoy, the knowledge of God. But this does not prevent what I said from being true. By communication, and intercourse, and converse with God, and by this only, can we attain to the knowledge of God... Yes, prayer is the only way by which man can know God. For it is only by our spirit addressing itself to God, meeting God, speaking what is in it to God, that man, who is a spirit, can know and feel that he knows God, who is a Spirit; and to do this, is to pray.²³

Likewise, Bishop Edward King's discussion of freedom, revelation, personal existence, conscience, God, and Christ, bore the recognisable impression of Mansel's doctrine.²⁴

Turning to the reception of Mansel's thought by those Anglicans who had converted to Roman Catholicism, a more complex and ambiguous picture emerges. A number of

²² J. M. Creed, *The Divinity of Jesus Christ* (London: Collins, 1964), pp. 105-06.

²³ R. W. Church, 'Knowledge of God by Prayer' in *Village Sermons*, second series (London: Macmillan, 1902), pp. 221-27, especially pp. 224-25.

²⁴ E. King, *Duty and Conscience* (London: Mowbray, 1911), pp. 34-38.

scholars have recognised the affinities between Newman's *Anglican* teaching, and Mansel's philosophical theology, and some have argued that the *Grammar of Assent* was Newman's *Roman Catholic* reply to Mansel's *Limits of Religious Thought*. Thus, according to J. D. Earnest and G. Tracey, the editors of the critical edition of Newman's *University Sermons*, Mansel's Lectures seem 'to have been one source of Newman's decision to publish the third edition of the *Oxford University Sermons*, even though the second edition had still not sold out'. Moreover, 'Even more curious... another result of the Mansel controversy may have been the *Grammar of Assent*'.²⁵ Granted the status of Newman's *Grammar* as *the* English theological classic of the Victorian period, such remarks demand attention. Quite clearly, Newman had some sort of influence on Mansel, but Mansel also had some sort of affect on Newman. One Newman scholar, J. Artz, has even suggested that examination of the connection between the two theologians 'merits a monograph'.²⁶ In the following I will restrict myself to the rather less ambitious task of providing details relevant to placing Mansel in context, and introduce archive material relevant to this project hitherto completely unnoticed in scholarship on both Mansel and Newman.

Mansel had been an undergraduate at Oxford at the height of Newman's power at the University. Newman's *University Sermons* were published in the same year that Mansel received his double first and was awarded a fellowship at St John's (1843).

²⁵ J. D. Earnest and G. Tracey (eds.), 'Editors' Introduction' in J. H. Newman, *Fifteen Sermons Preached Before the University of Oxford* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. cxvi. See further relevant remarks of this type in D. Cupitt, 'Mansel's Theory of Regulative Truth' in *Journal of Theological Studies*, vol. XVIII, no. 1 (1967), p. 104; N. Lash, 'Introduction' in J. H. Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), p. 1; M. Jadwiga Swiatecka, *The Idea of the Symbol: Some Nineteenth Century Comparisons with Coleridge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 5; B. Lightman, *The Origins of Agnosticism* (Baltimore, Maryland: The John Hopkins University Press, 1987), p. 69.

William George Ward's *Ideal of a Christian Church* was published in the same year that Mansel was ordained deacon (1844). The following year, when Mansel was a twenty-five year old college fellow, Ward was condemned and deprived of his degree by a group of University officials led by Mansel's own college President, Philip Wynter. It is impossible to imagine that Mansel was unaware of these matters. He was ordained priest in the Church of England in 1845, just three months after first Ward, and then Newman, seceded to Rome. Secure in the high church ethos of St John's, Mansel seems to have been unaffected by Newman's doubts over the Church of England. He committed himself to the Church just as Newman was leaving it.

Mansel seems to have attracted Ward's attention first. In the first edition of Ward's *Nature and Grace* (1859), the author cited a long passage from the *Prolegomena Logica*, and criticised Mansel for lacking the certainty of truth demanded by Roman Catholic philosophy. Ward labelled Mansel a sceptic and called him a disciple of Kant, though he also admitted that he had no acquaintance with Kant's writings himself and was not in any position to judge the question of Mansel's supposed Kantianism confidently.²⁷ When the second edition of *Nature and Grace* appeared the following year, in 1860, the three pages on Mansel in the original text had been extended to six. By this point, Ward had read Mansel's Bampton Lectures, but he had not changed his view: 'Mr. Mansel... implies a denial of what we have called the "Principle of Certitude"'.²⁸ Mansel's adherence to the Butlerian doctrine of probability as the guide for faith evidently fell short of Ward's demand for certainty.

²⁶ J. Artz, 'Newman in Contact with Kant's Thought' in *Journal of Theological Studies*, N. S., vol. XXXI, pt. 2 (October, 1980), p. 523.

²⁷ W. G. Ward, *On Nature and Grace*, Book I (London: no publisher, printed for private circulation, 1859), pp. 15-17.

²⁸ W. G. Ward, *On Nature and Grace*, Book I (London: Burns and Lambert, 1860), pp. 20-26, here citing p. 21.

Ultimately, the demand for certitude or certainty in faith was to become the chief Roman Catholic criticism of Mansel: Ward's concern on this point was later to be reproduced by Newman, and possibly reflects both men's almost fundamentalist assumption that the Roman Catholic Church taught with an authoritative certainty that Anglicanism lacked. An informative contrast may here be drawn between Mansel's balanced view – wonderfully expressed in the Preface to the third edition to the *Limits of Religious Thought* – that 'our rational conviction in any particular case [of religious truth] must be regarded, not as a *certainty*, but as a *probability*', and Newman's raw proclamation, 'I know I am right. How do you know it? I know I know'.²⁹ For Mansel, there was no 'single infallible criterion of all religious truth' and those 'who set up some one supreme criterion of religious truth... are especially liable to be led into error'.³⁰ For Newman, 'Certitude... is... the consciousness of knowing, as expressed in the phrase, "I know that I know," or "I know that I know that I know"'.³¹ In summary, Mansel was upholding the old Butlerian principle of Anglican orthodoxy that 'probability is the very guide of life'.³² Newman (or at least Newman writing in 1864 *after* reading Mansel) had begun to associate Butlerian probability with 'scepticism', not certainty.³³

Despite such concerns about the 'Principle of Certitude', Ward's early misgivings about Mansel can be contrasted with the position he moved to in the 1870s once he

²⁹ H. L. Mansel, 'Preface to the Third Edition' in *Limits of Religious Thought*, American Edition (Boston: Gould and Lincoln, 1868), p. 16 (note that this preface was not included in the fifth edition); John Henry Newman, *John Henry Newman: Autobiographical Writings*, ed. Henry Tristram (London, 1956), p. 172 cited in Ian Ker, *John Henry Newman: A Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 5.

³⁰ H. L. Mansel, 'Preface to the Third Edition', pp. 16-17.

³¹ J. H. Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1917), p. 197.

³² J. Butler, 'Introduction' to *Analogy of Religion* in *Works*, vol. I (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1836), p. 3.

³³ J. H. Newman, *Apologia Pro Via Sua* (London: Penguin, 1994), pp. 30-31.

had established himself as a critic of John Stuart Mill. Ward spent the 70s writing a series of essays in criticism of Mill, revisiting Mill's controversial *Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy*, and effectively offering a guarded defence of Mansel's philosophical theology from a critical Roman Catholic perspective. Many of Ward's essays on Mill, collected together in his posthumous *Essays on the Philosophy of Theism* (1884), demonstrate a keen if critical sympathy for Mansel's position. Mansel's intellectual critics had become Ward's principal targets. More than once Ward insisted that Mill had misunderstood Mansel, and sought to defend Hamilton against both Mill and Spencer.³⁴ Further, Ward even happily reproduced Mansel's letter to Pusey on miracles in his own essay on the same topic. Mansel's argument was acknowledged to be remarkably similar to his own.³⁵ In hindsight, Ward could be viewed as having taken up the defence of Mansel (albeit from a Roman Catholic perspective), after Mansel's own untimely death in 1871. The overall message of his essays reproduced many of Mansel's key doctrines, including defence of Reidian common sense, defence of the idea of God as a personal being, defence of free will, defence of miracles, and attacks on Mill and Spencer. Ward evidently intuited the elements of truth in Mansel's position, even though as a Roman Catholic convert he could never quite admit the fact.

With Newman, the case is more complicated than with Ward, yet still ultimately focuses on the same Roman Catholic 'Principle of Certitude' which Ward originally found lacking in Mansel. Mansel was criticised for not rendering faith as certain

³⁴ See W. G. Ward, *Essays on the Philosophy of Theism*, vol. I (London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., 1884), p. 41, p. 47, and p. 114.

³⁵ W. G. Ward, *Essays on the Philosophy of Theism*, vol. II, pp. 211-13. Ward's claim that he had arrived at the same argument independently of Mansel can have a question mark placed against it. Ward's own son, Wilfrid Ward, in conversation with Newman attributed this type of argument to

knowledge; Newman wanted faith to be something more like knowledge, and could not find this in Mansel. For Mansel, by contrast, faith would not be faith if it could not be doubted, and religious belief implied something more like interpersonal relationship, something quite mysterious, but nonetheless real. Like Butler, Mansel was interested in the perplexity of the reality of human religious life, not in the certainty that Ward and Newman required to justify their conversions to Rome.

If Ward's "Principle of Certitude" divided Newman from Mansel, so too did his overall *approach* to the task of philosophical theology. Newman did not read German. He became aware of Kant through Coleridge and French literature, but could not be counted a *professional* philosopher or theologian. Mansel, by contrast, possessed an encyclopaedic knowledge of the German, French, and British traditions of philosophical and theological writing, and approached his task with a level of technical, academic professionalism not found in Newman. For all that they shared some broad theological sympathies, in one respect Mansel's work resembles a re-thinking of select themes from Newman by a *professional*, with critical apparatus supplied. At the end of the day, Mansel knew what Newman did not know – the difference between Reid, Jacobi, and Hamilton, on the one hand, and Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, Strauss, and Feuerbach, on the other.

Looking first at the *Anglican* teaching of Newman, a strong resemblance to Mansel's later work may be discerned. In the *University Sermons*, Newman observed what he called the 'method of personation' in God's revelation: God was 'continually revealed to us as a Person', and the Trinitarian 'plurality of Persons in the Godhead' acted as a

Mansel rather than to his own father. Why should Wilfrid Ward have done this unless he believed Mansel to be the originator of the argument?

sure guarantee that orthodox Christians could not be ‘Pantheists’. This was despite the fact that it was ‘inconceivable... how Personality can in any way be an attribute of the infinite, incommunicable Essence of the Deity’.³⁶ Newman therefore anticipated the central paradox of Mansel’s Bampton Lectures: the incomprehensibility of a God who was simultaneously infinite and personal. Further to such remarks, Newman’s sermon on ‘Personal Influence, the Means of Propagating the Truth’, has been particularly looked upon as an indication of his early “personalism”. Thus, Avery Cardinal Dulles has written of Newman’s ‘personalist apologetic’, and has suggested that he was ‘the outstanding master of personalism in theological epistemology’, the originator of a tradition that would have a profound impact on Roman Catholic theology in the twentieth century.³⁷ It is hard to imagine that Newman’s personalism did not have an affect on Mansel once he had learnt of its existence, yet Mansel derived his own version of personalism primarily from Jacobi and Hamilton, not Newman, and presented it in quite different terms. Certainly, it has to be admitted that Mansel’s own discussion of personalist themes was far more extensive than Newman’s, and took a more technical, rigorous form. Nevertheless, the essential religious message was in many ways identical: divine revelation was conceived in personalist terms, and understood as a moment of encounter between one person and another. This meant that the Anglican Newman faced some of the same difficulties for which Mansel was later to be criticised. Newman himself drew attention to one serious problem: why should faith believe the revelation given in Christianity, rather than the revelation given in Islam or any other religion, if reason itself could not judge the truth of that which transcended the limits of human knowledge? Newman’s own answer –

³⁶ J. H. Newman, *Fifteen Sermons Preached Before the University of Oxford*, pp. 32-34.

³⁷ Dulles, *Newman* (London, 2002), p. 45 and p. 159. On this theme, see also J. F. Crosby, *The Personalism of John Henry Newman* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2014).

consistent with his religious scheme – was conceived in personalist terms. Reason was not the safeguard of faith. ‘The safeguard of Faith is a right state of heart... It is Love which forms it out of the rude chaos into an image of Christ... justifying Faith... is *fides formata charitate*... We believe, because we love’.³⁸ The religious heart was drawn to the person it loved, not some abstract rule of reason. This was not a rationalistic approach to religion; it was a personalistic approach. Theology did not have to be rationalist; it only had to be reasonable.

Soon after the publication of the *Limits of Religious Thought* in 1858, Richard Simpson drew attention to the similarities between Newman and Mansel in the moderate Roman Catholic periodical, *The Rambler*. Simpson got somewhere close to accusing Mansel of virtual plagiarism of Newman’s *University Sermons*:

In these Bampton Lectures [Mansel] is going over the very ground that his illustrious predecessor in the pulpit of St. Mary’s so diligently cultivated; the conclusions to which the two men arrive are much alike, and there is a wonderful conformity in their very phraseology. Yet neither in text or note is Dr. Newman’s name once mentioned... When Mr. Mansel was an undergraduate, and for a short time after he had taken his degree, all Oxford was full of the fame of one man, who was recognised on all hands as the leading spirit of the University... No one who thought at all, was able to withdraw himself from the subtle influence of the great teacher, the reviver of religious thought in Oxford. If the influence came not directly from the

³⁸ J. H. Newman, *Fifteen Sermons Preached Before the University of Oxford*, pp. 162-63.

preacher's lips, it came indirectly through others, or it was felt in the atmosphere of the place.³⁹

This was a serious charge, and it was imperative that Mansel should reply in public. Mansel responded by issuing a new preface to the third edition of the *Limits of Religious Thought* (1859). This preface was republished in the fourth edition (1859), but was eventually to be omitted from the fifth edition (1867) when there was no longer any need to revisit past controversies. Mansel took the opportunity to deny any reliance on Newman's work:

Against a charge of this kind there is but one possible defence. No obligation was acknowledged, simply because none existed... Dr. Newman's teaching from the University pulpit was almost at its close before my connection with Oxford began: his parochial sermons I had very seldom an opportunity of hearing. His published writings might doubtless have given me much valuable assistance; but with these I was but slightly acquainted when these Lectures were first published; and the little that I knew contained nothing which appeared to bear upon my argument.⁴⁰

There is no good reason to doubt Mansel's word on this matter. By the time of his Bampton Lectures in 1858, Oxford no longer had any interest in the discredited Newman: J. B. Mozley observed that at this time there was 'no allusion to [the

³⁹ R. Simpson, 'Mansel's Bampton Lectures' in *The Rambler* (December 1858), no. 10, pp. 407-415, p. 409.

⁴⁰ H. L. Mansel, 'Preface to the Third Edition' in *Limits of Religious Thought*, p. xxvi.

Tractarians] ever, even the most remote'.⁴¹ It must have been possible for Mansel to have drawn his own conclusions independently of Newman. Nevertheless, Mansel evidently took the opportunity to read Newman's *University Sermons* at this point, and realised that his own work had much in common with the other man's. He humbly and courteously remarked:

That Revelation is accommodated to the limitations of man's faculties, and is primarily designed for the purposes of practical religion, and not for those of speculative philosophy, has been said over and over again by writers of almost every age, and is indeed a truth so obvious that it might have occurred independently to almost any number of thinkers. Doubtless there is no truth, however trite and obvious, which may not assume a new and striking aspect in the hands of a great and original writer; and in this, as in other respects, a better acquaintance with Dr. Newman's works might have taught me a better mode of expressing many arguments to which my own language may have done but imperfect justice.⁴²

Simpson accepted Mansel's explanation, and wrote a letter to Newman to say that it was necessary 'to make some amends to [Mansel] for an exaggerated accusation'.⁴³ In July 1859, Simpson's apology was published in *The Home and Foreign Review*: Mansel's response to the original charge had been 'satisfactory and handsome'.⁴⁴ Mansel's independence of Newman had been accepted as fact, but notice of the

⁴¹ Mozley to Church, (December 13th, 1858), in *Letters of the Reverend J. B. Mozley* (London: Rivingtons, 1885), p. 240.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. xxvi-xxvii.

⁴³ Simpson to Newman, 7th March, 1859, in C. S. Dessain (ed.), *The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman*, vol. XIX (Nelson, 1969), p. 77, n. 4.

similarities between their work had by now drawn Newman's own attention. Some six months later, Newman wrote to Charles Meynell, the Professor of Philosophy at Oscott, a letter stating his own ambiguous feelings about Mansel's work.

I have read a good deal of Mansel's Book – enough to show me that, as far as I may do so, without risk of false doctrine or temerity, I agree with it. Nay it seems to me taken from my own Protestant teaching. This does not hinder me from feeling a serious objection and fear of some of the things which he has said.⁴⁵

In the same letter Newman told Meynell that he was thinking of re-issuing his *University Sermons*, before adding that, 'I might be tempted... to write more'.⁴⁶ Meynell replied, suggesting that Newman had anticipated Mansel 'in considering our ignorance as regards theological subjects, in a systematic manner'. Meynell also observed that Mansel's account of theological 'Contradictions' (paradoxes?) was possibly derived 'from Kant and Sir William Hamilton', not Newman.⁴⁷ Evidently, this was sufficient to tempt Newman into action. He drafted a long, incomplete, and eventually unsent letter to Meynell on Mansel. Examination of this text shows that Newman initially thought there was a problem with Mansel's account of relativity. Revealed knowledge must be 'more than mere *relative* knowledge', wrote Newman. The 'word Person' in Mansel's teaching, thought Newman, was 'not an absolute fact in the Divine Nature, but a relation of the Divine Nature towards us, God acting

⁴⁴ R. Simpson, 'Literary Notices' in *The Home and Foreign Review* (July 1859), no. 1, pp. 247-48, here citing p. 247.

⁴⁵ Newman to Meynell, December 20th, 1859, *The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman*, vol. XIX, p. 256.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 256.

⁴⁷ Meynell to Newman, undated, in *The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman*, vol. XIX, p. 257.

towards us as Father, as Redeemer, as Sanctifier'.⁴⁸ (The attentive reader should note that this was not a fair criticism of Mansel: Mansel held that knowledge could be both relative and real simultaneously; the theory of personal relativity did not imply the absence of the fact of personality in the Divine Nature).⁴⁹ Newman took this to mean that Mansel had failed to provide a genuinely Trinitarian account of God, based on the *reality* of three persons in one Godhead. He therefore attempted to accuse Mansel of the Unitarian heresy of Sabellianism. Newman obviously realised that he had misinterpreted Mansel, for the draft letter quickly tailed off and was abandoned. What, then, *was* wrong with Mansel?

In 1859, Newman's notebooks indicate that he had gained new interest in Reid and Hamilton, and had possibly read Mansel's edition of *Aldrich*.⁵⁰ Although he had been familiar with Reid's work from as early as 1822, Newman took up serious close study of Reid only after the publication of Mansel's Bampton Lectures, and from this point onwards seems to have been provoked into a flurry of Mansel-inspired activity.⁵¹ In January 1860, he affirmed in a letter to Meynell, 'what Mr Mansel has said, I have said before him'. Newman went on to say something which revealed his intentions at the time:

I have had some correspondence with a dear Protestant friend, who wishes me to write a *book*, on what would really be the same subject [as the *University Sermons*] expanded... If I wrote a new work, it would be on 'the popular,

⁴⁸ Newman to Meynell, unsent letter, 'Appendix: Letter of December 1859 to Charles Meynell on Economy and Reserve' in H. M. de Achaval, J. D. Holmes, and C. S. Dessain (eds.), *The Theological Papers of John Henry Newman on Faith and Certainty* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), pp. 159-65, here citing pp. 159-60.

⁴⁹ See H. L. Mansel, *Limits of Religious Thought*, fifth edition, pp. 278-79.

⁵⁰ See *The Theological Papers of John Henry Newman on Faith and Certainty*, p. 51 and p. 91.

practical, and personal evidence of Christianity –’ i.e. as contrasted to the scientific, and its object would be to show that a given individual, high or low, has as much right (has as real rational grounds) to be certain, as a learned theologian who knows the scientific evidence.⁵²

Newman continued to be concerned about the theory of relativity. On the 9th May, 1860, Newman again wrote to Meynell: ‘To assert, with the School of Sir W. H. and Mansell [*sic*], that nothing is known because nothing is known luminously and exactly, seems to me saying [*sic*] that we do not see the stars because we cannot tell the number, size, or distance from each other’.⁵³ Once again, this was an unfair criticism of Mansel, for whom relative knowledge could be real; nevertheless, Newman persisted in this vein. Like Ward, whose *Nature and Grace* had now been published, Newman was searching for something beyond relativity, namely, *certainty*. Over the succeeding years, Newman worked on the project which was to eventually become the *Grammar of Assent*, a response to the search for certainty in faith.⁵⁴ The book was an implicit defence of Ward’s dogmatic “Principle of Certitude” against Mansel’s softer, more subjective, yet in its own way equally real, theological personalism.

In 1864, Goldwin Smith’s criticisms of Mansel had been picked up by members of Newman’s network. In a letter Richard Simpson sent to Lord Acton dated 4th March, Simpson argued that Mansel was right: God’s character was unknown to speculative

⁵¹ See M. J. Ferreira, *Scepticism and Reasonable Doubt* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), pp. 146-47.

⁵² Newman to Meynell, January 23rd, 1860, *The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman*, vol. XIX, p. 294.

⁵³ Newman to Meynell, 9th May, 1860, in *The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman*, vol. XIX, p. 335.

philosophy, and apprehension of God was dependent on revelation. Yet, in a sense, Smith was right to argue ‘that our moral nature bears the *positive* image of God’. This was a great question, and Simpson wondered whether Newman ought to ‘do it’.⁵⁵

Only sixteen months lay between the publication of the *Grammar of Assent* on the 15th March, 1870, and Mansel’s death on the 30th July, 1871. In this time, Mansel obtained a copy of Newman’s new book, read it, and annotated it. Mansel’s personal copy of the *Grammar*, held by the library at St John’s College, provides essential archival evidence for what he thought of Newman’s work. Very curiously, it has hitherto been ignored by scholarship.

It is interesting to note particular features of Mansel’s annotations. In one case he seems to have been interested in Newman’s use of language which echoed his own: Mansel had spoken of relationship with God being ‘under finite forms to finite minds, as a Person to a Person’; Newman had written of notions of God ‘forced on us by the necessity of our finite conceptions’ as being *different* to ‘the real and immutable distinction which exists between Person and Person’ in the Godhead.⁵⁶ The vocabulary seemed similar enough. Other annotations questioned Newman’s logical acumen, and raised concerns over Newman’s reading of Locke. But what really concerned Mansel more than anything else in these marginal notes was his perception that Newman’s definition of belief amounted to nothing but, as Mansel scribbled in his own handwriting, ‘blind acceptance’. Where Newman had argued that a believer

⁵⁴ For a detailed examination of the background to the *Grammar of Assent* see *Theological Papers of J. H. Newman on Faith and Certainty*; see also D. A. Pailin, *The Way to Faith* (London: Epworth Press, 1969).

⁵⁵ Simpson to Acton, 4th March, 1864, in J. L. Altholz, D. McElrath, and J. C. Holland (eds.), *The Correspondence of Lord Acton and Richard Simpson*, vol. III (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 181.

could not also be an inquirer, Mansel pencilled the note, 'Why not?' Mansel's understanding of belief was rather more flexible than Newman allowed. 'I believe, but a doubt is suggested to me, which without destroying my belief, raises a difficulty to me', wrote Mansel. He continued: 'may I not endeavour to overcome this difficulty or imagine how it may be reconciled with my belief, without becoming an unbeliever'.⁵⁷ Mansel was concerned about Newman's apparent argument that 'the essence of assent is the absence of all doubt'.⁵⁸ He noted that 'by making assent unconditional' Newman in fact asserted the conclusion that 'obstinacy is a duty' and that 'a man's confidence in a statement is the measure of its truth'.⁵⁹ To Mansel, Newman appeared to be, more or less a fundamentalist.

What can be taken from this is that Mansel was considerably more flexible or accommodating in his attitude to doubt than Newman would allow. As far as Mansel was concerned, doubts, problems, questions, could co-exist with belief without overthrowing belief. Newman, by contrast, seemed obsessed with turning faith into inflexible, rigid, certainty. For this he was criticised by James Fitzjames Stephen in *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity* (1874). In an apparently Manselian passage, Fitzjames Stephen wrote:

The whole doctrine of faith involves an admission that doubt is the proper attitude of mind about religion, if the subject is regarded from the intellectual side alone... If a man actually did rise from the dead and find himself in a different world, he would no longer be told to believe in a future state; he

⁵⁶ H. L. Mansel, *Limits of Religious Thought*, fifth edition, p. 91; J. H. Newman, *Grammar of Assent*, second edition (London: Burns, Oates, & Co., 1870), p. 48.

⁵⁷ Mansel's handwritten annotations to *Grammar of Assent*, pp. 184-85.

⁵⁸ Mansel's handwritten annotations to *Grammar of Assent*, p. 176.

would know it. When St Paul contrasts seeing in a glass darkly with seeing face to face – when he says that now we know in part and believe in part – he admits that belief is not knowledge; and he would have found it impossible to distinguish (at least no one has yet established an intelligible distinction) between faith and acting on a probability – in other words, between faith and a kind of doubt. The difference between the two states of mind is moral, not intellectual. Faith says, Yes, I will, *though* I am not sure. Doubt says, No, I will not, *because* I am not sure; but they agree in not being sure. Both faith and doubt would be swallowed up in actual knowledge and direct experience.⁶⁰

If faith was certain it would cease to be faith. It is perhaps informative and useful to observe that, in Barthian perspective, Newman took the *certainty* of his own personal act of faith too seriously, whilst Mansel, conscious of his own limits and fallibility, like Reid, *trusted in God* to supply what was lacking in his own knowledge. As Barth was later to say, ‘Everyone who has to contend with unbelief should be advised that he ought not to take his own unbelief too seriously. Only faith is to be taken seriously; and if we have faith as a grain of mustard seed, that suffices for the devil to have lost his game’.⁶¹

Reception by “Agnostics” (Herbert Spencer and Thomas Henry Huxley)

Herbert Spencer’s role in the reception of Mansel’s work, and the denigration of Mansel’s later reputation, demands discussion. At the end of the day, it was Spencer,

⁵⁹ Mansel’s handwritten annotations to *Grammar of Assent*, p. 191.

⁶⁰ J. Fitzjames Stephen, *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 264.

⁶¹ K. Barth, *Dogmatics in Outline* (London: SCM, 1949), pp. 20-21.

more than anyone else, who was responsible for the tradition of reading Mansel as a Kantian, Spencerian, agnostic. Although born in the same year (1820), Spencer outlived Mansel by thirty-two years, and therefore had plenty of time to promote his picture of Mansel before his own death in 1903. Spencer wanted Mansel to be remembered primarily in connection with his own name, and unfairly distorted the reception of Mansel's work. As discussed above, Spencer's reasons for this distortion were probably, more than anything else, personal. His affair with Mansel's sister, Katherine, lay at the root of things. Although the affair took place when Spencer was twenty years old in 1840, there is evidence that he still 'cherished his illusions' about Katherine Mansel 'more deeply than he would admit' even in old age.⁶² This awkward, deeply personal affair probably led to his later strained interpretation of Mansel's work, his 'apparently incongruous' use of Mansel's ideas, and his 'constant brandishing' of the Mansel name in print which scholars have hitherto struggled to explain.⁶³ According to Mark Francis, Herbert Spencer 'always remained distantly in love with the memory of this young woman', a woman that can now be identified as Katherine Mansel.⁶⁴

It is hard to be sympathetic to Spencer. His attitude towards women was, frankly, appalling. His own biographer has drawn attention to what Spencer himself described as his "rough playfulness" with young women: 'girls under his control, were caressed frequently, and had to forfeit to him a kiss whenever he answered a question they put to him. Spencer was oblivious to any suggestion that the objects of his affection might

⁶² 'Two', *Home Life with Herbert Spencer*, new edition (Bristol: J. W. Arrowsmith, 1911), p. 123.

⁶³ M. Taylor, 'Spencer, Herbert' in W. Mander and A. P. F. Sell (eds.), *Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century British Philosophers*, vol. 2 (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 2002), pp. 1052-58, here citing p. 1054; Mark Francis, *Herbert Spencer* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2007), p. 182.

⁶⁴ M. Francis, *Herbert Spencer*, p. 29.

not want to kiss men'.⁶⁵ His behaviour towards George Eliot was atrocious, and the deliberately distorted account of it he left for posterity reveals his capacity for manipulation. He treated women as objects, refusing to meet ones he found "ugly", but welcoming the ones he found "beautiful". Women were, for him, mere objects of sexual lust.⁶⁶

In feminist perspective, such behaviour is bad enough. Combine this with Spencer's support for extreme *laissez-faire* economics, his responsibility for the development of the terrifying doctrines of social-Darwinism, with his coining of the principle of the 'survival of the fittest', and the resultant picture of Spencer's personality is grim.

Spencer conceptualised people as objects; little wonder he could not understand Mansel's personalism. Where Mansel had referred to persons, Spencer referred to the unknown. Indifferent to other people – and therefore indifferent to personalism – Spencer could only take Mansel for an inconsistent Kantian. It was Spencer who, in 1862, was the first to label Mansel (quite incorrectly) a 'Kantist', and it was through Spencer's Liberal allies, like Goldwin Smith, that this label spread through intellectual circles.⁶⁷ Sadly, Mansel could not explain his differences from Spencer in print: he could not defend himself in public controversy with Spencer without potentially drawing attention to his sister and embarrassing his own family. Although more than able to rise to the challenge of Maurice, Goldwin Smith, and Mill, Mansel could only respond to Spencer with silence. If this point is not taken seriously, how else does one explain the otherwise curious fact that Spencer's name occurs only once in Mansel's writing? Despite later writers' attempts to tie the names of Mansel and

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 55.

⁶⁶ 'Two', *Home Life with Herbert Spencer*, pp. 119-20.

Spencer together, all that Mansel himself had to say on the other man was restricted to a single, dismissive sentence: ‘I have not read Mr. Spencer’s book on First Principles, which I believe is only printed for his own subscribers; but from what I know of it indirectly, and from what I know directly of the author’s other writings, I believe his teaching to be the contradictory, not the complement, of mine’.⁶⁸

In 1869, William George Ward asked both Mansel and Spencer to join the new Metaphysical Society, together with Manning, Tennyson, Mill, Huxley, Gladstone and others. Crucially, both Mansel and Spencer refused the invitation – and were noticeable for having done so. Spencer declined ‘for the reason that too much nervous expenditure would have resulted’.⁶⁹

Examination of Spencer’s use of Mansel in *First Principles* (1862) shows just how one-sided his interpretation was: personalism was eradicated; only relativism and scepticism remained. Ultimately, Spencer’s was a reductive reading of Mansel. Although he noted Mansel’s interest in self-consciousness, he found Mansel’s treatment of the subject ‘unsophisticated’ and inconsistent with thoroughgoing scepticism. For Spencer, ‘the personality of which each is conscious, and the existence of which is to each a fact beyond all others the most certain, is yet a thing which cannot be known at all, in the strict sense of the word’.⁷⁰ Having dismissed the self, Spencer proceeded to dismiss God: where Mansel had approached the unknown God through prayer with reverence, Spencer simply ignored the unknowable deity. To achieve this result, Spencer turned a blind eye to the religious or fideistic elements of

⁶⁷ H. Spencer, *First Principles* (London: Watts & Co., 1937), p. 31.

⁶⁸ H. L. Mansel, *Second Letter to Professor Goldwin Smith* (Oxford: Henry Hamman, 1862), p. 53.

⁶⁹ A. W. Brown, *The Metaphysical Society: Victorian Minds in Crisis, 1869-1880* (New York: Octagon Books, 1973), pp. 22-24.

the intellectual tradition to which Mansel belonged: he either did not know, or did not care for, the philosophy of Reid and Jacobi. Hamilton's and Mansel's recourse to Jacobi's epistemological doctrine of "revelation" struck Spencer as inconsistent or incomprehensible. Better awareness of Jacobi's philosophy, or at least awareness of the problems in Kant's idealism and scepticism which Jacobian realists had tried to solve, may have prevented Spencer from being so dismissive of Hamilton and Mansel. On the other hand, perhaps Spencer was simply prejudiced against religion, and dogmatically rejected religious solutions to problems of philosophical scepticism. The following passage from *First Principles* is telling:

Both Sir William Hamilton and Mr Mansel do, in other places, distinctly imply that our consciousness of the Absolute, indefinite though it is, is positive. The very passage in which Sir William Hamilton asserts that "the *absolute* is conceived merely by negation of conceivability," itself ends with the remark that, "by a wonderful revelation we are thus, in the very consciousness of our inability to conceive aught above the relative and finite, inspired with a belief in the existence of something unconditioned beyond the sphere of all comprehensible reality." The last of these assertions practically admits that which the first denies. By the laws of thought as Sir William Hamilton interprets them, he finds himself forced to the conclusion that our consciousness of the Absolute is a pure negation. He nevertheless finds that there does exist in consciousness an irresistible conviction of the real "existence of something unconditioned." And he gets over the inconsistency by speaking of this conviction as "a wonderful revelation," – "a belief" with

⁷⁰ H. Spencer, *First Principles*, p. 53.

which we are “inspired”: thus apparently hinting that it is supernaturally at variance with the laws of thought. Mr. Mansel is betrayed into a like inconsistency. When he says that “we are compelled, by the constitution of our minds, to believe in the existence of an Absolute and Infinite Being, – a belief which appears forced upon us, as the complement of our consciousness of the relative and the finite”; he clearly says by implication that this consciousness is positive, and not negative. He tacitly admits that we are obliged to regard the Absolute as something more than a negation – that our consciousness of it is *not* “the mere absence of the conditions under which consciousness is possible.”⁷¹

Spencer’s language reveals only what he did not understand about Mansel’s system. The “revelation” of the reality of being (and of God) was not, as Spencer wrote, ‘at variance with the laws of thought’, but was, for Mansel (as for Reid and Jacobi), the very foundation, basis, or ground of ‘the laws of thought’ themselves, the fideistic assurance of reason itself, and the antidote to idealist scepticism. Mansel was not here ‘betrayed into... inconsistency’, but was responding to a problem which Spencer had hardly conceived: the problem of the ground of reason. Reason itself was something that had to be *believed in* before it could be applied as a preventative against radical, Humean doubt. Spencer did not even seem to have understood the problem. Mansel himself provided a much more astute account of the varieties of scepticism, and of what divided the religious sceptic from the philosophical sceptic. In his essay on ‘Philosophy and Theology’ (1866), Mansel wrote:

⁷¹ Ibid., pp. 75-76.

There is a religious scepticism as well as a philosophical scepticism; and the two have not merely no natural connection with each other, but each may frequently be called into existence as the antagonist and antidote to the other. It may often be that the very despair which a man feels of finding the truths of which he is in need by philosophical speculation, may lead him to cling with a firmer belief to the doctrines of revelation: it may also be that his doubt or disbelief in the possibility of revelation may make him a more eager disciple of that philosophy which best promises to supply its place.⁷²

At least Mansel was upfront about his commitments: ‘The so-called freethinker is as often as any other man the slave of some self-chosen master, and many who scorn the imputation of believing anything merely because it is found in the Bible, would find it hard to give any better reason for their own unbelief than the *ipse dixit* of some infidel philosopher’.⁷³ Parallel observations of the same kind and quality are nowhere to be found in Spencer. Nevertheless, Spencer clearly intended his own philosophy to supply the place of religion in his version of secular modernity. There were personal reasons for this, some connected with his titanic ego and ‘boring’ mental energy, and some connected with his attitudes towards women. Spencer’s view of society, as Maurice Cowling has hinted, ‘emphasized that in present conditions women were to be mistrusted for being subservient to... religion, which it was one of the main aims of Sociology to supersede’.⁷⁴ In feminist perspective, Spencer’s sexual frustrations may be seen as one of his reasons for abandoning Christianity. Seen in this light, his unsatisfied lust for Katherine Mansel, and his deliberate distortion of her brother’s

⁷² H. L. Mansel, ‘Philosophy and Theology’ in *Letters, Lectures and Reviews* (London: John Murray, 1873), p. 342.

⁷³ H. L. Mansel, *Limits of Religious Thought*, fifth edition, p. 6.

⁷⁴ M. Cowling, *Religion and Public Doctrine in Modern England*, vol. II, p. 126 and p. 134.

religious philosophy are but two sides of the same coin. The replacement of religion with sociology was a sexual necessity.

With T. H. Huxley (1825-95), things were different. Huxley's famous quip about the tragedy of Spencer's philosophy – 'A beautiful theory, killed by a nasty, ugly little fact' – has been much repeated, and indicates the difference of intellectual quality between the two men. According to Huxley's biographer, Adrian Desmond, theirs was a 'turbulent friendship'; 'Huxley would end up bursting Spencer's overblown balloons, but a secular iconoclasm bound them at a deeper level'.⁷⁵ When their friendship eventually ended after thirty-five years, Spencer complained that Huxley had made him 'look like a fool to a hundred thousand readers', and Huxley moaned that Spencer was a 'long winded... pedant' with 'about as much tact as a hippopotamus'. Even Spencer's natural allies and friends disliked him.⁷⁶

Nevertheless, in August 1860, Huxley spent his summer holidays proof-reading Spencer's *First Principles*.⁷⁷ He understood what he was reading, having apparently first read Hamilton's *On the Philosophy of the Unconditioned* at the age of twelve.⁷⁸ What Spencer now said about Hamilton and Mansel evidently drew his attention. On the 23rd September of that year, he wrote a long letter to Charles Kingsley, worth quoting at length. In the letter Huxley described his own concept of personhood, and discussed his view of Hamilton and Mansel:

⁷⁵ A. Desmond, *Huxley: From Devil's Disciple to Evolution's High Priest* (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley, 1997), pp. 184-85.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 573-74.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 285.

⁷⁸ E. Clodd, *Thomas Henry Huxley* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1902), p. 3.

That my personality is the surest thing I know – may be true. But the attempt to conceive what it is leads me into mere verbal subtleties. I have champed up all that chaff about the ego and the non-ego, about noumena and phenomena, and all the rest of it, too often not to know that in attempting even to think of these questions, the human intellect flounders at once out of its depth.

It must be twenty years since, a boy, I read Hamilton's essay on the unconditioned, and from that time to this, ontological speculation has been a folly to me. When Mansel took up Hamilton's argument on the side of orthodoxy (!) I said he reminded me of nothing so much as the man who is sawing off the sign on which he is sitting, in Hogarth's picture. But this by the way.

I cannot conceive of my personality as a thing apart from the phenomena of my life. When I try to conform such a conception I discover that, as Coleridge would have said, I only hypostatise a word, and it alters nothing if, with Fichte, I suppose the universe to be nothing but a manifestation of my personality. I am neither more nor less eternal than I was before...

Science seems to me to teach in the highest and strongest manner the great truth which is embodied in the Christian conception of entire surrender to the will of God. Sit down before fact as a little child, be prepared to give up every preconceived notion, follow humbly wherever and to whatever abysses nature leads, or you shall learn nothing. I have only begun to learn content and peace of mind since I have resolved at all risks to do this.⁷⁹

⁷⁹ L. Huxley, *Life and Letters of Thomas Henry Huxley*, vol. I (London: Macmillan, 1900), pp. 218-19. The image from Hogarth's picture described in Huxley's letter of 1860 was reproduced by other writers with reference to Mansel. Thus, for instance, James Anthony Froude said of Mansel in an article first published in *Fraser's Magazine* in 1863: 'He has been compared to a man sitting on the end of a plank and deliberately sawing off his seat'. (J. A. Froude, 'A Plea for the Free Discussion of Theological Difficulties' in *Essays in Literature and History* (London: J. M. Dent, no date), pp. 195-223, here citing

Huxley's claim to "sit down before fact" masks the fact that he – as much as anyone else – could confuse his own prejudices for science, and was responsible for some of the worst examples of racism and misogyny masquerading as "science" in the Victorian period.⁸⁰ If he had attended more to the themes of human selfhood and conscience, he may have avoided some of his worst excesses in this regard. But, quite clearly, Huxley was intent on ignoring the personalist elements of Hamilton's and Mansel's teaching, and was blind to what Mansel had to say about "I-Thou" encounter with a real "Other". In a further letter to Kingsley, dated 5th May, 1863, Huxley said, 'I believe in Hamilton, Mansell [*sic*] and Herbert Spencer so long as they are destructive, and I laugh at their beards as soon as they try to spin their own cobwebs'.⁸¹

Mansel delivered his lectures on *Gnostic Heresies* in the Lent term of 1868. One year later, in April 1869, Huxley first coined the term "agnostic" to describe his own position. The word stuck: by 1879, Darwin was applying the word "agnostic" to himself.⁸² Initially, Huxley's "agnosticism" – minted in the aftermath of Mansel's lectures – was as much a response to "gnosticism" as Mansel's. Nevertheless, a wide gulf existed between the two forms of the doctrine. Mansel's religious agnosticism, like that of Bishop Butler or Thomas Aquinas, was reverent in the face of mystery; Huxley's version was not.

pp. 208-09. Huxley had also used the image in a letter to Charles Lyell in 1859. For discussion of 'The Old Saw of Agnosticism' see B. Lightman, *The Origins of Agnosticism: Victorian Unbelief and the Limits of Knowledge* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), pp. 7-9.

⁸⁰ For Huxley's "scientific" racism and misogyny, see 'Emancipation – Black and White' in T. H. Huxley, *Lay Sermons, Addresses, and Reviews* (London: Macmillan, 1871), pp. 20-26.

⁸¹ Huxley, *Life and Letters*, p. 242.

But Huxley's agnosticism was not just different to Mansel's; it was also different to Spencer's. In 1889, he explained his differences from Spencer.

As between Mr Spencer and myself, the question is not one of "a dividing line," but of an entire and complete divergence as soon as we leave the foundations laid by Hume, Kant, and Hamilton, who are *my* philosophical forefathers. To my mind, the "Absolute" philosophies were finally knocked on the head by Hamilton; and the "Unknowable," in Mr Spencer's sense, is merely the Absolute *redivivus*, a sort of ghost of an extinct philosophy, the name of a negation hocus-pocussed into a sham thing. If I am to talk about that of which I have no knowledge at all, I prefer the good old word *God*, about which there is no scientific pretence.⁸³

Huxley said enough to show that he interpreted Hamilton with reference to Hume and Kant, rather than with reference to Reid and Jacobi, and thus accepted a one-sided view of Hamiltonianism in some ways similar to Spencer's interpretation of Hamilton. Like Spencer, therefore, Huxley took Mansel to be a sceptic. Unlike Spencer, however, Huxley did 'not very much care to speak of anything as "unknowable,"' and regretted that Spencer had 'made the mistake of wasting a capital "U" upon it'. In his view, Spencer had wandered into 'the region of uncertainty'. Huxley described all metaphysical speculation as 'the nebulous country in which words play the part of realities'.⁸⁴ Arguably, he had more respect for William George Ward's Roman Catholic version of Manselian theology than he did for Spencer, or the

⁸² See C. Darwin, *Autobiographies* (London: Penguin, 2002), p. 54.

⁸³ E. Clodd, *Thomas Henry Huxley*, p. 220.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

Idealist critics of Mansel. It is well known that Huxley ‘developed a respect for Ward... that grew into personal warmth’.⁸⁵

Leslie Stephen did much to further popularise the view that Mansel should be read in light of Spencer, and his writings promoted the idea that Mansel was an agnostic. His biographical account of Mansel, and his *Agnostic’s Apology*, helped consolidate this version of Mansel amongst the intelligentsia of late-Victorian England. He was, however, not the only one to contribute to this process. Matthew Arnold, in *Literature and Dogma* (1873) had begun to replace God with the cryptic ‘Eternal Power, not ourselves, by which all things fulfil the law of their being’. Like Spencer, Arnold resisted Manselian personalism, leaving behind only an agnostic remnant of the unknown. He regarded the idea ‘*that the God of the universe is a PERSON*’ as mere ‘pseudo-science’.⁸⁶ Mansel was wrong; Spencer was right. God was not a person; God was simply unknown.

Tellingly, such “agnostic” or Spencerian views of Mansel did not go unchallenged even amongst the agnostic community. Frederic Harrison (1831-1923), who tended to believe that agnosticism needed to be resolved into Comtean positivism, had attended Mansel’s Bampton Lectures whilst an undergraduate at Oxford. Holding to the trend to interpret Mansel as a Kantian sceptic, Harrison believed that Mansel (and, incidentally, Maurice and Jowett), ‘propound[ed] from the pulpit what I felt... to be radical rejection of the formal Creeds and Articles of religion’.⁸⁷ But Harrison also became a critic of Spencer, and was keen to draw attention to Spencer’s *misreading* of Mansel. Attacking Spencer’s idea of the “Unknowable”, Harrison undermined

⁸⁵ A. Desmond, *Huxley*, p. 389.

⁸⁶ M. Arnold, *Literature and Dogma* (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1893), p. 230.

Spencer's own claim to dependency on Mansel; there was clear water, in Harrison's view, between Spencer and Mansel: what separated the two men was Mansel's obvious commitment to personalism.

With respect to Dean Mansel I made no mistake; the mistake is Mr. Spencer's – not mine. I said that of all modern theologians the Dean came the nearest to him. As we all know, in *First Principles* Mr. Spencer quotes and adopts four pages from Mansel's *Bampton Lectures*. But I said "there is a gulf which separates even his all-negative *deity* from Mr. Spencer's impersonal, unconscious, unthinking, and unthinkable Energy."... Mansel's idea of deity is personal, whilst Mr. Spencer's Energy is not personal. That is strictly accurate. Dean Mansel's words are, "it is our duty to think of God as personal"; Mr. Spencer's words are, "duty requires us neither to affirm nor deny personality" of the Unknown Cause. That is to say, the Dean called his First Cause God; Mr. Spencer prefers to call it Energy. Both described the First Cause negatively; but whilst the Dean calls it a Person, Mr. Spencer will not say that it is person, conscious, or thinking.⁸⁸

Quite clearly, one did not have to be Dean Burgon to see that Mansel was a personalist, and that his system was quite different to Spencer's. It is interesting to observe that Mansel's allies were adamant that his philosophy could not be equated with Spencer's. Montagu Burrows, the naval historian, emphasised that Mansel had 'incurred undeserved opposition' from his critics; Mansel had 'been unfairly attacked,

⁸⁷ F. Harrison, *The Creed of a Layman* (London: Macmillan, 1907), p. 28.

⁸⁸ F. Harrison, *The Philosophy of Common Sense* (Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1968), p. 365.

and only slightly defended'.⁸⁹ Those who linked Mansel with Herbert Spencer failed to 'discriminate that an ocean rolls between the systems of the... former and the latter'.⁹⁰

[Mansel's] central position... is the doctrine of Personality, as testified by the facts of our consciousness. This is the *sine qua non* of a truly philosophical system. There can be no Christian philosophy, nor any other true philosophy, without it. It is the crucial test. This Personality is part and parcel of the *Freedom of the Will*, which is a positive fact of our consciousness, – a Freedom of the Will under the conditions imposed by the Divine Being. Just as this is the fundamental position of Dean Mansel, so the foundation of... Mr. Herbert Spencer, and most of those who have opposed or travestied our author [Mansel], is *Necessity*. One, is the watchword of Belief, – the other, of Scepticism and Materialism in all their Protean forms.⁹¹

Spencer's evolutionary near-fatalism, and 'lack of a deep theory of human autonomy', have been much remarked upon: recent critics have commented on his unsatisfactory account of self-determination, and have suggested that this was a serious flaw in his philosophy.⁹² In retrospect, it is hard to see how serious philosophers could have associated his work with Mansel's at all – unless the reason for this association was not actually intellectual, but depended on some other factor, perhaps personal, perhaps political.

⁸⁹ Montagu Burrows, *Autobiography* (London: Macmillan, 1908), p. 228; Montagu Burrows, 'Dean Mansel as Christian Philosopher' in *Church Quarterly Review*, vol. V, no. IX (October 1877), pp. 1-27, p. 26.

⁹⁰ M. Burrows, 'Dean Mansel as Christian Philosopher', p. 18, n. 1.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

Metaphysical and Idealist Reactions to Mansel

When reviewing Idealist reactions to Mansel, we move into the region which Huxley dismissed as ‘the nebulous country in which words play the part of realities’.⁹³ Not that Huxley’s criticism would have worried any of the British Idealists: they saw themselves as providing an antidote to the dismal, unethical materialism that they perceived in Huxley and Spencer. Nevertheless, this did not make them friendly towards Mansel, and, if anything, it suited them to portray Mansel as a Kantian, Spencerian, agnostic, and the representative of a crude religiosity which they sought to overcome as much as they sought to overcome Spencer. Why was this? The explanation must surely be the commitment which many of the Idealists felt to Mansel’s antagonist, Frederick Denison Maurice. British Idealism was, in religious terms, Maurician. It was also, in political terms, Gladstonian or Radical. The Idealists set their faces against the Tory ecclesiasticalism that they perceived in Mansel. As such, he became one of their favourite targets, and it is even possible to claim that one of the motivating forces in the initial construction of the Idealist movement in Britain was reaction to Mansel. Maurice was right, and Mansel had to be shown to be wrong. This meant that Maurice and his Idealist disciples found it convenient to believe Spencer’s own myth that Mansel was an agnostic. Gladstonian Liberal broad churchmen would rather believe Spencer right on Mansel than admit that Maurice was wrong, and the repeated criticism that Mansel led inevitably to Spencer was actually an example of rather lazy Maurician thinking.

⁹² T. Gray, ‘Herbert Spencer’s Liberalism – from Social Statics to Social Dynamics’ in R. Bellamy (ed.), *Victorian Liberalism: Nineteenth-Century Political Thought and Practice* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 110-30, here citing, p. 110.

⁹³ E. Clodd, *Thomas Henry Huxley*, p. 125.

For good reason, Maurice will be treated separately below. For present purposes, it suffices to say that he was an emphatic critic of the tradition of negative theology. Maurice knew that ‘a multitude of orthodox Christian theologians... have said, “GOD *cannot* be known.”’ But Maurice (here, alarmingly, following Comte), dismissed them. ‘GOD *can* be known... the knowledge of Him is the root of all other knowledge’.⁹⁴ Maurice’s commitment to theological gnosticism did not seem to worry his supporters: one of the chief factors in his popularity seems to have been his reassuring claim that mid-Victorian man *knew* the Good – not some substitute or shadow of True morality, but the absolute Good itself. God’s goodness accorded with human ideas of goodness, and Victorian gentlemen could therefore confidently assert the Truth of their own moral commitments.

Such sentiments were shared not just by Maurice’s own immediate disciples, but by liberal broad churchmen more generally. Chief amongst these was Benjamin Jowett, who, though more cautious and intelligent than Maurice, was akin to him in his criticism of negative theology. Jowett taught that ‘it was only through the human [that] we could approach the divine’.

The highest and best that we can conceive, whether revealed to us in the person of Christ or in any other, *that* is God. Because this is relative to our minds, and therefore necessarily imperfect, we must not cast it away from us, or seek for some other unknown truth which can be described only by negatives... Every good thought in our own mind, every good man whom we

⁹⁴ F. D. Maurice, *The Epistles of St. John* (London: Macmillan, 1890), pp. 343-44.

meet, or of whom we read in former ages, every great word or action, is a witness to us of the nature of God.⁹⁵

Jowett's message amounted to the type of theology which Karl Barth would later reject emphatically: God was *not* the sum of human ideas of goodness; God was a *real* "Other".⁹⁶ In Barthian perspective, followers of Maurice and Jowett risked reducing Christianity to a projection of their own selves, writ large; they were – wittingly or unwittingly – too close to Feuerbach, whom Mansel had criticised in his Bampton Lectures.⁹⁷ Of course, they did not see themselves in such terms: they shared an 'optimism', 'faith in progress (both human and cosmic)', 'high ethical standards', and 'religious aspirations', which must be accounted genuine, if questionable.⁹⁸

One of the most striking features of the Idealist critics of Mansel was the way in which they formed a discernible social network. These were men who shared a common intellectual tradition, and, often friendship. Take the example of F. J. A. Hort of Cambridge University: Hort had once declared in a letter to Charles Kingsley that he owed nearly all the better part of his being to Maurice. He radically overestimated Maurice's place in the history of philosophy and had once taken seriously the idea

⁹⁵ B. Jowett, *Sermons on Faith and Doctrine* (London: John Murray, 1901), pp. 92-93. Jowett's implied target here was Mansel – see pp. 84-85.

⁹⁶ 'God... cannot be known by the powers of human knowledge, but is apprehensible and apprehended solely because of His own freedom, decision and action. What man can know by his own power according to the measure of his natural powers, his understanding, his feeling, will be at most something like a supreme being, an absolute nature, the idea of an utterly free power, of a being towering over everything. This absolute and supreme being, the ultimate and most profound, this "thing in itself", has nothing to do with God. It is part of the intuitions and marginal possibilities of man's thinking, man's contrivance. Man is able to think this being; but he has not thereby thought God. God is thought and known when in His own freedom God makes Himself apprehensible'. K. Barth, *Dogmatics in Outline*, p. 23.

⁹⁷ On this theme see K. Barth, 'An Introductory Essay' in L. Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, trans. G. Eliot (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), pp. x-xxxii.

that Maurice's *History of Philosophy* was 'the only positive addition to philosophy since Kant'. Like many other members of the network, Hort was Liberal in politics, resolutely pro-Gladstone and anti-Derbyite.⁹⁹ Even before reading Mansel's Bampton Lectures, Hort had already pre-judged the book, saying that Mansel held 'the doctrine of universal nescience more consciously and clearly than... any other Englishman'. When he actually got round to reading the book, he discovered that it was 'less unfair than I expected', but nevertheless 'very juiceless and indigestible' and 'a big lie from beginning to end'.¹⁰⁰ Hort's case is interesting, not just because of his dependency on Maurice, but also because of his links with two specific intellectual networks, the Cambridge "Apostles", and the Grote club. Indeed, he helped Joe Mayor (Bickersteth) edit Grote's posthumous works.¹⁰¹ As John Grote, and his brother, George Grote, were two other critics of Mansel, this demands some comment.

John Grote made several references to Mansel in the works that Hort helped to edit, and Mayor recorded that Grote had left 82 pages of unpublished manuscript material directly concerned with Mansel which has since been lost.¹⁰² In the *Exploratio Philosophica*, Part I (1865), Grote had interpreted Mansel as a phenomenalist, and criticised him for failing to account adequately for the "self" or "I" that perceives phenomena: was not perception of the "self" just another phenomenon amongst others?¹⁰³ If whatever knowledge we possess of the mind is itself phenomenal, being mere appearance and not reality, how can knowledge of the mind provide an

⁹⁸ See the discussion of common themes in British Idealism in W. J. Mander, *British Idealism: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 5.

⁹⁹ A. F. Hort, *Life and Letters of Fenton John Anthony Hort*, vol. I (London: Macmillan, 1896), p. 106, p. 184 and p. 283.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 398 and pp. 401-02.

¹⁰¹ A. F. Hort, *Life and Letters of Fenton John Anthony Hort*, vol II, p. 116.

¹⁰² J. Grote, *Exploratio Philosophica*, Part II, ed. J. Bickersteth Mayor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1890), p. x.

¹⁰³ J. Grote, *Exploratio Philosophica*, Part I (Cambridge: Deighton, Bell, and Co., 1865), p. 71.

ontology? This was a curious criticism of Mansel: it reproduced Jacobi's realist criticism of Kantian idealism (with which Mansel agreed), and failed to perceive that Mansel had argued that knowledge could be both *relative* and *real*, as in the case of interpersonal "I-Thou" intuitive knowledge of a real "Other". It may be that Grote was interpreting Mansel as a Kantian, and not as a common-sense realist. One of his particular targets was "relativism" (a term he coined for the first time in 1865).¹⁰⁴ Relativism suggested that knowledge did not bring 'real contact with the thing we know' but appeared only as 'something between us and it, either altering its *real* reality to accommodate it to us, or forming some screen or barrier between us and it'. Grote described this as a 'Kantoidic doctrine', 'the error of those philosophers who speak about "things in themselves"' by presupposing an 'unknown and unknowable substratum of things'.¹⁰⁵ Grote clearly felt that Mansel was not a realist; he also disliked his ethical teaching. A Maurician critique of Mansel was pursued in Grote's *Examination of the Utilitarian Philosophy* (1870): 'Morality and revealed religion ought to help to commend each other to us', wrote Grote. 'Revelation' divorced from 'human moral feeling' left only 'dogmatic religion caring for nothing but acknowledgement and obedience'.¹⁰⁶ Grote conceived of religion as a spiritual aspiration after a higher state, and argued that the goal of religion had to be at least partially knowable.¹⁰⁷ Morality introduced the human being to transcendental religion, and proved the truth of it. As such, Mansel had to be criticised; Grote's editors left a

¹⁰⁴ For John Grote's use of the term "relativism", and the use of the word "relativity" by George Grote and John Stuart Mill, see M. Baghramian, 'A Brief History of Relativism' in M. Krausz (ed.), *Relativism: A Contemporary Anthology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), pp. 31-52, here citing p. 39.

¹⁰⁵ J. Grote, *Exploratio Philosophica*, Part I, p. xii, p. 240, and p. 176.

¹⁰⁶ J. Grote, *An Examination of the Utilitarian Philosophy*, ed. J. Bickersteth Mayor (Cambridge: Deighton, Bell, and Co., 1870), p. 216.

¹⁰⁷ J. Grote, *A Treatise on the Moral Ideals*, ed. J. Bickersteth Mayor (Cambridge: Deighton, Bell, and Co., 1876).

footnote in the text identifying Mansel as his target.¹⁰⁸ His brother, George Grote, sometime Radical MP and Vice-Chancellor of the University of London, joined John in charging Mansel with relativism, promoting this version of Mansel in his book, *Plato, and the Other Companions of Sokrates*.¹⁰⁹

Richard Holt Hutton (1826-97) was another disciple of Maurice to attack Mansel. Hutton said of Maurice that it was to him, ‘more than to any other living man, I certainly owe my belief that theology is a true science, that a knowledge of God in a true scientific sense, however imperfect in degree, is open to us’.¹¹⁰ Under Maurice’s influence, Hutton had left the Unitarians and joined the Church of England, and eventually became prominent as the editor of both the *National Review* and the *Spectator* – two periodicals which took a consistently anti-Manselian line. In a series of reviews of works by Herbert Spencer, Maurice, and Mansel, Hutton conflated Mansel’s position with that of Spencer, suggesting that the one led directly to the other. This was unfair, but it suited the Maurician agenda. ‘Scepticism and dogmatism’ were two sides of the same coin, both drawing on the declaration that God was ‘unknown and unknowable’.¹¹¹ A similar critique of Mansel is found in the works of James Martineau, Hutton’s Unitarian mentor and fellow admirer of Maurice. Indeed, some had even thought that Hutton’s articles on Mansel had come from Martineau’s own pen, and Martineau had to disavow this.¹¹² In his own essays, Martineau reproduced the familiar charge that Hamilton was a Kantian.¹¹³ Further, Spencer’s “the Unknowable” was contrasted unfavourably with Maurice, Mansel was

¹⁰⁸ J. Grote, *Exploratio Philosophica*, Part II, p. 319.

¹⁰⁹ G. Grote, *Plato, and the Other Companions of Sokrates*, new edition, vol. III (London: John Murray, 1888), p. 121, p. 124 n., p. 126 n., and p. 133 n.

¹¹⁰ R. H. Hutton, *Theological Essays* (London: Macmillan, 1888), p. v.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. vi, pp. 39-58, and pp. 83-127.

charged with relativism and Kantianism, and Maurice was held to have won in the controversy with Mansel.¹¹⁴ Once again, therefore, Mansel was equated with Spencer, and criticised according to the standard Maurician agenda. Interestingly, Martineau recognised the similarities between Newman and Mansel: according to one biographer in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1911), Martineau regarded both as extreme sceptics who had clung to religion as an antidote to scepticism. ‘The philosophic principles and religious deductions of Dean Mansel he disliked as much as those of Newman, but he respected his arguments more’.¹¹⁵

Oxford Idealists reproduced similar criticisms of Mansel. Jowett’s pupil and assistant at Balliol, T. H. Green (1836-82), had come under the influence of Maurice at an early stage and was said to have ‘assimilated’ his works, together with those of Fichte (Jacobi’s main Idealist critic), by the mid-1860s.¹¹⁶ Green sat at the opposite end of the political spectrum to Mansel at Oxford; tellingly, when Disraeli won the 1868 election, Green was critical of the ‘vehement tory partisanship shown by the clergy’.¹¹⁷ Religiously, philosophically, and politically, Green was Mansel’s antithesis. He replicated and repeated the typical broad church liberal charges against Mansel: Mansel was dismissed for extracting his position ‘from Kant’ (not Jacobi!), and was all too similar to Herbert Spencer in his ‘agnosticism’. Mansel’s Kantian agnosticism was described by Green as an ‘apology for the acceptance of

¹¹² J. Drummond and C. B. Upton (eds.), *The Life and Letters of James Martineau*, vol. I (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1902), p. 444.

¹¹³ J. Martineau, *Essays, Philosophical and Theological*, vol. II (New York: Henry Holt, 1875), p. 286.

¹¹⁴ J. Martineau, *Essays, Philosophical and Theological*, vol. I (New York: Henry Holt, 1875), pp. 171-212, pp. 213-43, and pp. 280-328.

¹¹⁵ ‘James Martineau’ in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 17 (1911).

¹¹⁶ R. L. Nettleship, ‘Memoir’ in T. H. Green, *Works*, vol. 3 (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1888), p. xxv.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. cxiii.

ecclesiastical dogma, on the ground [of] our necessary ignorance of God'.¹¹⁸

Elsewhere, Green attacked both Hamilton and Mansel for *not* having taken Kant as the exponent of a philosophy which found its fulfilment in the absolute idealism of Hegel.¹¹⁹ Through Green, the standard Maurician caricature of Mansel was thus promoted at Oxford in the period immediately following Mansel's own departure from the University and relocation to St Paul's Cathedral. As Montagu Burrows knew, in the University, Mansel suffered from being 'unfairly attacked, and only slightly defended'.¹²⁰

A similar programme was adopted in the University of Glasgow: John Caird's Inaugural Lecture of 1863 attacked Mansel, and outlined concerns over Mansel's wariness of claiming human knowledge of the Absolute Good. Mansel was counted as an agnostic and sceptic, for whom reason was incapable of criticising faith. For John Caird, this was 'like calling in the devil to protect the sanctuary'. He made a direct attack on personalism, and repudiated 'the false opposition between personality and law'.¹²¹

The signs of the highest personality are not to be sought in the manifestation of mere will, but in the manifestation of will under the guidance of intelligence – that is, of will acting rationally and regularly, of will acting by law. When we consider the idea of personality more carefully, it will be seen that it manifests itself as mere will only in the weakest and most childish natures, in persons whose ideas are unprincipled, governed by no plan or rule, with

¹¹⁸ T. H. Green, *Works*, vol. 3, pp. 127-28.

¹¹⁹ T. H. Green, *Works*, vol. 2 (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1886), pp. 158-94.

¹²⁰ M. Burrows, 'Dean Mansel as a Christian Philosopher', p. 26.

respect to whose actions we can form no calculation; for you do not know what whim may seize them, what fallacy mislead them, into what vagary their inconsistent life may fall. But the more wise and thoughtful a man becomes, the wider the reach of his foresight and the range of his knowledge, the more fixed and consolidated his principles of action, - with the greater confidence can you predict what he will say and do; for the more numerous become the data on which your calculations are based. And the highest activity, the nearest approach to infallible uniformity of conduct would be attained if the agent became, what no human person is, perfectly wise and good.¹²²

The inference is that John Caird thought God's behaviour should be predictable, determined by necessary laws of reason. Hamilton was described as a modified Kantian who had 'propounded a doctrine as to the relativity of knowledge'. Mansel's negative theology, meanwhile, was the 'apotheosis of zero', for which 'the highest type of religion' was 'sheer vacuity of mind'. If Mansel was right, 'of all human beings the idiot would be the most devout'.¹²³ According to Caird, God was not known perfectly, but partially; knowledge of God was real, though not exhaustive. But whatever God was, was determined by rational law. This was controversial in Presbyterian Scotland: 'Theologians were startled by the appeal to reason as the final arbiter of truth; and the philosophical followers of Hamilton, then numerous in Scotland, were irritated by the uncompromising rejection of Mansel's... defence of

¹²¹ See the memoir of John Caird by his brother Edward Caird in E. Caird, *The Fundamental Ideas of Christianity*, vol. I (Glasgow: James MacLehose and Sons, 1899), pp. liii.

¹²² *Ibid.*, pp. liii-liv.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, pp. lv-lvi.

religion'. Edward Caird recorded that 'for many years after, there was an atmosphere of suspicion attached to my brother's name in what are called "religious circles"'.¹²⁴

Edward Caird called John Caird's Inaugural Lecture the 'key-note of his later teaching', and it is interesting to note the criticisms of Mansel in subsequent works of both brothers.¹²⁵ John Caird's *Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* (1880) attacked Mansel via Spencer, and criticised the doctrine of the relativity of knowledge derived from Kant.¹²⁶ Edward Caird's *Evolution of Religion* (1892) likewise attacked Mansel via Spencer, and questioned the idea that 'to know' is 'to relate'.¹²⁷ In neither case was Mansel's theistic personalism differentiated from Spencer's deterministic materialism; in both cases rationalism was held to be the final arbiter in religion.

As Scottish idealism established itself as an alternative to common sense realism, conservative church views in Scotland – favourable towards Mansel – slowly waned. The influence of John Caird in particular, together with other Scottish idealists critical of Hamilton like James Hutchison Stirling (1820-1909), had an affect on the old common sense school. James McCosh – much quoted by Mansel in the Bampton Lectures – wrote a critical review of Mansel's work in the *North British Review*. McCosh was eager to uphold the idea that human philosophy remained an imperfect guide to the attainment of religious truth, and felt this aspect to be lacking in Mansel's work. Later, in his book *Intuitions of the Mind*, McCosh noted parallels between Hamilton and Spencer, but nevertheless dismissed him. But, it remained the case that

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. lx.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. liii.

¹²⁶ J. Caird, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* (Glasgow: James Maclehose, 1880), p. 14, p. 19, and p. 33.

¹²⁷ E. Caird, *The Evolution of Religion*, fourth edition, vol. I (Glasgow: James Maclehose, 1907), p. 93, and p. 139.

McCosh was worried by what he now took to be Hamilton's Kantian scepticism; the tide was turning against the old, established Scottish philosophy.¹²⁸ This did not stop him from being complimentary about Hamilton and Mansel in his *Scottish Philosophy* (1875), where his sympathy for Hamilton's *religious* instincts was made clear.¹²⁹

Other Hamiltonians in Scotland also became more guarded after Mansel's death.

Veitch, having read John Grote's *Exploratio Philosophica*, made some cryptic comments about Mansel in his book *Hamilton* (1882).¹³⁰ Alexander Campbell Fraser, having assimilated Berkeley, began to worry that 'Mansel seemed to go beyond Hamilton, and to make morality in God something different in kind from morality in man'. But at least Fraser knew that Mansel complained about this type of criticism.¹³¹

Campbell Fraser's pupil, Pringle-Pattison was guarded about Mansel's relativism, but was also wary of Hegelian gnosticism and absolute idealism. Religion was concerned primarily with faith, not knowledge. When Pringle-Pattison began to develop his own doctrine of "personal idealism", it is possible to view his work as a modified form of Mansel, informed by Campbell Fraser, Jacobi, and Lotze (the German neo-Kantian, who achieved prominence in Britain only after Mansel's death).¹³² Although Mansel was out of fashion, his work had a curious affect on the new personalists, Pringle-Pattison, William Wallace, and Illingworth. All three men referred to Mansel's work in developing their own doctrines.¹³³ Wallace held that 'the essence of personality is undoubtedly shown in the distinction of I and Thou'; 'personality', he wrote, echoing Mansel, 'is only known as a person among persons'. He noted that Kant had *not* given

¹²⁸ See J. D. Hoeveler, *James McCosh and the Scottish Intellectual Tradition* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981), pp.155-66.

¹²⁹ J. McCosh, *The Scottish Philosophy* (London: Macmillan, 1875), pp.454-55.

¹³⁰ J. Veitch, *Hamilton* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1882), pp.. 32-33, n. 2.

¹³¹ A. Campbell Fraser, *Biographia Philosophica* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1904), pp. 173-74.

positive expression to the idea of personhood, and referred back to Mansel (briefly) as someone who had argued for the importance of personal existence. Even though he struggled to recognise the theistic ground of Mansel's personalism, and was confused over the foundations of Mansel's philosophical theology, he provides clear evidence that personal idealists were looking back to Mansel for inspiration in the 1890s.¹³⁴

Conclusion

Mansel had his supporters and his detractors. His supporters noted that he had been unfairly criticised by his opponents – especially when he was associated with Herbert Spencer. They affirmed that he was, essentially, a personalist, and observed that this dimension was lacking in Herbert Spencer's philosophy. A great gulf lay between the two men, made all the wider by the personal details of their respective stories.

Crucially, both supporters and detractors belonged to discernible networks that shared common views of religion and politics. Supporters were typically high church and Tory. Critics were, in every case, Liberal or Radical in politics; they were often broad church. Mauricians and idealists repeated the claim – first made by Spencer – that Mansel was a Kantian, and that his thought led directly to Spencer's own. They bought the story that Spencer had to tell, and actively promoted a distorted vision of Mansel, shorn of personalism.

Overall, the criticism that seemed to stick was, as Campbell Fraser put it, that Mansel had made 'morality in God something different in kind from morality in man'.

Ironically, this was the very doctrine for which Kierkegaard would later become

¹³² A. Seth Pringle-Pattison, *Scottish Philosophy* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1907), p. 186, pp. 206-10, and pp. 217-22.

¹³³ See J. R. Illingworth, *Personality: Human and Divine* (London: Macmillan, 1913), pp. 26-27.

famous in theological circles: there was an infinite qualitative distinction between God and man, and God's morality was of an infinitely different kind to human morality. When Mansel argued this case in the Bampton Lectures of 1858, he bore the brunt of criticism; but his position was not very different from that which Karl Barth adopted in Switzerland in 1920. Barth made the 'unintuitable Christ the standard by which human ethical activity [was] to be judged and measured, rather than Kant's universal law of reason'. The result was an 'ethic of... witness to... God's Self-revelation in Jesus Christ'. As Bruce McCormack has explained:

For... Barth... ethics is grounded in Christology: in the forgiveness of sins realized in the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The full significance of this claim can only be comprehended against the background of the "infinite qualitative distinction" between God and human kind. Human beings living in time are sinners. For the sinful human being, the achievement of the good is an impossibility. But the ethical problem goes much deeper than the mere fact that human beings are unable to achieve the good that they would like to accomplish; even their self-chosen ethical goals – in that they are self-chosen – are the product of their self-relating, sinful orientation. Hence: "The will of God is wholly other and never identical with the will of human beings." All of the ethical goals which human beings set for themselves and the attempts to achieve these goals stand in the shadow of this judgment.¹³⁵

¹³⁴ W. Wallace, *Lectures and Essays on Natural Theology and Ethics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1898), p. 282, p. 280, and pp. 272-73.

¹³⁵ B. McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p. 275.

This was exactly the type of critically realistic, anti-idealist, Christological ethic that Mansel had described in the Bampton Lectures. He had critics in his own age; from a later perspective he was way ahead of his time.

Chapter V: Mansel, Political Networks and Personalities

Victorian Politics

The mid-Victorian period was a time of crucial political change for Britain: the country went through a generally peaceful transition from a government based on landed power to one responding to the pressures of mass industrial society. In order to be a *peaceful* transition, change was carefully orchestrated, manipulated, and controlled by men such as Gladstone, Disraeli, and Salisbury. Perhaps unsurprisingly, personal and party advantage were often as much a part of the process as the substance of policy. Individuals were as important as ideas, private interests as important as political ideologies, in the slow, measured, and cautious change from a society based on patronage, to something beginning to resemble democracy. Changes were not inevitable (as the Marxist or the materialist might claim), but resulted from the free choices of individual politicians.¹

Although Mansel himself lived to see Disraeli's Second Reform Bill of 1867, his political worldview was pre-democratic. He had been born into a 'patronage society', which, despite the Reform Bill, continued to exist for many years after his death.² Personal connection with powerful patrons provided the key to success: *who* you knew mattered as much as *what* you knew. Without the intervention of Philip Wynter, Mansel would not have got a place at Merchant Taylors' School, not entered St John's College (where Wynter was President), and not won his position as a University fellow. In later life, Lord Carnarvon seems to have supplied the role of patron, a

¹ See M. Cowling, *1867: Disraeli, Gladstone, and Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967); P. Smith, *Disraelian Conservatism and Social Reform* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967); M. Bentley, *Politics Without Democracy, 1815-1914* (London: Fontana, 1984).

powerful ally at the heart of the British social and political establishment. Mansel's career depended upon careful negotiation of social networks, and the ability to build links, associations, contacts, and even close friendships, with those in positions of power. The nurturing of personal relationships was all important.

The old system brought Mansel success. There is no evidence to suggest that he did not agree with it; indeed, he thrived in this social environment. Once more, we are reminded of the importance of understanding Mansel with reference to context: if Mansel is to be understood, he needs to be 'placed within the shared understandings of a group or tradition, in the social and cultural context of his time'.³ Study of Mansel needs to make contact with the conservative social factions of the Anglican elite in England, the ecclesiastical Toryism of Oxford University, and, more than anything else, with the individual personalities that affected his personal life and public career. Refusing to reduce Mansel's political life to a series of necessary consequences of social and contextual causes, in the following I will focus on individual personalities, pursuing a methodological vision of political history that emphasises the importance of personal actors as free causes of events. My account will focus on what individuals like Mansel 'believed themselves to be doing', identifying 'those perspectives that informed their judgement of objectives and priorities'.⁴

² See J. M. Bourne, *Patronage and Society in Nineteenth-Century England* (London: Edward Arnold, 1986).

³ J. Gibbins, *John Grote: Cambridge University and the Development of Victorian Thought* (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2007), p. 6.

Mansel's Religious Politics: Anglican Toryism

The evidence for Mansel's personal Toryism is well established. Burgon recorded that Mansel held 'strong political predilections' from the age of sixteen or seventeen, and that his school friends remembered 'his eager youthful "Toryism"'. This political position, Burgon went on to say, also 'characterized his maturer years'.⁵ According to Burrows, Mansel was 'a pronounced Conservative' who 'dared to take a somewhat active part in politics'.⁶ Opponents also confirmed Mansel's political affiliation: to Mark Pattison, he was 'a Tory leader and arch-jobber'.⁷ According to Carnarvon, Mansel's 'Liberal opponents' recognised that he was 'the ablest head' of the 'Conservative party' at Oxford.⁸ Carnarvon also stated that he was 'the pillar and centre of the Conservative cause'.⁹ Sixty years later, Saintsbury remembered Mansel as the 'brain' of the 'Tory party in the University'.¹⁰

What did Toryism mean in Mansel's lifetime? If *laissez-faire* economics – the unfettered rule of market forces in the new industrial centres and cities – was *primarily* (though not always exclusively) associated with Whigs and Liberals, the Tories often represented something a little different. In his 'Young England' phase of one-nation conservatism, Disraeli had sought to develop a 'popular and socially responsible Toryism, appealing to the masses through paternalistic reform... preaching a kind of revived and spiritualised feudalism, centred on Crown and

⁴ M. Bentley, *Politics Without Democracy*, p. 13.

⁵ J. W. Burgon, *Lives of Twelve Good Men* (London: John Murray, 1891), p. 328.

⁶ M. Burrows, 'Dean Mansel as a Christian Philosopher' in *Church Quarterly Review*, vol. V, no. IX (October, 1877), p. 4.

⁷ M. Pattison, *Memoirs of an Oxford Don* (London: Cassell, 1988), p. 91.

⁸ Carnarvon, 'Introduction' in Mansel, *The Gnostic Heresies of the First and Second Centuries* (London: John Murray, 1875), p. xxi.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. xxi.

¹⁰ G. Saintsbury, *A Second Scrap Book* (London: MacMillan, 1923), p. 74.

Church'.¹¹ This was the type of Conservative politics that attracted the interest of academic clergymen at Oxford: K. S. Inglis has even claimed that Keble, Pusey, and Newman 'could sound like Disraeli and his friends of Young England' in the 1840s.¹² Through the 1850s and 1860s, such sentiments persisted in conservative ecclesiastical circles. In the countryside especially, where so much of the party's strength was based in the social and political system of the landed interest, such paternalistic politics, hand-in-hand with the patronage society, represented a relatively benign form of a system which had stood the test of time. The system was intimately intertwined with the Anglican establishment, was resistant to change, yet – as demonstrated in the 1860s – 'capable of responding to the nation's needs with moderate reforms'.¹³

It was only at a late stage in Mansel's life that figures in his network began to recognise the failure of the old system in the new industrial, urban environment. Mansel himself authorised one of his Cathedral Canons at St Paul's, Robert Gregory, to preach a sermon on the problem of poverty under the new social realities in 1869. In the paternalistically titled sermon, 'Past and Present Ways of Dealing with the Poorer Classes', Gregory 'contrasted the old system of personal relationships and personal duties with the corporate responsibilities which should have replaced them now that they had become impossible in an overcrowded impersonal Britain'. Personal responsibility to relieve poverty was failing; a new communal response was becoming necessary.¹⁴ Times were changing, and Mansel knew it.

¹¹ P. Smith, *Disraelian Conservatism and Social Reform*, p. 8.

¹² K. S. Inglis, *Churches and the Working Classes in Victorian England* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), p. 265.

¹³ P. Smith, *Disraelian Conservatism and Social Reform*, p. 87.

¹⁴ G. Kitson Clark, *Churchmen and the Condition of England, 1832-1885* (London: Methuen, 1973), p. 232.

Mansel had signalled his own ridicule of *laissez-faire* factory owners much earlier: in the *Phrontisterion* (1852) he had taken a swipe at the ‘out-and-out Free Trader’ and the ‘money-making band’; but his solutions were of their age, favouring Protectionism and the maintenance of Church and State as the antidote to economic and social evils.¹⁵ He can hardly be blamed for offering typical 1850s answers to 1850s questions concerning the largely agricultural problems of that decade. Nevertheless, such responses are indicative of Mansel’s commitment to a socially engaged Toryism, which albeit traditional and paternalistic, was critical of free market economics. Rooted in old country traditions, Mansel’s family had also been abolitionist, representing an opposition to slavery in the Tory tradition of William Wilberforce.¹⁶ A wide gulf lay between him and the non-interventionist, ‘survival of the fittest’ heartlessness of contemporary social Darwinists like Herbert Spencer.

Lest there be any confusion, Mansel’s Toryism was miles away from Spencer’s brand of *laissez-faire*, non-interventionist Liberalism. Consider what politics meant to Spencer. For him, according to K. Theodore Hoppen, ‘politics became... charged with deterministic inflexibility – the great law of evolution quite simply forbidding trade unions, church establishments, public health legislation, poor laws, or the protection of trade as unnatural interferences in the working-out of cosmic processes’.¹⁷ No genuine autonomy, no church, no public hospitals, not even the beginnings of a rudimentary welfare system. In Mansel’s terms, unthinkable.

¹⁵ H. L. Mansel, *Phrontisterion*, p. 404 and p. 408.

¹⁶ Mansel’s uncle, Constantine Richard Moorsom, attended the World Anti-Slavery Society Convention in London in 1840. See his *DNB* entry.

¹⁷ K. Theodore Hoppen, *The Mid-Victorian Generation, 1846-1886* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 476. For an alternative view, see Mark Francis, *Herbert Spencer*, pp. 321-22. Yet even Francis has to account for Huxley’s attack on Spencer as a ‘*laissez-faire* liberal who believed that self-

Mansel's social views were dependent on his Christian beliefs. He appears to have been a late representative of the old high and dry, church and state politics of the 'old orthodox Anglican political theology'.¹⁸ This political tradition was still alive in the mid-Victorian period, and was being carefully nurtured by Disraeli as a useful dimension of Conservative ideology. It is perhaps best encapsulated in words used by Archdeacon Christopher Wordsworth (nephew of the poet; soon to be made Bishop of Lincoln by Disraeli) at a Tory meeting in Reading on 1st February, 1865:

What gentlemen, is Conservatism? It is the application of Christianity to civil government. And what is English Conservatism? It is the adoption of the principles of the Church of England as the groundwork of legislation.

Gentlemen, I say it with reverence, the most Conservative book in the world is the Bible, and the next most Conservative book in the world is the Book of Common Prayer.¹⁹

Mansel's Toryism was an expression of his Anglicanism; his political position was derived from his religious position. By the 1860s, aspects of his Toryism were beginning to appear old-fashioned even to fellow Conservatives. Carnarvon observed that 'In politics he... lived too late for his generation', and championed the 'Church and State doctrines of the early part of the century'.²⁰ This was indeed true. On 15th June, 1868, Mansel had written to Carnarvon to say, 'I confess I dread all movement

interest would provide all the administration needed by modern society', and admits that Spencer believed that personal character had no place in politics.

¹⁸ On this tradition see J. C. D. Clark, *English Society, 1688-1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 216 ff.; P. B. Nockles, *The Oxford Movement in Context: Anglican High Churchmanship, 1760-1857* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 44 ff.

¹⁹ Cited in Owen Chadwick, *The Secularization of the European Mind in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 108.

²⁰ Carnarvon, 'Introduction', p. xxi and pp. vi-vii.

towards a separation of church and state'.²¹ Carnarvon told the story of how Mansel 'saw the decay and change of ideas and institutions which were precious in his eyes'. The story was an unhappy one of slow loss. Carnarvon continued to say that 'though he [Mansel] resisted it to the utmost of his power, he watched with pain the revolution of thought that has carried so far from her old moorings the University which had been long his home'.²² Nevertheless, Carnarvon also stated that Mansel was 'not blind' to 'alterations of public or Parliamentary opinion'. Carnarvon's ultimate judgement was that:

His [Mansel's] Conservatism, in short, was not the Conservatism of prejudice, but of individual conviction, founded on severe thought, adorned by no common learning, and bound up through the entire course of his life with the principles of his religious belief.²³

The hallmarks of such belief had been pastoral charity, individual personal responsibility, and a strong sense that the Church of England was the conscience of the nation, a moral guardian and protector of English values. Individual conscience was held to be sacrosanct, and, following the teachings of Bishop Butler, provided the basis for an ethics of duty, both civic and religious. Mansel's Toryism, then, was an *intellectual* Toryism, grounded in theology. But, as Fitzjames Stephen indicated, it was also grounded in philosophy, for intuitionist metaphysics had become associated

²¹ Mansel to Carnarvon, 15th June, 1868, BL, Carnarvon Papers, vol. LXXVIII, Add. MS 60834 (1853-1889), f. 110.

²² Carnarvon, 'Introduction', p. xxi.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. xxii.

with political Toryism.²⁴ Reidian common sense philosophy – ever a religious philosophy, dependent on trust in revelation – had become a natural complement to Tory politics, grounded in religion. As Campbell Fraser knew, appeal to ‘conservative elements in human nature’ was a basic presupposition of Mansel’s philosophical theology.²⁵ Alongside the conservative political philosophy of Edmund Burke, Tories in the mid-Victorian period were equally drawing on Butler and Reid to sustain their intellectual vision of the world.

In what ways did Mansel’s Toryism lead to *action*? He did more than just provide what Maurice Cowling has described as an ‘intellectual counter-attack’ to Liberalism in the 1850s and 1860s.²⁶ For one thing, his presence on the Hebdomadal Council allowed him to counter reformist voices in University politics. For another, his statements made before the University Commission of 1852, whilst appearing on the surface to be fairly practical arguments on University organisation, nevertheless also provided an opportunity to argue against Lord John Russell’s plans for reform. But Mansel’s political activity also extended beyond the confines of University politics. He contributed pieces to a Disraelian newspaper in the mid-1850s. He was active in party organisation, acting in two parliamentary elections as chair of the electoral committees for Lord Chandos in 1859, and Gathorne Hardy in 1865. He helped buy the *Oxford Times* in the late 1860s in order to promote the Tory agenda. More than anything else, he was a *networker*. He taught, and then engaged in lifelong correspondence with, Lord Carnarvon – the Tory frontbencher who together with

²⁴ Sir J. Fitzjames Stephen, ‘Mr. Mansel’s Metaphysics’ in the *Saturday Review*, vol. IX, no. 840 (30th June, 1860), reproduced in Fitzjames Stephen, *Essays by a Barrister* (London: Smither, Elder and Co., 1862), pp. 326-27.

²⁵ A. Campbell Fraser, *Biographia Philosophica*, pp. 173-74.

²⁶ M. Cowling, *Religion and Public Doctrine in Modern England*, vol. II (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 71.

Gathorne Hardy formed the “high church” core of Lord Salisbury’s parliamentary group. In Lord Blake’s words, he was an ‘old ally’ of Disraeli – a description all the more significant considering that many Oxford Tories and churchmen (including the Tractarians) remained committed to Gladstone right up to 1865.²⁷ He had developed loyalty to Disraeli much earlier than many other churchmen, and this was used by Carnarvon to exert pressure on Disraeli prior to the Second Reform Act in 1867. Focus of any political study of Mansel should therefore centre on his activity in political networks, and spotlight his relationships with key political personalities. As befits a personalist philosopher, his political engagement was primarily concerned with personal relationships, friendships, and the interaction between individuals as a source of freely made choices about political change.²⁸

It must be remembered that in the mid-Victorian context, the *religious* dimensions of Tory politics were very significant. Religion was central to the politics of the day. When Mansel delivered his Bampton Lectures in the Spring of 1858, debate in the House of Commons was dominated by religious issues: in that session of Parliament, ‘Of the fifty divisions taken before the Easter recess, twenty-six had been on secular and twenty-four on religious questions’.²⁹ Sixteen years later, in 1874, the Parliamentary session was once more dominated ‘not by... imperialistic adventures or social legislation... but by a bill to regulate the public worship of the established Church’.³⁰ Religion was at the heart of national life, a reflection of the Victorian concern to use politics to promote common values and a shared morality in order to

²⁷ R. Blake, *Disraeli* (London: Prion, 1998), p. 509.

²⁸ For a brief discussion of such an approach to political history, see P. Williamson, ‘Maurice Cowling and Modern British Political History’ in R. Crowcroft, S. J. D. Green and R. Whiting (eds.), *The Philosophy, Politics and Religion of British Democracy* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2010), pp. 108-152, especially p. 112.

²⁹ A. Roberts, *Salisbury: Victorian Titan* (London: Phoenix, 2000), p. 71.

bind the nation together. A letter from Gladstone to Manning dating from 1835 encapsulates the point succinctly: ‘Politics would be an utter blank to me were I to make the discovery that we were mistaken in their association with religion’.³¹ The Church was an essential institution, a key part of political life. Mansel’s position as a leading clergyman made him a public figure, a spokesman for religious issues in the political sphere. His intellectual contributions to philosophical and political debate would have been taken as serious statements of the Tory vision, and demanded careful attention from both fellow Tories and their Liberal opponents. Men like Mansel were battling for the soul of the country.

Lord Carnarvon

Henry Howard Molyneux Herbert, the Fourth Earl of Carnarvon (1831-90), began his ministerial career at the age of twenty-seven when he served briefly as Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies (1858-59). Following this, as he reached political maturity, he served twice as Secretary of State for the Colonies, first under Derby (1866-67) and for a second time under Disraeli (1874-78). Later, he completed his frontbench career as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland under Salisbury (1885-86). In the 1860s, he was counted as ‘a young, virtuous, intellectual high churchman’, whose ‘conservatism involved... a supra-class conception of national moral solidarity’. As such, he represented a type of one-nation Toryism, and sought to avoid the division of the nation into ‘two clearly defined and perhaps ultimately hostile classes – a rich upper class on the one hand, and a poor artisan class on the other’.³² Fearing that an ill-conceived version of democratic reform would threaten national security and social

³⁰ P. T. Marsh, *The Victorian Church in Decline* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), p. 135.

³¹ E. Short, *Newman and his Contemporaries* (New York: T. & T. Clark, 2011), p. 220.

³² M. Cowling, *1867: Disraeli, Gladstone, and Revolution: The Passing of the Second Reform Bill*, p. 178.

stability, he famously resigned (with Salisbury) from the Disraeli government on the 2nd March, 1867, in protest at the proposed Second Reform Bill. In office, he proved his commitments to Conservative social reform, and was concerned with ‘education... penal reform, and... campaigning for the better treatment of London’s sick paupers’. He was a founder of the Association of the Improvement of the Infirmaries of Workhouses.³³ Later, his attention turned to animal welfare. He provided a useful example of benign Tory paternalism in action, often resistant to change, yet capable of responding to the nation’s needs with moderate reforms. He acted with a clear sense of duty to the disadvantaged, and without seeking to upset the established order, went about the business of seeking the betterment of the poor.

Carnarvon was also significant for having been a close personal friend of Salisbury: ‘an acquaintance begun at Oxford had... matured into a friendship which... became for many years the warmest and closest of Lord Cranborne’s [Salisbury’s] public life’.³⁴ Their relationship was considered to be one of candid ‘personal intimacy’.³⁵ ‘They had been drawn together by a similarity of aims and standards... their opinions [in the 1860s], both in the domain of Church doctrine and in that of State politics, being practically identic [*sic*].’³⁶ In 1874, Salisbury could claim that the only two men he could depend upon in church matters were Carnarvon and Gathorne Hardy, his fellow Oxford high churchmen.³⁷

³³ P. Smith, *Disraelian Conservatism and Social Reform*, pp. 39-40 and p. 59.

³⁴ Lady Gwendolen Cecil, *Life of Robert Marquis of Salisbury*, vol. I, 1830-1868 (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1921), p. 221.

³⁵ Lady Gwendolen Cecil, *Life of Robert Marquis of Salisbury*, vol. II, 1868-1880, p. 41.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 221.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. II, p. 50.

Despite having Pusey as an uncle, Carnarvon's churchmanship was resolutely orthodox: Peter Gordon is surely right in pointing out Lord Blake's error in describing Carnarvon as 'a priggish Puseyite'.³⁸ His biographers emphasised that traditional notions of the established church featured prominently in his religious thought:

The advantages of an established Church far outweighed in his estimation its undeniable drawbacks. He did not accept the modern theories that modern forms of government were inconsistent with the union of Church and State. He believed with Hooker, that the Church and State "should dwell lovingly together in one subject"; and with Burke, that "religion ought to be the principal care of the Christian magistrate, because it is one of the bonds of human society, and its object the supreme good, the ultimate aim and object of man himself".³⁹

Carnarvon was wary of the Tractarians, which were viewed as a 'narrowing force' and source of 'anxiety'. From the later perspective of 1925, his churchmanship was explained in the following terms:

Lord Carnarvon stood between the conflicting schools of Evangelical and High Church opinion. He was opposed to attacks on the Rubric or the Liturgy, and to infringements of the law, but prepared to accept any practices permissible within the legal limits of toleration which the Prayer Book had

³⁸ R. Blake, *The Conservative Party: From Peel to Major* (London: Arrow Books, 1998), p. 106; P. Gordon ed., *The Political Diaries of the Fourth Earl of Carnarvon, 1857-1890, Colonial Secretary and Lord Lieutenant of Ireland* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 84.

³⁹ Arthur Hardinge, *The Life of Henry Howard Molyneux Herbert, Fourth Earl of Carnarvon, 1831-1890*, vol. I (London: Humphrey Milford, 1925), p. 363.

assigned. The highly emotional services of the extreme High Church Party struck him as being foreign to the temperament of the English people.⁴⁰

Carnarvon's association with Mansel stretched back to his time at Oxford, beginning in 1851. As his biography states, he 'fell into the hands of Henry Mansel of St. John's... then in the first efflorescence of his keen intellectual powers'. Mansel was reputed to be 'the most illustrious of Oxford tutors'.⁴¹ Details recorded in the biography include some useful remarks on Mansel's character, an invaluable source for recreating some sense of Mansel's personality. He was remembered as being something of a donnish eccentric, whose manners did not quite conform to the expectations of his aristocratic pupils.

Notwithstanding their warm subsequent friendship, Lord Carnarvon did not at first feel attracted to Mansel. The latter appears to have had, like many clever men absorbed in serious studies, somewhat short way of dealing with undergraduates, and his reputation in this respect had already reached his newest pupil. "I like Mr. Mansel's way of communicating instruction much better than his manners," he writes to Sir William Heathcote, "though these are not nearly so bad as I imagined... He is pleasanter to live with than I expected, and his peculiarities are, I think, more owing to a want of manner than to any intention."⁴²

In his biographical sketch of Mansel, Carnarvon recorded that he had a great reputation as a teacher: 'those who sought the highest honours of the University in the

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 365.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 43.

Class schools thought themselves fortunate to secure instruction such as he gave, transparently lucid, accurate, and without stint... making the most complicated questions clear'.⁴³ Mansel obviously impressed: he was hired as a private tutor and coach, and spent the Long Vacation of 1851 on a reading party in Guernsey with the Carnarvon family. It was recorded that he 'added greatly to the hilarity of the party by his incessant jokes'. This arrangement continued the following year at a similar vacation at Weymouth. Lord Carnarvon's mother wrote to Sir William Heathcote on the 20th September, 1852, observing that the family was growing fond of Mansel: 'we all like *him* so much better this year – the little oddities of his manner, and his *Donishness* has worn off, and the genuineness of his character has won upon all of us'.⁴⁴ Later, Carnarvon recalled a summer by the seaside with Mansel, establishing 'scientific principles' for 'the method of sailing a boat' on the advice of 'an old fisherman' – a curious story, perhaps, but one which Carnarvon evidently carried with him for the rest of his life.⁴⁵

Mansel's coaching was successful: Carnarvon obtained a first class in Greats. A letter Mansel wrote to Carnarvon, dated 25th November, 1852, reproduced in the biography, hints at Mansel's approach to education. According to Mansel, 'the main end of education' was to cultivate 'the faculty of thinking'.⁴⁶ Presumably, this represents a logician's approach to higher studies, not the view of someone who understands the task of education to be the accumulation of facts and knowledge. Mansel, who had recently published his *Prolegomena Logica*, had concentrated on training Carnarvon

⁴² Ibid. p. 44.

⁴³ Carnarvon, 'Introduction', p. vi.

⁴⁴ A. Hardinge, *The Life of Henry Howard Molyneux Herbert, Fourth Earl of Carnarvon, 1831-1890*, vol. I, p. 44-5.

⁴⁵ Carnarvon, 'Introduction', p. xx.

how to think. (Carnarvon's undergraduate notes, together with occasional remarks and corrections in Mansel's hand have been preserved, and provide a fascinating snapshot of Oxford education).⁴⁷

According to Carnarvon, there followed 'many years of close friendship and unrestrained intercourse'.⁴⁸ The surviving correspondence between Mansel and Carnarvon preserved at the British Library, plus further letters at Highclere, show that the two men remained on good terms for very nearly twenty years until Mansel's death in 1871. Mansel's letters to Carnarvon extend to over 200 folios, supplemented by further letters from Mansel to Lady Carnarvon (Lord Carnarvon's mother). They chiefly comprise references for individuals seeking positions of employment, inconsequential requests, and – not infrequently – advice for book purchasing for the library at Highclere. They also provide evidence of meetings between the two men on a relatively frequent basis. In sum, the bulk of the correspondence shows how Carnarvon and Mansel networked. More than anything, however, these private letters provide essential evidence of Mansel's political views and activities, vital to understanding the context of his controversies with Maurice and Mill.

Some of the most striking material contained in the correspondence are examples of Mansel's increasing exasperation with Gladstone. Gladstone was, until 1859, supposedly a Peelite Tory, and until 1865, one of the Members of Parliament representing the University of Oxford. When many other Oxford clergymen (even Tory ones, like Burgon and Denison) for reasons of personal loyalty continued to vote

⁴⁶ A. Hardinge, *The Life of Henry Howard Molyneux Herbert, Fourth Earl of Carnarvon, 1831-1890*, vol. I, p. 46.

⁴⁷ Carnarvon Papers, BL, Volume CCLXXII, Add. MS 61028, ff. 1-144.

⁴⁸ Carnarvon, 'Introduction', p. v.

for Gladstone right up to 1865, Mansel's antagonism towards Gladstone began at a very early stage. In a private letter to the twenty-three year old Carnarvon, dated 30th June, 1854, Mansel expressed his feelings on Lord John Russell's Oxford Reform Bill (April 1854). It was not just the 'hollow promises' of Russell that upset him. His real ire was reserved for Gladstone, the turn-coat betrayer of the University. The 'Judas-kisses of Mr. Gladstone' – a striking image for a clergyman to use – signal that Mansel already felt the worst of him.⁴⁹ A decade of antagonism was to follow.

In 1859, personal antagonism turned into political action. In the June of that year, Gladstone crossed the floor and became Chancellor of the Exchequer in a Liberal government led by Palmerston. The switching of sides was swift and dramatic, shocking even to some of his most ardent supporters, and provoked alarm at Oxford. On the same day that Gladstone accepted office (18th June) he learnt that his re-election to the University seat was to be contested. The Marquess of Chandos, Richard Plantagenet Temple-Nugent-Brydges-Chandos-Grenville (1823-1889), the eldest son of the Duke of Buckingham, was put forward as a candidate in open challenge to Gladstone. Chandos was a staunch Conservative, and had sat as member of Parliament for Buckingham between 1846 and 1857. He was to go on to sit in Lord Derby's Cabinet 1866-68, and was to be Governor of Madras, 1875-80.⁵⁰ Morley described him as the 'most formidable candidate that [Gladstone] had yet encountered'. Key members of Gladstone's team defected to Chandos, and his London chairman even 'became chairman for his new antagonist'. Gladstone was

⁴⁹ Mansel to Carnarvon, 30th June, 1854, BL, Carnarvon Papers, vol. LXXVIII, Add. MS 60834, folio 8.

⁵⁰ M. Bentley, *Politics Without Democracy, 1815-1914*, p. 374.

‘angry, harassed, sore’.⁵¹ Mansel was directly involved. Two days after Gladstone’s defection, he wrote the following letter to Carnarvon:

I find myself, very much against my wishes, plunged most prominently into the political vortex, as chairman of the committee for promoting the election of Lord Chandos... The conspicuous position in this instance was assuredly not of my seeking, and was rather thrust upon me in spite of remonstrances. Still I did not feel myself at liberty to refuse in a matter of which I believe the University is bound to record an energetic protest. I think I was never in my life so astonished... as when I heard that Mr Gladstone, after voting with Lord Derby’s government, has accepted office under Lord Palmerston, for whom he has on former occasions expressed as little respect as is compatible with courtesy. I very much regret the necessity of separating from Mr Gladstone at this time. I respect him most highly, and on many accounts I would gladly see him member for the University during the rest of his political life. But all his good qualities are more than neutralized but that fatal vacillation which makes him more dangerous to his professed friends than to his open foes. If ever a constituency had strong and decided political sympathies, it is the University of Oxford, and I cannot allow that any member, however excellent in other respects, is at liberty to play fast and loose with those sympathies. I am no friend of the “delegate” theory of representation, which makes the member the mere mouthpiece of the majority of his constituents; but I think that an educated constituency, like the University, is the very last that ought to send a member to Parliament merely

⁵¹ J. Morley, *The Life of William Ewart Gladstone*, vol. I, 1809-1872, pp. 628-29.

with a carte blanche to do just as he pleases. Such a constituency ought to have a prominent voice in public matters, and ought to have a member who will make that voice heard on all occasions. I regret most deeply being forced with this step. A very short time ago, as you well know, had Gladstone's seat been contested, on the Ionian vacancy, I would have supported him and... Now I can do nothing but oppose him to the utmost, though with great regret.⁵²

Mansel was clearly acting independently of Carnarvon. He must have had important links with Chandos, who, as Chairman of the London and North Western Railway, was an executive of the company for which Mansel's brother, Robert Stanley Mansel, then worked as a railway manager.⁵³ Once advised of the situation, Carnarvon expressed his agreement and backed the action. The next day Carnarvon wrote a letter to Sir William Heathcote (the sound Tory MP for Oxford), expressing his support for Chandos. 'I own I am sadly disappointed at Gladstone's conduct... I look upon his acceptance of office as a lapse from all his old traditions, and an entire break with the party to which in *principle* I always thought him attached'. Carnarvon was quite clear in his estimate of Gladstone: 'He never will be again trusted by the great body of Conservatives and the country gentlemen: and I must say that their distrust will not be unreasonable'.⁵⁴ Carnarvon continued to make clear his personal support for Chandos in language which echoed Mansel's letter of the day before:

⁵² Mansel to Carnarvon, 20th June, 1859, BL, Carnarvon Papers, Vol. XXVII, Add. MS 60783 (ii), ff. 218-221.

⁵³ R. Jenkins, *Gladstone*, p. 209; C. A. Maunsell, *History of the Family of Maunsell (Mansell, Mansel)* (London: K. Paul, 1917), p. 321.

⁵⁴ Carnarvon to Heathcote, 21st June, 1859. Cited in A. Hardinge, *The Life of Henry Howard Molyneux Herbert*, vol. I, pp. 144-45.

With all my strong personal liking and admiration for him [Gladstone] I shall be very glad if Lord Chandos succeeds at Oxford. The University has a right to calculate *generally* on the line of conduct to be pursued by her representative, and not to be asked within four months to re-elect him as serving under Lord Derby and Lord Palmerston successively. As you know well, my feeling has always been so much in his favour that I come now to this view painfully and against my natural inclinations. I admire his genius, his wonderful vigour and versatility, and his high moral qualities, but I am sure that it is better that the Conservatives as a party should know how to reckon him distinctly whether as friend or open enemy, and I am equally sure that the University is in safer keeping when represented by a man who, if he be inferior intellectually, is definite in his opinions and reliable in the line of conduct in which he pursues.⁵⁵

Gladstone won by 1050 votes to 860, but it had been a hard, embarrassing, and costly fight. Votes against Gladstone had come from the Tory networks centred at St John's, Brasenose, St Mary Hall, Lincoln College, and New College. Individuals voting against Gladstone included Mansel's allies at St John's, Bellamy and Starkey (both of whom taught Lord Salisbury), together with a few other notable names like Goulburn and Charles Dogdson (Lewis Carroll).⁵⁶

Mansel's action was not to be forgotten, and in the next chapter I will provide details of how the Liberal reaction to the 1859 contest targeted Mansel in particular. The correspondence with Carnarvon shows that Liberal attacks on him were immediate: in

⁵⁵ Carnarvon to Heathcote, 21st June, 1859. Cited in *Ibid.*, p. 145-46.

a letter dated 2nd July, 1859 (the day after the election), Mansel wrote: 'I am told that I have been heartily abused in some of the Liberal papers. As I never read newspapers on the opposite side during a contest, when I have once determined how to act, I have hitherto remained in happy unconsciousness of the severe blows inflicted'.⁵⁷ The blows were, indeed, severe, but Mansel was resolute that his action had been correct: Gladstone had had to have been opposed because he had not acted consistently, had not fulfilled his promise to support Tory interests. Mansel had acted in good conscience; Gladstone in bad. There were increasing concerns over Gladstone's apparent belief that he stood above rules of conduct which applied to ordinary people. In the same letter to Carnarvon, Mansel observed:

So we have had our fight, and though it has not been very successful, I cannot say that I regret having made it. I think it was due to the moral sense of the University that a portion at least of its members should record their emphatic protest against the political combination with which their representative has thought proper to connect himself; and the duty is the same, whether successful or not. In these days, when character and consistency are unfortunately more rare in public men than ability and eloquence, it is necessary from time to time to protest against that prevalent hero-worship which releases a great man from all ordinary responsibilities.⁵⁸

Mansel was not out of line with standard Tory views of Gladstone: he was a hypocrite, a man who had abandoned Tory high church principles in order to gain

⁵⁶ See *An authentic copy of the poll for a burgess to serve in parliament for the University of Oxford* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1859); for discussion see W. R. Ward, *Victorian Oxford*, pp. 226-27.

⁵⁷ Mansel to Carnarvon, 2nd July, 1859, BL, Carnarvon Papers, vol. XXVII, second folder, ff. 228-229.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

personal power. ‘The charge of hypocrisy was one that Gladstone frequently faced... and it is not difficult to see why’.⁵⁹ ‘His hypocrisy makes me sick’, said Lord Salisbury, famously.⁶⁰ To Disraeli, he was, ‘that unprincipled maniac Gladstone – extraordinary mixture of envy, vindictiveness, hypocrisy and superstition’.⁶¹ Mansel’s other criticism of Gladstone – that he had allowed himself to become the subject of hero-worship, and believed that normal rules no longer applied to him – was also to be echoed by others. To William Thomson, Archbishop of York, Gladstone was ‘at heart a despot’.⁶² To Christopher Wordsworth, Bishop of Lincoln, Gladstone’s acquiescence in hero-worship was sub-Christian: ‘The fact is – in idolizing him, who is the impersonation of the People’s Will, they are worshipping themselves’.⁶³ To William Magee, the problem with Gladstone was simple: he ‘helped himself and hurt his party’.⁶⁴ What is significant about Mansel’s letter to Carnarvon is that it shows that Mansel was putting such thoughts into expression a decade earlier than most other Tories.

The only surviving record of private contact between Mansel and Gladstone dates from 1863. Gladstone had extended a gentle approach, testing the water by sending Mansel two volumes of philosophy, and consulting him on points of detail in Ancient Greek thought. Mansel’s reply was a simple, polite brush-off. He had marking to do at the end of term, and was too busy to help the Chancellor of the Exchequer in matters

⁵⁹ M. Partridge, *Gladstone* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 2.

⁶⁰ E. D. Steele, *Lord Salisbury: A Political Biography* (London: UCL Press, 1999), p. 410, n. 59.

⁶¹ R. Blake, *Disraeli and Gladstone* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 4.

⁶² E. H. Thomson, *The Life and Letters of William Thomson* (London: John Lane the Bodley Head, 1919), p. 261.

⁶³ J. H. Overton and E. Wordsworth, *Christopher Wordsworth, Bishop of Lincoln, 1807-1885* (London: Rivingtons, 1888), p. 332.

⁶⁴ J. C. MacDonnell, *The Life and Correspondence of William Connor Magee*, vol. II (London: Isbister and Co., 1896), p. 120.

of philosophical inquiry.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, Gladstone read Mansel. The library at Hawarden contained the *Limits of Religious Thought* (annotated by Gladstone), *Gnostic Heresies*, and *Letters, Lectures and Reviews*. Gladstone had dedicated a lifetime of study to the works of Bishop Butler, and regarded Mansel as ‘Butler writ plain’. Ironically, Gladstone’s own supporters had abandoned Butler because he had become associated with Mansel, and this explained the removal of Butler’s works from the Oxford curriculum by Gladstonians.⁶⁶ He must have understood that Mansel acted in defence of the very principles of conscience that sat at the heart of Gladstone’s own self-understanding.

The correspondence between Mansel and Carnarvon also contains illuminating information on the rise of Lord Salisbury as the favoured representative of old high church Tory views. Mansel had the delicate task of informing Carnarvon that Salisbury was to be preferred to him as the next champion of the Tory cause. The particular issue Mansel had to negotiate was that of Lord Salisbury’s election as Chancellor of the University of Oxford in 1869, a contest in which Salisbury and Carnarvon were the only two serious Tory options. Carnarvon – a godparent to Salisbury’s children – had to be persuaded to endorse Salisbury, yet had himself a good claim to the position. After all, Mansel had coached Carnarvon to a first class degree whereas Salisbury had only obtained a gentleman’s fourth. As an intellectual, bookish, classical scholar, Carnarvon had his supporters, and could have expected his chances to be reasonable; he was already Lord High Steward of the University, and had served in this position for nearly ten years since March 1859. His decision not to promote himself has been something of a mystery to historians, who have provided

⁶⁵ Mansel to Gladstone, 27th June, 1863, BL, Gladstone Papers, vol. CCCXV, Add. MS 44400, folio 311.

different explanations for it without reference to the relevant correspondence with Mansel.⁶⁷ What the letters make clear is that Mansel had to gently hint that he would lose out to Salisbury if he ran, and that he had better therefore back the other candidate. Mansel himself, Carnarvon's tutor, would be supporting the other man.

Rumours had begun circulating in March, 1868, that the 14th Earl of Derby, having resigned as Prime Minister, 'was about to resign the Chancellorship of the University as well'.⁶⁸ On the 3rd March, Mansel was already providing Carnarvon with gossip about Liberal plans for potential Chancellors: he had heard that one Liberal candidate was Lord Granville. Indeed, Mansel had sat next to Granville in the Cathedral and challenged him on this.⁶⁹ Interestingly, in a private letter of the previous month, Mansel had already been discussing Lord Derby's situation, pointing out to Carnarvon that 'Cranborne [Salisbury]... is perhaps our best man, but nothing is arranged as yet'.⁷⁰ A few days later, Mansel wrote again on the matter of the Chancellorship, this time worrying that Cecil's father might prove problematic to the plan: 'I do not think it likely that Lord Cranborne would be brought forward should the vacancy occur during his father's life'.⁷¹ Events took their course, however, and Cecil's father, the 2nd Marquess of Salisbury, died aged 77 on the 12th April, 1868.⁷² Cecil promptly went from being Lord Cranborne to being the 3rd Marquess of Salisbury. The way was henceforward clear to organise matters in Salisbury's favour.

⁶⁶ L. Tollemache, *Talks with Mr. Gladstone* (London: Edward Arnold, 1898), p. 26.

⁶⁷ See J. F. A. Mason, 'The Election of Lord Salisbury as Chancellor of the University of Oxford in 1869' in *Oxoniensia*, vol. xxix-xxx (1964-5), pp. 167-189; A. Roberts, *Salisbury: Victorian Titan*, pp. 120-21; A. Hardinge, *The Life of Henry Howard Molyneux Herbert*, vol. II, p. 13.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 167.

⁶⁹ Mansel to Carnarvon, 3rd March, 1868, BL, Carnarvon Papers, vol. LXXVIII, Add. MS 60834 (1853-1889), f. 104.

⁷⁰ Mansel to Carnarvon, 20th February, 1868, BL, Carnarvon Papers, vol. LXXVIII, Add. MS 60834 (1853-1889), ff. 100-101.

⁷¹ Mansel to Carnarvon, 25th February, 1868, BL, Carnarvon Papers, vol. LXXVIII, Add. MS 60834 (1853-1889), f. 102.

What the private correspondence shows, therefore, is this: before Derby even resigned as Prime Minister in March, 1868, Mansel had already been advising Carnarvon that Salisbury would be an interesting candidate should the Chancellorship of the University fall vacant. There is no record that the two men discussed the possibility of Carnarvon's candidature. Perhaps Mansel's early intervention was the real reason for Carnarvon not standing. Mansel reinforced the point shortly before the eventual election the following year in a letter from the Deanery of St Paul's dated 21st October, 1869: 'From what I have heard in Oxford today, I think it probable that if Lord Salisbury were proposed he would be accepted by both parties without a contest'.⁷³ The following week, Mansel wrote again to confirm that Salisbury had been proposed.⁷⁴ When the election took place on 12th November, 1869, Salisbury received thirty-seven votes out of thirty-eight (one stray vote went to Carnarvon, but it cannot have been Mansel's as he had declared support for Salisbury).

From this point Salisbury was in the ascendancy, and Carnarvon would have to content himself with the fact. This was despite the fact that only two years before, in March 1867, Salisbury and Carnarvon had together distinguished themselves by resigning from the Cabinet in protest at Disraeli's proposals for the Second Reform Bill.⁷⁵ Salisbury had left the India Office, and Carnarvon the Colonial Office – both vital positions in the mid-1860s – on a point of principle. Both men, therefore, were viewed by churchmen as men of integrity, prepared to put that which they thought

⁷² Roberts, *Salisbury: Victorian Titan*, p. 103.

⁷³ Mansel to Carnarvon, 21st October, 1869, BL, Carnarvon Papers, vol. LXXVIII, Add. MS 60834 (1853-1889), ff. 118-19.

⁷⁴ Mansel to Carnarvon, 29th October, 1869, BL, Carnarvon Papers, vol. LXXVIII, Add. MS 60834 (1853-1889), f. 121.

⁷⁵ For details see A. Roberts, *Salisbury: Victorian Titan*, pp. 86-97.

was right before personal advantage or career advancement. Gathorne Hardy had almost joined them, but could not quite be persuaded. They were both seen as the rising stars of the Tory right, the only two serious contenders for the leadership of the anti-Disraeli faction in the party.

Mansel had been active in events leading up to Carnarvon's principled resignation in 1867. The correspondence shows that Mansel had been concerned about ill-judged democratic reform if it led to instability and unrest. Like many other Tories, Carnarvon included, he thought that any too-hasty change might be dangerous. After the passing of the Bill, he reminded Carnarvon of Byron's definition of democracy: 'an aristocracy of Blackguards'. Reform meant uncertainty: 'Heaven only knows what sort of House of Commons we may have under the new Reform Bill'. Would it be 'more radical or more conservative' than at present?⁷⁶ The previous year, before the passing of the Bill, Carnarvon had hosted both Disraeli and Salisbury at Highclere, the topic of discussion having been plans for reform. Disraeli had made efforts to persuade both men, and in reply, Carnarvon gave Disraeli a letter from Mansel on the topic. Evidently, if the two young Tory aristocrats could not persuade Disraeli, perhaps a letter from his "old ally" would. Mansel's long-standing connection with Disraeli – stretching back to the early 1850s – was being used to exert pressure on him. As Carnarvon recorded in his diary, Disraeli was impressed with what Mansel had to say. 'He was so struck that he asked to show it to Lord Derby and said that if the Deanery of Norwich was still vacant he would do his best to get it for him'.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Mansel to Carnarvon, 22nd July, 1867, BL, Carnarvon Papers, vol. LXXVIII, Add. MS 60834 (1852-1889), ff. 95-98.

⁷⁷ Carnarvon, diary entry, 28th October, 1866, in P. Gordon (ed.), *The Political Diaries of the Fourth Earl of Carnarvon, 1857-1890* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 133.

Disraeli did not want to risk losing Mansel's support, and sought to keep him on board by rewarding him with a senior ecclesiastical preferment.

The Wider Tory Network: Disraeli, Gathorne Hardy, and Salisbury

Mansel's association with Disraeli lasted for at least fifteen years, starting with his contributions to the newspaper Disraeli and his supporters owned and edited, *The Press*, in 1853, and reaching a high point when Disraeli made him Dean of St Paul's Cathedral in 1868. For much of this time, Disraeli had been pursuing a Church-and-State political agenda that reflected the interests of high church Tories like Mansel, and counter-balanced the Tractarian enthusiasm for Gladstone. He 'professed himself a High Churchman', though Salisbury was privately doubtful.⁷⁸ Disraeli's religious position has been represented by historians as a puzzle or a muddle. In his discussion, Lord Blake chose to use words like 'eccentric', 'vague notions', and 'curiously hazy' to describe the matter. Disraeli was represented as combining 'eccentricity in religious matters' with a 'cynicism half affected half real'.⁷⁹ His own political allies sometimes expressed surprise at his religious position. George Smythe early remarked that 'Dizzy's attachment to moderate Oxfordism is something like Bonaparte's to moderate Mahomedanism'.⁸⁰ Likewise, Lord Stanley viewed Disraeli's position in 1861 as an impossibility, asking in his diary, 'how can I reconcile his open ridicule, in private, of all religions, with his preaching up of a new church-and-state agitation?'⁸¹ On the other hand, not all were so cynical. J. A. Froude (no friend of the Church, and as perceptive a critic as any other) recorded that Disraeli did not just support the

⁷⁸ Lady Gwendolen Cecil, *Life of Robert, Marquis of Salisbury*, vol. II, p. 50.

⁷⁹ R. Blake, *Disraeli*, p. 503-04.

⁸⁰ C. Whibley, *Lord John Manners and his Friends*, vol. I (William Blackwood, 1925), pp. 145-46.

⁸¹ J. R. Vincent ed., *Disraeli, Derby and the Conservative Party* (Hassocks, Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1978), p. 179.

Church in public, for ‘He was himself a regular communicant’.⁸² According to Blake, Disraeli ‘worshipped regularly at Hughenden and took the Sacrament at Easter... he really did believe in Christianity of a somewhat peculiar sort’. Blake also observed that Disraeli ‘no doubt believed in the Virgin Birth, the Divinity of Christ and the Resurrection, but not with strong conviction’.⁸³ Some historians, frustrated by this apparent paradox, have decided that Disraeli’s commitment was principally, deliberately (perhaps even cynically?) political. He saw that the ‘connexion of religion with the exercise of political authority [was] one of the main safeguards of the civilisation of man’.⁸⁴ As John Vincent has pointed out, his message was that ‘religion or ideology’ was ‘socially necessary... society without ideology, like government without imagination [was] dangerous’.⁸⁵ So, too, as Ian St John has observed, ‘the Church of England was of capital importance to Disraeli, whatever were his private opinions on the content of its doctrines’.⁸⁶ Yet it is also possible to give Disraeli the benefit of the doubt. Perhaps his religion was not reductively political. He simply did not have the certainty of faith demanded by a Newman or a William George Ward; neither did he claim definite knowledge of God, as did Maurice. Like Mansel, he may well have held that *probability* was the guide of faith, that faith could co-exist with reasonable doubt and not waver, that ultimately, *God* was responsible for the truth of religion, not the sinful, limited, efforts of the individual believer. All too often, Disraeli is approached as someone who did not fulfil the expectations of a fundamentalist, not the expectations of a typical English Anglican. Viewed in Manselian perspective (remembering that Mansel himself,

⁸² J. A. Froude, *Lord Beaconsfield* (Stroud: Nonsuch Publishing, 2007), p. 127.

⁸³ R. Blake, *Disraeli*, pp. 503-04.

⁸⁴ Cited in J. Vincent, *Disraeli*, p. 106.

⁸⁵ J. Vincent, *Disraeli*, p. 99.

⁸⁶ St John, I, *Disraeli and the Art of Victorian Politics* (London: Anthem Press, 2005), p. 106.

though orthodox, was accused of atheism by followers of Maurice), the lines of his Christianity become clearer.

Whatever the truth of the matter, Disraeli's and Mansel's religion were sometimes described in similar terms. According to J. A. Froude, Disraeli 'believed in the religious principle as against the philosophic; and from the nature of his mind he must have known that national religions do not rest upon argument and evidence'.⁸⁷ The same writer said that Mansel taught that 'in the things of God reason is beyond its depth, that the wise and the unwise are on the same level of incapacity, and that we must accept what we find established, or we must believe nothing'.⁸⁸ More emphatically, following Disraeli's speech on 'The Present Position of the Church' on 14th November, 1861, a hostile report in *The Spectator* commented that 'Disraeli... does no doubt echo Mr. Mansel's philosophical scepticism'.⁸⁹ Clearly, contemporaries could see the links, and rightly or wrongly hinted that Disraeli's views on religion were akin to Mansel's.

The earliest record of a connection between Mansel and Disraeli dates back to the setting up of the new weekly Disraelian newspaper, *The Press*, in March 1853. Lord Stanley, Bulwer Lytton, and George Smythe were all called on to help, together with the editors of *Punch*, Shirley Brooks and Tom Taylor. Mansel – then aged thirty-three – also became involved.⁹⁰ So, too, did Mansel's old pupil, Thomas Keble, who was to become an almost constant visitor at Disraeli's homes and a useful journalist

⁸⁷ J. A. Froude, *Lord Beaconsfield*, p. 127.

⁸⁸ J. A. Froude, *Essays in Literature and History* (London: J. M. Dent, n.d.), p. 208.

⁸⁹ Report from *The Spectator* reproduced in *The Mercury* (Hobart, Tasmania), 8th February 1862, Accessed at: <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/8804225>

⁹⁰ Monypenny and Buckle, *Life of Disraeli*, vol. III (London: John Murray, 1914), pp. 492-93.

friend.⁹¹ Lord Stanley's annotated copy of the earliest numbers identified the otherwise anonymous contributors, and a copy of that document, now held by the Disraeli Project at the University of Toronto, shows that Mansel wrote at least three items in 1853 up to the point where Stanley's annotations ended. These were all throwaway satirical poems. The first was 'A New Electoral Fact' (4 June 1853), a 44-line poem on bribery at a recent election in Ireland. The second was 'Imitated From Lord Dorset' (11 June 1853), a 24-line poem (marked 'Mansel?' by Stanley). Finally, Stanley also attributed to Mansel 'Talents and Turks' (24 June 1853), a 76-line poem on the crisis in the Crimea. The content matched the editorial agenda of *The Press* well, reflecting Disraeli's points of attack on the government of the day.⁹² How long Mansel continued to contribute cannot be established, but it is nevertheless noteworthy that his own Bampton Lectures were the subject of an enthusiastic full-page review on 4th December, 1858. The newspaper described Mansel as possessing a 'powerful and well-trained intellect' and a 'high and noble aim'. His literary abilities were praised, and he was described as writing with 'marvellous clearness'. It had been 'many years since a volume of such merit' had been 'offered to the public', said *The Press*.⁹³ The newspaper's editors obviously kept faith with their own writers.

Disraeli had only made one minor platform speech on church matters before 1860. After that date he made a series of long speeches on the church each year from 1860 to 1865.⁹⁴ At the annual meeting of the Oxford Diocesan Church Societies, held at

⁹¹ For Kebbel's account of *The Press* see T. E. Kebbel, *Lord Beaconsfield and Other Tory Memories* (London: Cassell, 1908), p. 216 f. On Kebbel's relationship with Disraeli see his entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography* and his obituary notice in *The Times*.

⁹² See Ann Pottinger Saab, 'Foreign Affairs and New Tories: Disraeli, *The Press*, and the Crimean War' in *The International History Review*, vol. XIX, No. 2 (May, 1997), pp. 286-311.

⁹³ *The Press*, 4th December, 1858, pp. 1187-88.

⁹⁴ See the speeches on the Church of England reproduced in T. E. Kebbel (ed.), *Selected Speeches of the Earl of Beaconsfield*, vol. II (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1882), pp. 555-617. For comment, see J. Vincent, *Disraeli* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 9.

Aylesbury on the 14th November 1861, Disraeli made a speech on ‘The Present Position of the Church’. This was the speech that *The Spectator* was to pick out in its report as Disraeli’s echoing of Mansel’s sceptical philosophy. Disraeli attacked topics that Mansel had attacked, *Essays and Reviews*, and German theology. The latter was described as ‘a revival of Pagan Pantheism’, based on ‘speculations’ which were ‘overreaching’ and ‘self-destructive’. Hegel was named, and was said to have ‘subverted’ religion. But there was nothing to fear, for ‘No religious creed was ever destroyed by a philosophical theory; philosophers destroy themselves’.⁹⁵ The content reproduced Mansel’s theological strategy from the *Limits of Religious Thought* without naming this as the source. In particular, the association of Hegel and Pantheism paralleled what Mansel had said in his Bampton Lectures three years before. On the 25th November 1864, Disraeli made another speech on ‘Church Policy’ in Oxford. *Essays and Reviews* was attacked, and German scholarship was dismissed in comparison with Jewish scholarship of the past. Disraeli savaged the ‘lucubrations of nebulous professors, who seem in their style to have revived chaos, and who if they could only succeed in obtaining a perpetual study of their writings would go far to realise that eternal punishment to which they object’. The target was Mansel’s opponent, F. D. Maurice – this was obvious to many – and the reference had to be removed from the original published version of the text. Nevertheless, identification of Maurice as the “nebulous professor” was later to be definitively reasserted by Disraeli’s biographer, Buckle.⁹⁶ By attacking Maurice, Disraeli was again aligning himself with Mansel, or at least sharing opponents with Mansel. Quite clearly,

⁹⁵ Disraeli, ‘The Present Position of the Church, 1861’ in *Selected Speeches of the Late Right Honourable the Earl of Beaconsfield* ed. T. E. Kebbel, vol. II (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1882), pp. 555-66, p. 560.

⁹⁶ Buckle, *The Life of Benjamin Disraeli*, vol. IV, pp. 372-73; compare B. Disraeli, *Selected Speeches*, vol ii, p. 608.

opposing those to whom Mansel was opposed was in line with Disraeli's political strategy of the 1860s.

In November 1866, after the meeting with Carnarvon at Highclere to discuss Reform, Disraeli followed-up on his promise and made a first (unsuccessful) attempt to secure Mansel a deanery.⁹⁷ A second (this time successful) attempt was made after the election victory in 1868. This time, Mansel was to be made Dean of St Paul's Cathedral. The Royal household had been carefully briefed in advance that Professor Mansel was 'very able'. Disraeli discussed church appointments with Queen Victoria in the September of that year, and the Queen recorded in her journal that Mansel was 'a distinguished theologian and author'.⁹⁸ On the 1st October Disraeli formally proposed Mansel for the Deanery of St Paul's, dependent only on the Queen's sanction. She approved.

Frederick Arnold later argued that Mansel actually 'owed his elevation, much less to the fact of his being scholar, wit, and metaphysician, than to the fact of his being Chairman of the Conservative Committee in the election contest for the University'.⁹⁹ This was a cynical remark, but it could not quite be denied as completely false.

Mansel had twice served in this position, in 1859 and in 1865. In 1859, Lord Chandos had lost, but this proved to be only a temporary setback for a man who was later to come to prominence in Tory administrations as the Third Duke of Buckingham and Chandos. He was Lord President of the Council in 1866, before being reshuffled to

⁹⁷ Disraeli's correspondence for the 24th November 1866 includes references to the attempt to promote Mansel alongside – interestingly – a note sent to George Grote. G. E. Buckle, *Life of Disraeli*, vol V, p. 59, n.1; Benjamin Disraeli, *Letters, 1865-1867*, vol. 9, no. 4267.

⁹⁸ G. E. Buckle (ed.), *The Letters of Queen Victoria*, second series, vol. I, 1862-1869 (London: John Murray, 1926), pp. 537-39.

⁹⁹ F. Arnold, *Our Bishops and Deans*, vol. II (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1875), p. 275.

the Colonial Office following Carnarvon's resignation in March 1867. Another long-standing friend of Disraeli, he was alive to social problems of the day, taking a particular interest in housing and – even more especially – questions of public health. 'Buckingham possessed ability', and vigorously developed public health administration in England.¹⁰⁰ He provides another example of a socially-minded paternalistic Tory with a keen sense of public duty featuring in Mansel's political network. In 1865, Mansel chaired the election committee of Gathorne Hardy, the Tory M. P. who ousted Gladstone from the Oxford University seat.¹⁰¹ Gathorne Hardy's career was more prominent than that of either Lord Chandos or Lord Carnarvon. He was appointed President of the Poor Law Board in 1866, before becoming Home Secretary in 1867. Together with Carnarvon, he was the only other man Salisbury would trust on church matters, thus forming the third figure in the ecclesio-political core of Salisbury's own ideological network. Older than the other two, Gathorne Hardy had originally built his political career in Bradford, where he had taken 'a progressive line on social issues'.¹⁰² His first speech in Parliament had been on a factory bill, and he had long experience of the struggle to deal with social problems. After 1865, representing Oxford University, his attention was turned to other matters, but he remained a figure somewhat distinct from his born-aristocrat allies. Back in 1865, Mansel had been 'the most conspicuous member of his Committee', a key promoter of the Gathorne Hardy cause in the University.¹⁰³ When Mansel was made Dean of St Paul's, Gathorne Hardy recorded the event in his diary, signalling that no

¹⁰⁰ P. Smith, *Disraelian Conservatism and Social Reform*, p. 64.

¹⁰¹ Mansel was one of three vice-chairmen, alongside Michell and Wall. See J. F. A. Mason, 'The Election of Lord Salisbury as Chancellor of the University of Oxford in 1869', p. 174; Bodleian Library, Oxon. c. 84, nos. 507, 515.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 41.

¹⁰³ J. W. Burgon, *Lives of Twelve Good Men*, p. 356.

exception could be made to the appointment. He had been present with Mansel and Magee, together with Burgon, to celebrate the news.

It is important to recognise the extent and scope of Mansel's political network in 1866-67. Mansel knew Disraeli (Chancellor of the Exchequer until February 1867, and thereafter Prime Minister). He also knew the Duke of Buckingham and Chandos (Lord President), knew Gathorne Hardy (President of the Poor Law Board), and had taught Carnarvon (Colonial Secretary). His network included the Prime Minister and three further Cabinet Ministers. To this list, the name of a further Cabinet Minister, Lord Salisbury, then at the India Office, should also be added. The following year, Mansel was advising Carnarvon that Salisbury was the Tories' "best man", and that he would win the election for the Chancellorship of Oxford University. By this point, Mansel was backing Salisbury as the rising star of the Conservative party. Of course, he knew him. Salisbury had been taught at home by the Reverend Arthur Starkey, Fellow of St John's College, and a man whose name appeared repeatedly alongside Mansel's in the College records.¹⁰⁴ Once at Oxford, Salisbury had been taught by Mansel's old school friend from Merchant Taylors', James Bellamy – by that time another Fellow of St John's College.¹⁰⁵ Salisbury's two tutors Starkey and Bellamy shared administrative duties with Mansel at St John's. When Cecil arrived at Oxford in 1847, the role of Dean of Arts at St John's was shared between Mansel and Bellamy; the following year, 1848, it was shared between Mansel and Starkey; in 1849 and 1850, it reverted to Mansel and Bellamy. In 1851, Bellamy became Dean of

¹⁰⁴ On Starkey and Salisbury see Gwendolen Cecil, *Life of Robert, Marquis of Salisbury*, vol. I, p. 17; A. Roberts, *Salisbury: Victorian Titan*, p. 12.

¹⁰⁵ On Bellamy and Salisbury see W. C. Costin, *The History of St John's College, Oxford*, p. 252.

Divinity for a year, and Mansel succeeded him in this role in 1852.¹⁰⁶ The three tutors formed a tight network, Mansel teaching Carnarvon, Starkey and Bellamy teaching Salisbury. At this time, Cecil seems to have befriended Carnarvon, and – interestingly – Liddon, who was then also an undergraduate resident at Christ Church.¹⁰⁷

Following University, the young Robert Cecil was making a career as a journalist, writing biting articles in right-wing periodicals. In 1859, he helped found *Bentley's Quarterly Review*, writing at least one column in each number, and taking some editorial duties.¹⁰⁸ In the July issue, Salisbury's own 'The Faction Fights' was followed by Mansel's 'Modern German Philosophy' – the two men were writing for the same short-lived journal.¹⁰⁹ Later, Salisbury was writing the regular 'German Literature' column for Beresford Hope's *Saturday Review*. He used the column to attack the same German philosophers that Mansel had criticised in his Bampton Lectures: Schleiermacher, Schelling, Hegel, Strauss, and Feuerbach.¹¹⁰ In July 1865, Salisbury attacked Maurice in an article in the *Quarterly Review*.¹¹¹ His theological programme was, therefore, broadly aligned with Mansel's. One of Salisbury's earliest biographers, H. D. Traill, imagined echoes of Mansel's *Phrontisterion* in Salisbury's maiden speech in Parliament on University Reform.¹¹²

Salisbury maintained a lifelong interest in theology, and, with his own grasp of German philosophy, would have been well-placed to understand the content of his

¹⁰⁶ St John's College Archives, ADMIN I. A. 9, f. 161 (November 30th 1847); f. 171 (November 30th 1848); f. 182 (November 30th 1849); f. 190 (November 30th 1850); f. 212 (November 30th 1852).

¹⁰⁷ A. Roberts, *Salisbury: Victorian Titan*, p. 12.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

¹⁰⁹ W. Houghton (ed.), *The Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals, 1824-1900*, vol. II (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), p. 9.

¹¹⁰ See M. Cowling, *Religion and Public Doctrine in Modern England*, vol. I, p. 375.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 361 and p. 377.

¹¹² H. D. Traill, *The Marquis of Salisbury* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1891), p. 11.

personal copy of Mansel's *Limits of Religious Thought*, preserved in the library at Hatfield. Salisbury's seriousness about theology is well-documented: 'There was an informally gathered library in his private room, composed of the books which he detained there for his own reading, – and to the end of his life theology shared in it in equal proportions with its only serious rivals, history and science'.¹¹³

Lady Gwendolen Cecil recorded one conversation in which her father had discussed the relationship of 'Christian ethics' to 'the moral sense of mankind'. He was evidently unpersuaded by the so-called moral argument for Christianity. He had never doubted Christian doctrine, but 'had all his life found a difficulty in accepting the moral teaching of the Gospels'. Evidently, Cecil supposed there to be a great gulf between natural human ideas of ethics, and the ethics revealed by the person of Christ. 'He added that... his acceptance of Christ's moral teaching was an act of faith due to the divine authority upon which it rested'.¹¹⁴ This invites comparison with Mansel's uncompromising teaching on the subject: 'God, who alone is good, can alone shew to man what is good, and He has shewn it in the commandments which He has given'.¹¹⁵ God's goodness might be different to human ideas of goodness. As such, there was a Manselian streak to Salisbury's theological thought. As much as Mansel, Salisbury rejected the Feuerbachian method of Anglicans like Jowett and Maurice who represented their own ideas as a guide to Divine Truth. 'I consider this method of arguing... of guessing God's ways by what we know of man's ways – [as] utterly unsound and deceptive'.¹¹⁶ As Gwendolen Cecil observed, 'permanently characteristic of his thought was the uncompromising acceptance of an unsolved mystery... the

¹¹³ G. Cecil, *Life of Robert Marquis of Salisbury*, vol. I, p. 106.

¹¹⁴ G. Cecil, *Life of Robert Marquis of Salisbury*, vol. I, p. 102.

¹¹⁵ H. L. Mansel, 'St Matthew' in *The Speaker's Commentary*, New Testament, vol. I (London: John Murray, 1878), p. 104, n. 17.

refusal to tolerate any half-hearted attempt to subject God's action to the analysis of human reason'.¹¹⁷

Writing in 1921, Lady Gwendolen appears to have been puzzled by her father's theological position. Lacking knowledge of Manselian theology, elements of it seemed to her to resemble agnosticism. In an important passage, worth quoting at length, she wrote:

The acquiescence in incomprehension might be compared to the attitude of the pure agnostic. But he was incapable of the agnostic's negative conclusion. It would probably be impossible, – it would certainly be beside the point, – to attempt an analysis in logical form of his acceptance of the Christian revelation. It rested upon a spiritual vision which had an existence altogether apart from his intellectual processes and which was more compelling of conviction than any evidence which they could produce... We know from his own confession that his faith never suffered eclipse, and we must assume, therefore, that by the time his reason became critical his beliefs had already achieved an unassailable solidity [based on the] unique appeal which our Lord's revealed personality makes to the heart... The worship that emerged and that governed his maturity was wholly personal in its inspiration and knew nothing of metaphysical abstractions. He worshipped Christ, – not the Christ-type or the Christ-ideal or the "Divine revealed in the human." The vision, though clothed always with the mystery which to him was an essential and,

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 112.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 113.

indeed, in itself an evidential condition of man's approach to God, was to the end apprehended with all the direct simplicity of childhood.¹¹⁸

This was pure Mansel. 'When it was urged against the truth of some Christian doctrine that it was morally unsatisfying, or rationally incomprehensible, his only comment used to be, "as if *that* had anything to do with it!"' The 'reasoning faculties' had to be restricted 'within their legitimate limits'.¹¹⁹

If Mansel's philosophical theology fell out of favour in the Universities and was replaced by Idealist interpretations of Christian faith, his work still nevertheless continued to live on in the minds of leading Tory politicians right up to the end of the century. Roundly criticised by the next generation of University teachers, Manselianism continued to have a legacy in the minds of the leaders of the country, firmly established in the religious ideology of Salisbury's late-Victorian Toryism. Salisbury's own personal influence, the centrality of his own personal character, beliefs, and opinions, to national politics, meant that a deep-rooted Manselianism continued to wield influence in the sphere of life that mattered. Salisbury's own person allowed Mansel's theistic personalism an influential legacy.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 113-14.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 115.

Chapter VI: The 1859 Election and the Maurice Controversy

Towards the end of Derby's second premiership, the Conservatives were short of a clear Commons majority. The first half of 1859 was politically unstable, and it was unclear how the situation could be resolved. Then, in June 1859, an 'unlikely alliance of leading Peelites, Whigs, Liberals, and radicals...took shape'. This was a new 'progressive coalition' which came together under Palmerston. As Angus Hawkins states, 'June 1859 was a landmark in Victorian parliamentary politics, those strategic factors shaping the party struggles of the 1850s coming to a head'.¹ This was the period which saw the formation of the new Liberal party, creating a space which could include figures as diverse as Gladstone, Bright, Palmerston, Russell and Mill.²

Conveniently, Gladstone had been out of the country for some of this period. In November, 1858, he had been sent (by Bulwer-Lytton, and his young Under-Secretary at the Colonial Office, Carnarvon), to the Ionian Islands to serve as Lord High Commissioner Extraordinary.³ On his return, his position was ambiguous. On the 11th June, 1859, he voted with the Conservatives – unlike the other remaining Peelites in the Commons. Which way would he go? Derby and Disraeli had been trying to draw him to their side, but Disraeli was personally unpalatable to Gladstone.⁴ According to Roy Jenkins, 'His preferred outcome after the election was a Derby-Palmerston coalition with Disraeli moved away from the leadership of the Commons without

¹ A. Hawkins, *The Forgotten Prime Minister: The 14th Earl of Derby*, vol. II: 1851-1869 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 220-21.

² See J. Vincent, *The Formation of the British Liberal Party 1857-68* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972); see also, M. Bentley, *Politics Without Democracy 1815-1914* (London: Fontana, 1984), pp. 161-77.

³ The idea of sending Gladstone to the Ionian Islands had been Carnarvon's own. See A. Hardinge, *The Life of Henry Howard Molyneux Herbert, Fourth Earl of Carnarvon, 1831-1890*, vol. I, p. 131.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

being given the Foreign Office as a consolation'.⁵ But this was not to be. As W. R. Ward succinctly puts it, 'On June 11 he [Gladstone] voted with Disraeli on a motion of confidence [in support of Derby], the loss of which brought down the Tory government; a week later he was in office as Chancellor of the Exchequer under Palmerston'.⁶ The switching of sides was swift and dramatic, shocking even to some of his most ardent supporters. Gladstone had been a long-term critic of Palmerston, and his behaviour at this point mystified even close relatives. In an attempt to explain the move, Roy Jenkins has pointed to a letter Gladstone wrote to Sir William Heathcote (Carnarvon's guardian and Member of Parliament for Oxford University), which was 'remarkably defensive in tone', and seemed to suggest Gladstone's concerns surrounding reform and foreign policy.⁷ In the letter, also cited by John Morley, Gladstone had said that for thirteen years he had been 'cast out of party connection, severed from my old party'. He imagined himself to be an independent Member of Parliament, doing what suited himself. Although he had supported Lord Derby, he was now 'asked to take office'.⁸ Personal animosity to Disraeli obviously played a part. So, too, had personal ambition: he had not just switched sides, he had switched sides to become Chancellor. He joined Palmerston's government on June 18th.

The change of track caused considerable alarm at Oxford. On the same day that Gladstone accepted office he learnt that his re-election to the University seat was to be contested. The Marquess of Chandos, Richard Plantagenet Temple-Nugent-Brydges-Chandos-Grenville (1823-1889), the eldest son of the Duke of Buckingham, was put

⁵ Roy Jenkins, *Gladstone* (London: Papermac, 1996), p. 206.

⁶ W. R. Ward, *Victorian Oxford* (London: Frank Cass and Co., 1965), pp. 224-25.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 208.

forward as a candidate in open challenge to Gladstone. Morley described him as the ‘most formidable candidate that [Gladstone] had yet encountered’. Key members of Gladstone’s team defected to Chandos, and his London chairman even ‘became chairman for his new antagonist’. Gladstone was ‘angry, harassed, sore’.⁹ At the centre of activity – the University of Oxford itself – loyal Tories rallied to the Chandos cause. Mansel, who had had the foresight to identify Gladstone as a Judas figure five years earlier, stepped forward as chairman of the Conservative Election Committee.

By becoming chair of the Chandos Committee, Mansel found himself ‘plunged most prominently into the political vortex’.¹⁰ The position of chair was of vital importance. There was an ‘ancient and strict tradition that a University candidate must maintain silence in word and in print during election campaigns’; as a consequence, the chair acted as an official spokesman on behalf of the candidate.¹¹ Mansel was, therefore, the official public mouthpiece of opposition to Gladstone in the University. As the Gladstone machine swung into action, Mansel was, by his own admission, ‘heartily abused in some of the Liberal papers’.¹² He became a target for Gladstonian antagonism, *the* publicly identified partisan Tory. The name “Mansel” was passed back to Gladstone by Richard Greswell and Edward Hawkins as soon as news of the contest broke, and details were supplied of his involvement and activities. On 19th June – the day after Gladstone’s defection, and before Mansel had even written to Carnarvon to advise him of the election – Greswell wrote Gladstone a letter naming

⁸ J. Morley, *The Life of William Ewart Gladstone*, vol. I, 1809-1872 (London: MacMillan, 1905), p. 627.

⁹ J. Morley, *The Life of William Ewart Gladstone*, vol. I, 1809-1872, pp. 628-29.

¹⁰ Mansel to Carnarvon, 20th June, 1859, BL, Carnarvon Papers, vol. XXVII, Add. MS 60783 (ii), f. 218.

¹¹ See J. Vincent, *The Formation of the British Liberal Party, 1857-68*, p. 261.

names. ‘Mr Michell and Mr Peel make the deputation... Professor Mansel is the Chairman... Mr. Starkie [*sic*] of St John’s [one of the secretaries]’.¹³ On 21st June, Hawkins supplied a further intelligence report. He told Gladstone that there was ‘said to be a sharp paper issued by Mr Mansel to his friends’, which criticised Gladstone for switching sides: ‘how... can we have any confidence in you? ... you have now avowed yourself a Liberal, and Oxford will only have a Conservative’.¹⁴

Mansel’s ‘sharp paper’ has been lost, but its chief contents were quoted in Greswell’s official reply. There were two main issues, one party political, and the other centred on Gladstone’s personal behaviour. In party terms, Oxford had voted Tory, but in Gladstone they now had a Liberal. In personal terms, Gladstone had acted inconsistently and had effectively broken his word.¹⁵ Alarmed at the situation, Greswell attempted to split the Tory vote. He thought that the Oxford Tories were acting independently of their own party leadership. Had they had Derby’s – or even Disraeli’s – sanction for forcing the election? (The answer was probably no, for Mansel had only alerted Carnarvon of the situation two days after activity had begun; Gladstone may have been an asset worth clinging to if the Tories could keep him, but the election would only drive him further away. The prospect of Gladstone at the helm of Liberalism was a political risk to be avoided if possible).¹⁶ Greswell wrote to Derby himself, protesting at the Tories’ behaviour in Oxford, and naming a list of chief culprits: Michell, Peel, Mansel the chairman, Starkey.¹⁷ He then embarrassed

¹² Mansel to Carnarvon, 2nd July, 1859, BL, Carnarvon Papers, vol. XXVII, second folder, f. 229.

¹³ Greswell to Gladstone, 19th June, 1859, BL, Gladstone Papers, vol. XCVI, Add. MS 44181, f. 228.

¹⁴ Hawkins to Gladstone, 21st June, 1859, BL, Gladstone Papers, vol. CXXI, Add. MS 44206, f. 231.

¹⁵ Greswell to Mansel, 22nd June, 1859, Bodleian Library, G. A. Oxon. 4 A 58 (5), f. 4.

¹⁶ Carnarvon himself was of the opinion that ‘but for Disraeli *it is possible* he [Gladstone] might once more have found his way back to the Conservative side’. Hardinge, *The Life of Henry Howard Molyneux Herbert, Fourth Earl of Carnarvon, 1831-1890*, vol. I, p. 146.

¹⁷ Greswell, to Derby, 20th June, 1859, BL, Gladstone Papers, vol. XCVI, Add. MS 44181, f. 230.

Gladstone by clumsily allowing Derby's reply to be circulated.¹⁸ Greswell was a little out of his depth, and not knowing how to counter Mansel, sought help from others. Although officially Gladstone's own committee chairman, he asked Goldwin Smith to write further official responses to Chandos' supporters. A 'copy of a letter to the Chairman of Lord Chandos' committee [Mansel] signed by myself [Greswell], but written by Professor Goldwin Smith' was sent to Gladstone.¹⁹ Warming to his new unofficial role, Goldwin Smith wrote to Gladstone, 'Win or lose, you will have the vote of every one of heart and brain in the university... Young Oxford is all with you... But old Oxford takes a long time in dying'.²⁰

As the poll goes on it becomes more apparent that you have with you all the men of distinction and all the young. The opposition is in fact the last kick of the most impracticable kind of Toryism, academical and political, Toryism which in the person of the Derby government has fallen by its own hand and for ever.²¹

When Goldwin Smith published his own critique of Mansel's Bampton Lectures, he drew attention to Mansel's intellectual debts to Bishop Browne and Archbishop King, and pointedly referred to King's 'high Tory' partisanship.²² The political dimension of the intellectual debate was obviously still in his mind. Unfortunately, like Greswell, Goldwin Smith could also be an embarrassment, and, in the course of time, he only helped strengthen feeling against Gladstone. In 1859, his predictions of youthful support for Gladstone did not come to fruition. In actual fact, when the election was

¹⁸ W. R. Ward, *Victorian Oxford*, pp. 225-26.

¹⁹ Greswell to Gladstone, 23rd June, 1859, BL, Gladstone Papers, vol. XCVI, Add. MS 44181, f. 235.

²⁰ Cited in J. Morley, *Life of Gladstone*, vol. I, p. 630.

²¹ Cited in W. R. Ward, *Victorian Oxford*, p. 226.

held on 1st July, the poll books showed that votes for Gladstone had come from the older men of the University. Keble and Pusey voted for him, together with Liddon, Burgon, Thomson, and Denison. In contrast, Goulburn and Charles Dogdson (Lewis Carroll) voted for Chandos. Opposition to Gladstone had come from St John's, Brasenose, St Mary Hall, Lincoln College, and New College, each of which had supplied more men voting for Chandos than not. Men of the other colleges favoured Gladstone, who in the event, won by 1050 votes to 860.²³

The election certainly embarrassed Gladstone. The other two members of Parliament for Oxford University – Inglis and Heathcote – had never had their seats contested, and there had been only two elections for the Cambridge University seats since 1832.²⁴ In his diary he recorded on 20th June: 'I am sore about the Oxford election; but I try to keep myself in order: it discourages & demoralises me... O that I had wings'.²⁵ According to Shannon, Gladstone was 'intensely annoyed'; Jenkins took the view that 'It reduced him... to almost total incomprehensibility'.²⁶ He recognised that having fought four elections at Oxford, there were likely to be more in the future: his opponents would 'not be loath to fight... a fifth or a sixth'.²⁷ Gladstone himself accepted that, 'a contest for the university stretches me to be cut upon the operating table'.²⁸ (He personally had to bear the expenses of advertisements, and pay the costs of bringing up voters. Bills amounted to over £1000).²⁹ Despite winning the election, Gladstone had lost something that mattered in personal terms. According to Jenkins,

²² Goldwin Smith, *Rational Religion* (Oxford: J. L. Wheeler, 1861), p. 39.

²³ See *An Authentic Copy of the Poll for a Burgess to Serve in Parliament for the University of Oxford* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1859).

²⁴ Shannon, *Gladstone*, vol. I, p. 385.

²⁵ M. R. D. Foot and H. C. G. Matthew (eds.), *The Gladstone Diaries*, vol. V, p. 402.

²⁶ R. Shannon, *Gladstone*, vol. I (London: Methuen, 1984), p. 385; R. Jenkins, *Gladstone*, p. 209.

²⁷ Gladstone to Rawlinson, 5th July, 1859. Gladstone Papers, 44530, 45. Cited in Shannon, *Gladstone*, vol. I, p. 386.

²⁸ Gladstone Papers, 44530, 39. Cited in Ward, *Victorian Oxford*, p. 225.

‘Gladstone’s parliamentary divorce from the University seat began in 1859. He visited Oxford only three times in his remaining six years of his tenure as a burgess’.³⁰

Shannon agrees: ‘the indignity of being subjected to scrutiny left Gladstone from now on very restless about his Oxford seat’.³¹ Six years later, Gladstone wrote: ‘I never should have ventured to charge myself with the responsibilities of Member for the University’.³² In Jenkins’ view, there followed a ‘permanent disenchantment with the University as a constituency... Before 1859, whatever disputes or upheavals were involved, Gladstone was proud to be member for Oxford. After 1859, he wished that he had another, less presumptuous constituency’.³³ On 21st July, 1865, Gladstone wrote to Bishop Samuel Wilberforce a melancholy and revealing letter: ‘There have been two great deaths, or transmigration of spirit, in my political existence – one, very slow, the breaking of ties with my original party; the other, very short and sharp, the breaking of the tie with Oxford’.³⁴ That the two ‘great deaths’ were related to each other could not have been lost on either man.

After the 1859 election, the Tories gained confidence. The fact that Gladstone only returned to the University three times in the next six years showed that although they had lost the electoral contest, they had won a moral victory. In 1863, plans were laid for Gathorne Hardy’s candidacy at the next election, and Lord Robert Cecil (the young Lord Salisbury) declared that ‘every Churchman must be a good conservative, and every conservative a good Churchman’.³⁵ Support for Gladstone collapsed in the

²⁹ W. R. Ward, *Victorian Oxford*, p. 227.

³⁰ R. Jenkins, *Gladstone*, p. 209.

³¹ R. Shannon, *Gladstone*, vol. I, p. 385.

³² Gladstone to Granville Vernon, 28th July, 1865, Gladstone Papers, 44535, 96. Cited in R. Shannon, *Gladstone*, vol. I, p. 385.

³³ R. Jenkins, *Gladstone*, p. 209.

³⁴ Gladstone to Wilberforce, 21st July, 1865, cited in R. Wilberforce, *Life of the Right Reverend Samuel Wilberforce*, vol. III (London: John Murray, 1882), pp. 162-63.

³⁵ W. R. Ward, *Victorian Oxford*, p. 229.

University. Men that had supported him – Burgon, Thomson, Denison – would vote for Gathorne Hardy next time round. So, too, would Gladstone’s own chairman, Richard Greswell. Even Hawkins was against Gladstone by 1879.³⁶ Newman advised Keble that, given the opportunity, he also would have voted against Gladstone in the mid-1860s. In 1865, he wrote to Keble to say that ‘Gladstone... really... does go great lengths... He has lost his tether, now that the Conservatives have got rid of him – and won’t he go lengths?’ Newman continued to say he was ‘pained at his “keep moving” speech’. Crucially, he said, ‘None of his friends seem to trust his politics – indeed he seems not to know himself what are his landmarks and his necessary limits’.³⁷ When Newman met Keble for the last time in September 1865, the conversation turned to Gladstone’s defeat as Member of Parliament for Oxford. Newman recorded, ‘I said that I really thought that had I been still a member of the University, I must have voted against him’.³⁸

The Mansel-Maurice Controversy in Political Context

If the abuse of Mansel in the Liberal papers that arose during the short period between the 20th June and the election on the 1st July amounted to the usual rough and tumble of politics, it nevertheless had important consequences for the reception of his academic work. Michael Wolff once noted that reviews of his Bampton Lectures appeared to go through three stages. The first batch of reviews were enthusiastic, including two in the politically Liberal *Times*. A second stage saw objections gradually being raised. A third stage was hostile.³⁹ Crucially, the hostility coincided

³⁶ J. W. Burgon, *Lives of Twelve Good Men*, p. 301 and p. 235.

³⁷ W. Ward, *The Life of John Henry Cardinal Newman*, vol. II (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1913), p. 93.

³⁸ J. Coleridge, *Memoir of the Rev. John Keble* (Oxford: Parker, 1869), p. 533.

³⁹ M. Wolff, ‘Victorian Reviewers and Cultural Responsibility’ in Appleman, Madden, and Wolff (eds.), *1859: Entering an Age of Crisis* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1959), p. 276.

with the Gladstone – Chandos contest at Oxford. Mansel had made himself a target for Gladstonians. Maurice was one such man.

Frederick Denison Maurice (1805-72) belonged to the same generation as Gladstone, and had been a personal supporter since the late 1830s. In 1839, he had said that Gladstone ‘seems to be an excellent and really wise man’; in 1847, Maurice had indicated that he would vote for Gladstone if he could; in 1867, Maurice signalled his continued high regard for Gladstone, saying, ‘I admire him’.⁴⁰ It was not just that Maurice thought highly of Gladstone, or held him in respect and esteem. Sometimes his devotion could be expressed in worryingly unbalanced terms. When he said, ‘Mr Gladstone’s mistake would be better than [another’s] correct judgment’, Maurice’s devotion to Gladstone was surely bordering on the fanatical or foolish. Perplexingly, for Maurice, Gladstone possessed a ‘higher thing’ that set him apart from other men.⁴¹ The language used is suggestive of Carlylean “hero-worship” of Gladstone, a tendency on Maurice’s part to view Gladstone in religious terms. Normal rules did not apply to this man. When Gladstone lost his Oxford seat in the vote of 1865, Maurice hoped it would cure Liberals in the University of their belief in democracy. Democracy was wrong if it went against Gladstone; better no vote than a vote against him.⁴²

Maurice’s own followers were also typically personal supporters of Gladstone. Thus, F. J. A. Hort, who had once declared that he owed nearly all the better part of his

⁴⁰ F. Maurice, *Life of Frederick Denison Maurice*, vol. I, p. 257 and p. 436; vol. II, p. 558.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 442.

⁴² *Ibid.*, vol. II, p. 499.

being to Maurice, also said that Gladstone had ‘always been a favourite’.⁴³ Richard Holt Hutton, who owed his ‘belief that theology is a true science’ to Maurice, was also known and noted for his support for Gladstone.⁴⁴ This was no surprise to anyone, for Gladstone had once described Maurice as a ‘spiritual splendour’.⁴⁵ Gladstone’s niece, Lady Frederick Cavendish, believed Maurice to have been ‘a true Saint’.⁴⁶ Gladstonianism and Mauriceanism often went hand-in-hand, reflecting the *political* aspect of theological commitment in the mid-Victorian period. There were intellectual reasons for this. Both men had been influenced by S. T. Coleridge’s book, *On the Constitution of the Church and State* (1829), which was one of the chief theological sources for Gladstone’s *The State in its Relations with the Church* (1838), and Maurice’s *The Kingdom of Christ* (1838).⁴⁷ Adherence to a particular type of ideological vision, combining theology and politics in the Coleridgean tradition, united Gladstone and Maurice from an early stage.

There should be little surprise, therefore, that when Mansel became a target for Gladstonian anger in 1859, Maurice came out strongly and angrily against him. Although Maurice and Mansel represented different theological traditions and different brands of churchmanship, exchanges between them had, until 1859, conformed to the usual, polite terms of intellectual criticism and debate. In 1859, however, Maurice’s criticisms of Mansel boiled over into something quite different. What had been a merely academic debate suddenly became ‘the great literary event of

⁴³ A. F. Hort, *Life and Letters of Fenton John Anthony Hort*, vol. I (London: Macmillan, 1896), p. 184 and p. 283.

⁴⁴ R. H. Hutton, *Theological Essays* (London: Macmillan, 1888), p. v; J. Hogben, *Richard Holt Hutton of ‘The Spectator’: A Monograph* (London: Oliver & Boyd, 1900), pp. 53-55.

⁴⁵ F. Maurice, *Life of Frederick Denison Maurice*, vol. II, p. 208.

⁴⁶ J. Bailey (ed.), *The Diary of Lady Frederick Cavendish*, vol. II (London: John Murray, 1927), p. 131.

⁴⁷ On this, see A. R. Vidler, *The Orb and the Cross* (London: SPCK, 1945), p. 31 f.; J. Morris, *F. D. Maurice and the Crisis of Christian Authority* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 107-10; D. M. Thompson, *Cambridge Theology in the Nineteenth Century* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), p. 71.

the year'.⁴⁸ Serious literary reviews, periodicals, and journals took more notice of the Mansel-Maurice controversy than they did of the novels of Dickens and Thackeray, and, as Michael Wolff has observed, treated this particular controversy in an increasingly excited manner, with some of the journals becoming more and more hostile to Mansel.⁴⁹ Granted Maurice's hero-worship of Gladstone, the best explanation of this sudden and explosive detonation must have been anger over Mansel's role in the election contest of June that year. Mansel had challenged Gladstone, and had to be squashed.

The excited, partisan political electoral context of the Mansel-Maurice controversy helps explain some of the more curious and perplexing characteristics of the debate. Chiefly, Maurice's own contributions were notably tortuous, rambling, and rude. As R. V. Sampson put it, 'Maurice's apologists have generally experienced a certain embarrassment in handling... Maurice's polemical style' against Mansel. Maurice had quite suddenly become a 'fierce controversialist', yet his opponent, Mansel, appeared to be a man of 'integrity, courtesy, and distinction'.⁵⁰ For F. M. McClain, his 'controversy with Mansel was a significant case in which Maurice lost control'.⁵¹ A writer of bad prose at the best of times, Maurice descended to new depths when writing about Mansel. But he also adopted a sarcastic, stinging tone. Bizarrely, Maurice himself acknowledged as much in the preface to his book on Mansel, *What is Revelation?* (1859): 'I have not been able to avoid in these Letters a certain vehemence of expression, which if it has ever taken a personal form, I shall deeply

⁴⁸ *Literary Churchman*, V (16th December, 1859), p. 451, cited in P. Appleman, W. A. Madden, and M. Wolff (eds.), *1859: Entering an Age of Crisis* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1959), p. 275.

⁴⁹ Appleman, Madden and Wolff (eds.), *1859: Entering an Age of Crisis*, pp. 273-76.

⁵⁰ Appleman, Madden, and Wolff (eds.), *1859: Entering an Age of Crisis*, pp. 74-75.

⁵¹ F. M. McClain, *Maurice: Man and Moralizer* (London: SPCK, 1972), p. 44.

regret'.⁵² Regret it he did, for a dozen years later, in the preface to a new edition of another of his works, he wrote, 'I am anxious to express my regret for any language which I may have used... which... may have given pain to some of [Mansel's] friends'.⁵³ Maurice himself acknowledged that he had gone over the top, and the best explanations for this are those given by Kenneth Freeman and W. R. Matthews: Maurice's *What is Revelation?* was unthinkingly 'quickly written', and showed that Maurice had, quite simply, 'lost his temper'.⁵⁴ According to Michael Ramsey, 'Maurice was stung to a violence unparalleled in the whole of his life of conflict. Even his friends were perplexed by his violence'.⁵⁵ According to F. M. McClain, 'He seemed pathologically driven'.⁵⁶ *What is Revelation?* was Maurice's worst book. As Jeremy Morris has observed, 'its literary weaknesses damaged Maurice's cause'.⁵⁷ It was remembered with embarrassment by his own son, who said, 'I do not think that any of my father's friends have ever read the discussion with entire satisfaction'. He continued:

He does not limit the points of his difference with Mr. Mansel; does not enter upon a methodic argument, does not, in a way that would attract the attention of a careless reader, acknowledge the points that are not in dispute and define those that are. What he does is to prophesy against [Mansel's Bampton Lectures], to declare what [Mansel's] inevitable tendency must be, how the

⁵² F. D. Maurice, *What is Revelation?* (Cambridge: MacMillan, 1859), p. viii.

⁵³ F. D. Maurice, *Moral and Metaphysical Philosophy*, vol. I (London: MacMillan, 1890), p. xlii.

⁵⁴ Freeman, *The Role of Reason in Religion* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969), p. 110; W. R. Matthews, *The Religious Philosophy of Dean Mansel*, p. 18.

⁵⁵ A. M. Ramsey, *F. D. Maurice and the Conflicts of Modern Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951), p. 75.

⁵⁶ F. M. McClain, *Maurice: Man and Moralist*, p. 44.

⁵⁷ J. Morris, *F. D. Maurice and the Crisis of Christian Authority* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 162.

weapon forged in behalf of orthodoxy will become a deadly one in quite other hands.⁵⁸

Ludlow held a similar opinion. ‘I have not finished your reply to Mansel’, Ludlow wrote. ‘Crushing as it is for the most part, I still think it is more than was needed – that a short pamphlet would have embraced all that was required, and more tellingly’.⁵⁹ Maurice’s *What is Revelation?* did not make sense as a theological argument, but, read in the context of the summer of 1859, it did make sense as a quasi-political tract or electoral diatribe. It was a forceful and bitter written attack on Mansel, put together at haste, and serving the interests of the Gladstonians in the heat of 1859. For its readers, conscious of the election, the target was less Mansel’s theology than Mansel’s Toryism. Maurice’s own reference in a private letter to ‘Mr. Mansel’s Carlton Club and Oxford common-room yawn’ showed that even he was aware of how it was being read against the background of the election. He had attacked Mansel in print because he was the ‘spokesman’ of the ‘religious world’. In actual fact, Mansel had been the “spokesman” – the chairman – of the Tory committee. Maurice’s choice of word – “spokesman” – revealed all.⁶⁰

A second curious feature of the controversy lay in the questionable ways in which it was later remembered and represented by Mauriceans after the event. Maurice’s son had somewhere got the story that William Thomson, the Archbishop of York, had first directed Maurice’s attention to Mansel’s Bampton Lectures, describing them as

⁵⁸ F. Maurice, *Life of Frederick Denison Maurice*, vol. II, p. 336.

⁵⁹ J. M. Ludlow to F. D. Maurice, 1st July, 1859, Cambridge University Library, Add. 7348, art. 17, no. 29 cited in F. M. McClain, *Maurice: Man and Moralist*, p. 44.

⁶⁰ F. Maurice, *Life of Frederick Denison Maurice*, vol. II, p. 348-49. For the involvement of the Carlton Club see W. R. Ward, *Victorian Oxford*, p. 226.

‘the most unalloyed Atheism that had been heard in England for generations’.⁶¹ The story was first told in the official biography of Maurice, and was subsequently reproduced in other books on his life and work, thereby gaining the appearance of truthfulness. But the story was too good to be true. The ascription of such a view of Mansel to Thomson has never made much sense. Thomson knew Mansel well, and trusted him to contribute to his own volume, *Aids to Faith* (1862). Why should Thomson have complained to Maurice that Mansel was an atheist in 1858? Aware of the story told in Maurice’s biography, Thomson himself wrote a letter to *The Times* (3rd February, 1885), denying that any such thing had happened. Maurice’s biography was misrepresenting the true events. ‘Kindly give me space to deny that I ever used words so foolish and so utterly unjustifiable’, wrote Thomson. It was ‘inconceivable that he could have used such language’ of his friend, Mansel. Besides, he had himself reviewed Mansel’s Bampton Lectures in quite different terms at the time.⁶²

Somewhere along the line, myth had got tangled up with truth in the telling of the story. A convenient haziness had crept into Mauricean accounts of the background to the writing of *What is Revelation?* If the story is taken to be an example of electoral mischief-making or excited political gossip that had got out of hand, it makes a little more sense.

A further underlying contextual dimension of the Mansel-Maurice controversy was its significance as a publishing event. In the second half of the nineteenth century, a loose rule applied that the Macmillan publishing house published works by Liberal authors, and the firm of John Murray published books by Tories. Thus, MacMillan published Morley’s *Life of Gladstone* (1903), Sandford’s *Memoirs of Archbishop*

⁶¹ Ibid., vol. II, p.333.

⁶² See Appleman, Madden and Wolff (eds.), 1859: *Entering an Age of Crisis*, p. 75.

Temple (1906), all works by Charles Kingsley, and all works by F. D. Maurice. Murray published Monypenny and Buckle's *Life of Disraeli* (1910), Beresford Hope's *Worship in the Church of England* (1875), Burgon's *Lives of Twelve Good Men* (1888), Thomson's *Aids to Faith* (1862), and most works by Mansel. The House of Macmillan was especially conscious of the cause it had to promote, and was responsible for building Maurice's reputation. Alexander Macmillan always referred to Maurice as 'the prophet'. 'Anything about Mr. Maurice is always interesting', he wrote.⁶³ His brother, Daniel Macmillan, named his first son Frederick, and his second son Maurice, in honour of the great man. 'The Macmillan's believed passionately in him – and published and published him'. If anything, they arguably published *too much* of Maurice, the wheat and the chaff. 'At one time his works... occupied a page and a half in their catalogue'.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, they published him because he sold. His works were crucial to the reputation and success of their business in its first two decades. There is good evidence that he had attracted their attention precisely because they saw in him a good business opportunity. Maurice's style resembled that of Thomas Carlyle, and he could be viewed as a Carlyle in Christian clothing for the masses of literate Victorian Christians. 'The Prophet', Maurice, was regarded as having been 'entrusted with a mission to expand Carlyle's profoundly nebulous religiosities to an unbelieving generation'.⁶⁵ For Carlyle and Maurice the press had replaced the pulpit as the means of preaching God's word. 'I many a time say, the writers of Newspapers, Pamphlets, Poems, Books, these *are* the real working effective Church of a modern country.'⁶⁶ If Carlyle was the high priest of the new media, Maurice was his disciple. Maurice learnt from Carlyle the *way* to say things. Both

⁶³ C. L. Graves, *Life and Letters of Alexander Macmillan* (London: Macmillan, 1910), p. 57.

⁶⁴ C. Morgan, *The House of Macmillan 1843-1943* (London: Macmillan, 1943), p. 34.

⁶⁵ C. Morgan, *The House of Macmillan*, p. 34.

⁶⁶ T. Carlyle, *On Hero Worship* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1872), p. 151.

men ‘managed to touch the millions’.⁶⁷ The Macmillans, meanwhile, made money. G. M. Young described the market for this stuff succinctly: ‘a new type... men in tweeds who smoke in the streets, disciples of Maurice, willing hearers of Carlyle, passionate for drains and co-operate societies’.⁶⁸

In the January of 1859, Maurice had preached Epiphanytide sermons which, albeit critical of Mansel, were by no means rude or angry in tone. On 12th January, Alexander Macmillan wrote to Maurice, saying, ‘If you think of doing anything in reply to Mansel’s book I will be exceedingly glad to publish it... Such a volume would be sure to sell’.⁶⁹ But what in the end turned out to be the apparently hastily-written *What is Revelation?* did not appear in print before the electoral contest of that summer. The preface was dated 4th June, exactly a fortnight to the day before Gladstone crossed the floor.⁷⁰ By fluke, coincidence, or design, the book was published just at the time when an attack on Mansel would attract the most interest. Maurice received reviews of *What is Revelation?* that September, showing that the book was read in the context of the summer election.⁷¹ Perhaps the best way of guessing an approximate date of publication is with reference to two letters. On 1st July, the day of the Oxford election itself, Ludlow wrote to Maurice, saying ‘I have not finished your reply to Mansel’.⁷² Granted that Ludlow was personally very close to Maurice, this can quite reasonably be taken as an indication that the book had just been published. Maurice’s reply to Ludlow, dated 3rd July, 1859, contained angry

⁶⁷ B. Hilton, *Frederick Denison Maurice*, An Address by Boyd Hilton, Trinity College Chapel, 1st November, 2009), pp. 1-12, here citing p. 11.

⁶⁸ G. M. Young, *Victorian England: Portrait of an Age* (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), p. 71.

⁶⁹ C. L. Graves, *Life and Letter of Alexander Macmillan*, pp. 124-25.

⁷⁰ F. D. Maurice, *What is Revelation?*, p. ix.

⁷¹ F. Maurice, *Life of Frederick Denison Maurice*, vol. II, pp. 348-49.

⁷² J. M. Ludlow to F. D. Maurice, 1st July, 1859, Cambridge University Library, Add. 7348, art. 17, no. 29.

remarks about Mansel. ‘At all events, what is done is done’, wrote Maurice. ‘If I had taken advice, I should have let Mr. Mansel alone altogether; but there are monitors within which must be obeyed whatever voices without contradict them’.⁷³ Maurice’s soreness suggests that Mansel was then a live issue in his mind. If *What is Revelation?* was indeed published hastily, it most likely must have been published just before that date, quite possibly between the announcement of Gladstone’s defection to the Liberals (18th June) and the date of the election at Oxford (1st July). That would make the book for most of its readers a pro-Gladstonian electoral tract which, having been published quickly by Macmillan to coincide with the election, was marketed beyond the limited Oxford audience for which it was intended. Promoted beyond its natural scope, it drew the attention of a national public. Because Macmillan published *too much* Maurice, it was published on the wrong scale. If Macmillan published hastily to catch a market excited by the election, then we have an explanation for the poor quality of the book. Its oddities can be explained by suggesting that Maurice did not have time to review it carefully.

Consideration of Maurice’s special relationship with the Macmillan publishing house does not just explain how a bad book got published. Other details of Maurice’s correspondence with Alexander Macmillan reveals aspects of Maurice’s personal character which are vital to understanding the emotional dimension of his controversy with Mansel. Originally prejudiced against Mansel, Alexander Macmillan later found that he was ‘by no means a bad fellow in his way’. After he started working as an advisor to the Clarendon Press with Mansel, his opinion had changed: ‘personal relations with Mansel and Burgon induced him to revise his earlier and less

⁷³ Ibid., p. 348.

favourable estimates'.⁷⁴ At some point – the year was not given, but we know it was on 4th January – Maurice wrote to Macmillan to say he would *refuse* to meet Mansel or be reconciled with him, *as Macmillan had recommended*. The hitherto unpublished letter is worth quoting extensively: 'You were kind enough to express a wish last Thursday that Mr Mansel and I should somehow be brought together', wrote Maurice. 'In case you are serious in this proposal, I will trouble you with a few lines and tell you why I think such a meeting would not be desirable for either of us'.

[My] opposition to him as a theologian is of the most serious and unalterable kind. I look upon him as probably the most noble champion in Oxford of an orthodoxy based upon infidelity which is rapidly becoming the orthodoxy of our day and is driving numbers of young men to the foundation upon which it rests: To fight against his orthodoxy is in my judgment to fight for the faith once delivered to the Saints, the actual faith of our Creeds. If I were not utterly unworthy of such an honour I should ask God that I should die as a witness against this orthodoxy, for this truth.

He went on, 'If I met Mr Mansel it would be to exchange... hollow greetings'. The letter concluded, 'I wish for no intercourse of a new social kind with him'.⁷⁵

Foolishly or fanatically, Maurice regarded Mansel's orthodoxy as something he would resist even to the point of martyrdom. What he was *not* prepared to do was meet with Mansel to talk about it. There could be no discussion. In private correspondence, Maurice revealed the limits of his generosity.

⁷⁴ C. L. Graves, *Life and Letters of Alexander Macmillan*, p. 124 and p. 215.

Outline of a Controversy

In sum, ‘The controversy between Maurice and Mansel in the late 1850s turned on the question, what does it mean when a Christian claims to know God’.⁷⁶ The controversy went through several stages, beginning politely and academically in 1854, passing through the crisis point of June 1859, and trailing on sorely until Mansel’s death in 1871. In order to fully understand the *theological* (if not the political) issues involved, it is necessary to review the pre-1859 material before describing the later contours of the debate.

‘On Eternal Life and Eternal Death’, the concluding chapter of Maurice’s *Theological Essays* (1853), first got him into trouble. He was sacked from King’s College London for apparently adopting a position akin to universalism, and rejecting popular notions of future reward and punishment. ‘I knew when I wrote the sentences about eternal death,’ wrote Maurice to Kingsley in July 1853, ‘that I was writing my own sentence at King’s College. And so it will be’.⁷⁷ After a brief controversy about heaven and hell between Maurice and Jelf went through the presses in 1854, Mansel published a short essay of just over a dozen pages under the title ‘Man’s Conception of Eternity’ (1854). According to Geoffrey Rowell in *Hell and the Victorians*, Mansel’s essay stretched Maurice more than Jelf had: it was the ‘most important criticism’ Maurice had faced.⁷⁸ Mansel’s criticism was epistemological, but acute: what was the status of theological knowledge, and how on earth did Maurice know what eternity was? Since

⁷⁵ Maurice to Alexander Macmillan, 4th January, no year, in BL, Macmillan Archive, Add. 55091, ff. 166-69.

⁷⁶ D. Young, *F. D. Maurice and Unitarianism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 120.

⁷⁷ F. Maurice, *Life of Frederick Denison Maurice*, vol. II, p. 168.

⁷⁸ G. Rowell, *Hell and the Victorians: A Study of the Nineteenth-Century Theological Controversies Concerning Eternal Punishment and the Future Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), p. 85.

human minds existed in time and not eternity, the latter was beyond the limits of human knowledge, being a matter for us of metaphysical speculation. Since such speculative truths of metaphysics were incapable of proof, it would be better for the theologian to concentrate on regulative truths capable of informing moral experience. A regulative truth was, ‘designed, not to satisfy our reason, but to guide our practice; not to tell us what God is, but how He wills that we should think of Him’.⁷⁹ The idea of everlasting punishment, whilst being incapable of proof by speculative reason alone, nevertheless served as an important regulative truth for human conduct. The idea of eternity was a fitting ‘regulative idea under which God reveals Himself to man... confirmed by the analogy of all similar regulative ideas, of which the purpose is to accommodate Revelation to human faculties, not to require us to transcend them’.⁸⁰

Mansel’s criticism basically amounted to elements of the *Limits of Religious Thought* in miniature, and it is interesting to note how some of the phrases used in ‘Man’s Conception of Eternity’ were later reused in the Bampton Lectures. Maurice’s response came the next year in a new preface to the second edition of *Patriarchs and Lawgivers* (1855). Here Maurice insisted that there had to be more to Revelation than mere moral guidance for human life, accommodated to human limits. ‘The notion of a revelation that tells us things that are not in themselves true, but which it is right for us to believe and to act upon *as if* they were true, has, I fear, penetrated very deeply into the heart of our English schools, and of our English world’.⁸¹

⁷⁹ H. L. Mansel, ‘Man’s Conception of Eternity’ in *Letter, Lectures and Reviews*, p. 113.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

⁸¹ F. D. Maurice, ‘Preface to the Second Edition’ in *Patriarchs and Lawgivers* (London: Macmillan, 1882), p. v (*emphasis mine*).

The history of the Bible, as I read it, is the history of the way in which God has raised men above their own conceptions, has educated them to believe in Him, to trust in Him, to know Him... The education of man by God is, it seems to me, the education into a knowledge of that which is, not of that which it behoves us to think or believe.

Maurice's "*knowledge of that which is*" was, he thought, grounded in God. 'God... created man in His image... being so created he is capable of receiving a revelation of God, – of knowing what God is', said Maurice.⁸² The Bible, as God's revelation, was not symbolic but *literal*. It provided real knowledge of God's own being.

Thus far, Maurice had backed himself into a fundamentalist corner that it would be difficult to hold once biblical criticism changed the theological climate. But the tone was polite, academic, gracious. There was no need for an immediate or controversial reply from Mansel. Three years later, in the first edition of the Bampton Lectures, Mansel noted some of his concerns with Maurice's *Theological Essays*, and in another note replied to *Patriarchs and Lawgivers*.⁸³ In this latter note, Mansel explained:

I... believe... that God is infinite, and that no human mode of thought, nor even a Revelation, if it is to be intelligible by the human mind, can represent the infinite, save under finite forms and it is a legitimate inference from this position, that no human representation, whether derived from without or from within, from Revelation or from natural Religion, can adequately exhibit the

⁸² *Ibid.*, pp. ii-iii.

absolute nature of God... man does not know God as God knows Himself; and hence... he does not know Him in the fullness of His Absolute Nature...

Revelation is subject to no other limitations than those which encompass all human thought. Man gains nothing by rejecting or perverting its testimony; for the mystery of Revelation is the mystery of Reason also.⁸⁴

For Mansel, ‘our knowledge of God is not a consciousness of the Infinite as such, but that of the relation of a Person to a Person’.⁸⁵ When Mansel wrote that ‘man does not know God as God knows Himself’, he was allowing God to be a genuine “Other”, distinct from the self, strange, encountered in genuine interpersonal relationship. The human being was limited, and “knowledge” was not the right word to describe interpersonal relationship with God. The self *knew* only itself; it intuited – had revealed to it – the existence of other selves.

In Maurice’s sermons for Epiphany, 1859, he began to explore his response to Mansel. On Sunday 9th January, he was critical of Christians who taught that, ‘If we are humble and modest, we shall be content without *knowledge* of divine things. Probabilities, distant approximations to knowledge, are all to which creatures such as we are can aspire’.⁸⁶ The series of sermons, which never named Mansel, eventually became the first 100 pages of *What is Revelation?* When that book finally appeared, including the long, rambling, and repetitious ‘Letters to a Theological Student’, the overall effect was disjointed. Maurice’s anger was expressed in this second section, which was breathless, rude, and leapt from point to point without following any clear

⁸³ H. L. Mansel, *Limits of Religious Thought*, first edition (Oxford: John Murray, 1858), pp. 280-81, n. 13 and n. 14, and p. 435, n. 23.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 436-37.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

structure. He chewed his way through Butler, quoted Carlyle, and quoted Mill's *On Liberty* with approval.⁸⁷ Yet, at the same time, Maurice was adamant that the Biblical authors, the Apostles Paul and John, had to be 'taken in their most literal sense'.⁸⁸ The unsophisticated Biblical literalist was showing his colours.

Mansel's short, sharp, critical reply came quickly. *An Examination of the Rev. F. D. Maurice's Strictures on the Bampton Lectures of 1858*, is a relief to read after wading through Maurice's muddy prose. Mansel knew that Maurice's *What is Revelation?* had missed its target and did more damage to Maurice than anyone else. Mansel pointed out Maurice's 'extraordinary' and 'continuous misrepresentation' of his position, and attacked Maurice for unclarity and inaccuracy.⁸⁹ He dismissed the sermons as irrelevant and suggested that Maurice had done little other than 'raise a cloud of words... to conceal the real question under discussion'.⁹⁰ Mansel showed that Maurice had not understood Schleiermacher, Butler or Hamilton. Maurice was 'not very accurate in his knowledge of Kant' and did not 'condescend to support his assertions by a single reference or quotation'.⁹¹ By contrast, Mansel displayed his excellent technical knowledge of theology and philosophy with extensive references to the literature. At points, one sees Mansel getting frustrated with Maurice's inaccuracy; he accused Maurice not just of unintentional misunderstanding, but of wilful misrepresentation.⁹² On the issue of Maurice's 'peculiar views on the question of Eternal Punishment', Mansel showed that his position was incompatible with Scripture: 'Will Mr. Maurice tell us what portion of the Bible is to be burnt, as

⁸⁶ F. D. Maurice, *Sermons Preached in Lincoln's Inn Chapel*, vol. V (London: Macmillan, 1892), p. 90.

⁸⁷ F. D. Maurice, *What is Revelation?* p. 266 and p. 477.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 212.

⁸⁹ H. L. Mansel, *An Examination of the Rev. F. D. Maurice's Strictures on the Bampton Lectures of 1858* (London: John Murray, 1859), pp. 3-5.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

asserting this universal redemption?’⁹³ On the issue of revelation, Mansel outlined their differences: ‘He holds the Bible to be a complete revelation of the infinite as infinite. I hold it to be an adaptation of the infinite to the finite capacities of men’.⁹⁴ Mansel saw that this had consequences for Maurice’s Christology. If God was revealed absolutely and immediately, there could be no mediatory role for the human nature of Christ. Maurice was actually undermining Chalcedonian Orthodoxy. Correctly interpreting the doctrine of the two natures of Christ, Mansel wrote:

I do not regard the manifestation of God *in the flesh*, as a direct manifestation of the Absolute and Eternal Essence of the Deity; but as the assumption of a nature in which the manifestation is adapted to human faculties and limited to a mode in which man is capable of receiving it... Mr. Maurice’s teaching, on the other hand, so far as I can understand it, appears to be this. He holds that the Incarnation of Christ as a Man was not the assumption, by the Son of God, of a new nature; but an unveiling to man of that which had existed from all eternity. He seems to maintain that God the Son is, in His Eternal and Infinite Essence, very and perfect Man; and that, in His manifestations to the world in the likeness of sinful flesh, He did not “empty Himself, taking the form of a servant,” but manifested his Divine Glory in all its infinite perfection.⁹⁵

Just after 21st November, 1859, the Bampton Lectures went into their fourth edition, and this time included a new preface in which Mansel responded to critical reviews. Mansel referred any readers interested in Maurice’s criticisms to his separate

⁹¹ Ibid., pp. 73-4.

⁹² Ibid., pp. 79-80.

⁹³ Ibid., pp. 87-88.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 94.

publication, *An Examination of F. D. Maurice's Strictures*, saying the 'language in which Mr. Maurice's remarks are conveyed, and the temper which they exhibit... place his work in a totally different class'.⁹⁶ The long note to Lecture VIII was extended in this edition: the 'tone and temper' of Maurice's 'attack' had by now made Mansel 'comparatively indifferent about explanation or conciliation of any kind'.⁹⁷

In 1860, Maurice replied with *Sequel to the Inquiry, What is Revelation?* This book was largely a series of long quotations from Mansel joined with Maurice's comments. In summary, Maurice taught there was a human faculty 'capable of receiving a Revelation of God as God', whilst Mansel denied that there was 'in man any faculty for conversing with the Infinite and the Eternal'.⁹⁸ Maurice asserted that the human race did indeed have such a faculty:

'the Eternal and Infinite is always near us, is always speaking to us, is always preparing us for the knowledge of His creation and Himself... Does not every lower nature – does not our own – become a worthy and profound study to us, when we look up to a higher Nature, and believe that we are intended to participate in that? Thanks be to any teacher who shows us how wonderful it is that we should be capable of such greatness... But if there is no such capacity, is not the Universe emptied of its meaning and its glory?'⁹⁹

⁹⁵ Ibid., pp. 106-7.

⁹⁶ H. L. Mansel, *The Limits of Religious Thought*, fourth Edition (London: John Murray, 1859), p. xl.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 313.

⁹⁸ F. D. Maurice, *Sequel to the Inquiry, What is Revelation?* (Cambridge: Macmillan, 1860), pp. 278-79.

⁹⁹ Ibid., pp. 295-6.

This was Pelagian and pantheistic, and it seemed to owe much to Plato and Coleridge. Was the human race fallen, or did the human race participate in an archetypal divine reality?

Mansel did not reply again. The preface to the fourth edition of the Bampton Lectures did not reappear in the final fifth edition of 1867. There was evidently little to be gained from arguing with Maurice, as Maurice's argument was little more than an assertion that he knew God. At the end of the day, Mansel and Maurice had differed over the meaning of the word "knowledge", and Mansel had a more subtle and philosophical grasp of other terms, like "intuition" or "revelation", which, when used in a technical, Reidian sense, allowed for some sort of apprehension of the divine for which Maurice only had the word "knowledge". For Mansel, faith was based on probability; it could not be described as knowledge without stopping being faith. Maurice, meanwhile, ended up making faith into knowledge.

It took one of Maurice's followers, R. H. Hutton, to clarify what Maurice *ought* to have meant by "knowledge". Perhaps seeing the riches of Mansel's thought, Hutton sought to redefine "knowledge" in personalist terms. Whilst affirming his commitment to Maurice, Hutton nevertheless pursued a semi-Manselian line when explaining Maurice's theology.

To know is not to have a notion which stands in the place of the true object, but to be in direct communion with the true object, and this is exactly most possible, where theory or complete knowledge is least possible. We know the "abysmal deeps" of personality, but have no theory of them. We know love

and hatred, but have no theory of them. We know God better than we know ourselves, better than we know any other human being, better than we know either love or hatred; but we have no theory of him, simply because we stand under and not above him. We can recognize and learn, but never comprehend.¹⁰⁰

Hutton saw that Maurice's "knowledge" had to be explained by defining it in relational terms, claiming that such "knowledge" was distinct from "theory" (Platonic vision). But this was to Manselianise Maurice.

Maurice and the Carlylean Doctrine of Certainty

Maurice's understanding of theological "knowledge" demands some explanation.

After all, *gnosticism* had been one of the great heresies of early Christian thought: one believed in God, but one did not *know* God. It is therefore necessary to locate the source of Maurice's idea of "knowledge" – "*certain* knowledge" – of God: did it come from a non-Christian source, and if so, from whence did it come?

Maurice 'was the most cloudy, some said most woolly, some said most profound, of the Victorian thinkers'.¹⁰¹ In 1853, J. B. Mozley said, 'Maurice has been petted and told he is a philosopher, till he naturally thinks he is one. And he has not a clear idea in his head. It is a reputation that, the instant it is touched, must go like a card-house'.¹⁰² According to Jowett, Maurice was 'misty and confused, and none of his

¹⁰⁰ R. H. Hutton, *Theological Essays*, pp. 89-90.

¹⁰¹ O. Chadwick, *Michael Ramsey: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 63.

¹⁰² A. Mozley (ed.), *Letters of J. B. Mozley* (London: Rivingtons, 1885), p. 222.

writings appear[ed] to me worth reading'.¹⁰³ Newman was dismissive: 'to use general terms and glowing words is to Mauricize'.¹⁰⁴ Leslie Stephen said, 'Of all the muddle-headed, intricate, futile persons I ever studied, he [Maurice] was about the most utterly bewildering'.¹⁰⁵ Even Gladstone could at times be perplexed, thinking him, 'a good deal of an enigma'.¹⁰⁶ 'I got little solid meat from him', wrote Gladstone, 'as I found him difficult to catch and still more difficult to hold'.¹⁰⁷

Granted that Macmillan published Maurice as a Christian version of Carlyle, the most likely explanation is that the chief source of Maurice's peculiar views was Carlyle himself. In 1828 they were both part of a circle, together with John Sterling and John Stuart Mill, writing for the *Athenaeum*. Carlyle later described their work together in his *Life of John Sterling* (1851).¹⁰⁸ Maurice's son later stated that Carlyle was an 'important element in life to my father at this time, as well from his relation to Sterling as on public grounds.' He added that they 'met in society not infrequently... to a certain point they agreed exceedingly well'. In a letter dated 23rd July 1838, Strachey wrote, 'Maurice says he has been more edified by Carlyle's Lectures than by anything he has heard for a long while, and that he had the greatest reverence for Carlyle.'¹⁰⁹

The two men were associated for decades. In a letter to J. M. Ludlow dated 30th May 1862, Maurice stated that he had learnt much from Carlyle. Ludlow expressed his

¹⁰³ E. Abbott and L. Campbell (eds.), *The Life and Letters of Benjamin Jowett*, vol. II (London: John Murray, 1897), p. 45.

¹⁰⁴ Cited in D. L. Edwards, *Leaders of the Church of England, 1828-1978* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1978), p. 180.

¹⁰⁵ F. W. Maitland, *The Life and Letters of Leslie Stephen* (London: Duckworth, 1906), p. 240.

¹⁰⁶ F. Maurice, *Life of Frederick Denison Maurice*, vol. II, p. 208.

¹⁰⁷ J. Morley, *Life of Gladstone*, vol. I, p. 55.

¹⁰⁸ T. Carlyle, *Life of John Sterling* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1871), pp. 38-40.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 250-51.

doubts over Carlyle's 'worship of might', but Maurice defended Carlyle's political vision. 'I have always been persuaded', wrote Maurice, 'that a profound theocratic belief was really at the basis of his [Carlyle's] mind'. Carlyle was, 'utterly and purely a theologian; God was all in all to him.' The 'contradictions in his thought', according to Maurice, could also be found in his own work. Maurice added a statement of his 'reverence and love' for Carlyle.¹¹⁰ Maurice Reckitt stated that Carlyle's 'influence on the group round Maurice, and on Maurice himself is known to have been great'.¹¹¹ Bernard Reardon has written about Maurice's 'very genuine respect' for Carlyle. Maurice, he observed 'esteemed his friendship highly'.¹¹² According to Basil Willey, Maurice thought that Carlyle was 'teaching the reality of a divine order in history'.¹¹³ Most recently, Boyd Hilton has maintained that, 'We have to see Maurice as following in the wake of Carlyle'.¹¹⁴ As we have already seen, Maurice was published by the House of Macmillan because they hoped that he represented a Christianised Carlyle: 'The Prophet... [was] entrusted with a mission to expand Carlyle's profoundly nebulous religiosities to an unbelieving generation'.¹¹⁵

In *On Heroes* (1840), Carlyle had followed Fichte in calling the modern 'Man of Letters', 'a Prophet'. 'Men of Letters are a perpetual priesthood, from age to age, teaching all men that a God is still present in their life'.¹¹⁶ For Carlyle and Maurice the press had replaced the pulpit as the means of preaching God's word. 'I many a time say, the writers of Newspapers, Pamphlets, Poems, Books, these *are* the real

¹¹⁰ F. Maurice, *Life of Frederick Denison Maurice*, volume II, p. 404-05.

¹¹¹ M. Reckitt, *Maurice to Temple: A Century of the Social Movement in the Church of England* (London: Faber and Faber, 1947), p. 58.

¹¹² B. M. G. Reardon, *From Coleridge to Gore: A Century of Religious Thought in Britain* (London: Longman, 1971), p. 374.

¹¹³ B. Willey, *Nineteenth-Century Studies: Coleridge to Matthew Arnold* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 106.

¹¹⁴ B. Hilton, *Frederick Denison Maurice*, p. 11.

¹¹⁵ C. Morgan, *The House of Macmillan (1843-1943)*, p. 34.

working effective Church of a modern country.’¹¹⁷ If Carlyle was the high priest of the new media, Maurice was his disciple. No one understood Maurice’s debt to Carlyle better than Carlyle himself. Like many who have detected a copycat, Carlyle expressed his indignation towards Maurice. Prickett noted that there was ‘sufficient similarity between Maurice’s position and Carlyle’s to ensure the latter’s implacable scorn’.¹¹⁸ Carlyle obviously thought Maurice a bad copy and pale imitation: ‘One of the most entirely uninteresting men of genius that I can meet with in society is poor Maurice to me. All twisted, screwed, wiredrawn; with such a restless sensitiveness: the uttermost inability to let Nature have fair play with him.’¹¹⁹

For his part, Maurice could be equally cautious of Carlyle, accusing him of ‘most monstrous confusions’, ‘inconsistencies’ and ‘wild pantheistic rant’.¹²⁰ Nevertheless, Maurice took from Carlyle a very strict doctrine of faith. ¹²¹ Carlyle made it clear that what he meant by faith was ‘certainty’ – a word he repeated time and again. As he said in *John Sterling*, ‘Religion is not a doubt... it is a certainty, - or else a mockery and a horror.’¹²² By contrast, scepticism was, ‘a chronic atrophy and disease of the whole soul. A man lives by believing something; not by debating and arguing about many things’.¹²³ In 1850 he wrote:

A man’s “religion” consists not of the many things he is in doubt of and tries to believe, but of the few he is assured of, and has no need of effort for

¹¹⁶ T. Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero Worship and the Heroic in History*, p. 145.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

¹¹⁸ S. Prickett, *Romanticism and Religion: The Tradition of Coleridge and Wordsworth in the Victorian Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 137.

¹¹⁹ T. Carlyle, *New Letters of Thomas Carlyle*, volume I, ed. Alexander Carlyle (London: John Lane, 1904), p. 108.

¹²⁰ F. Maurice, *Life of Frederick Denison Maurice*, volume I, p. 282-83.

¹²¹ B. Willey, *Nineteenth-Century Studies*, p. 107.

¹²² T. Carlyle, *Life of John Sterling*, p. 85.

believing. His religion, whatever it may be, is a discerned fact, and coherent system of discerned facts to him; he stands fronting the worlds and the eternities upon it: to *doubt* of it is not permissible at all! He must verify or expel his doubts, convert them into certainty of Yes or No; or they will be the death of his religion.¹²⁴

Following Carlyle, Maurice wrote, ‘A worshipper can only rest upon One who is absolute Truth, who guides into truth. He begins therefore from certainty.’¹²⁵ The use of the word “certainty” was a give-away. Maurice, like Ward, had replaced faith with a “principle of certitude”. But whereas Ward and Newman had looked to the Pope for certainty, the broad church Maurice looked to Carlyle. None of this reflected the Anglican tradition of Butlerian faith which Mansel represented. Indeed, in his *Theological Essays* Maurice expressed ‘groans’ over Butler’s probabilities.¹²⁶ Religion was a certainty or it was nothing.

How did this play out in terms of political thought? Carlyle also influenced Maurice in the construction of a heroic and authoritarian vision of society. “Certainty”, expressed politically, meant totalitarianism. Much has been written about the ‘tendency of his political ideas towards an indiscriminating adulation of authority’. Carlyle has been accused of ‘brutalistic authoritarianism’ and ‘fascism’.¹²⁷ In *Past and Present*, Carlyle had written ‘Democracy... means despair of finding any Heroes to govern you... it is of kin to *Atheism*, and other sad *Isms*: he who discovers no God

¹²³ T. Carlyle, *On Heroes*, p. 161.

¹²⁴ T. Carlyle, *Latter-Day Pamphlets* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1872), p. 266.

¹²⁵ F. D. Maurice, *Social Morality* (London: Macmillan, 1893) p. 411.

¹²⁶ F. D. Maurice, *Theological Essays*, first Edition (Cambridge: Macmillan, 1853), p. 234.

¹²⁷ A. Shelston, ‘Introduction’, in Thomas Carlyle, *Selected Writings*, edited Alan Shelston (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), pp. 9, 19, 22.

whatever, how shall he discover Heroes, the visible Temples of God?’¹²⁸ Reardon said that for Carlyle ‘Man himself is godlike, but his follies are unending. The toiling masses call for pity, but democracy is contemptible. Only the isolated Hero, the rare Great Man, is left to be admired; and the reader at once guesses that in this select gallery the author has already assigned himself a forward place.’¹²⁹ The “great man”, like Gladstone, should never be opposed in a vote. For his part Maurice had a ‘dread of democracy’,¹³⁰ saw it as a ‘horror’ and believed ‘the voice of Demos will be the devil’s voice and not God’.¹³¹ As we saw earlier in this chapter, Maurice believed that democracy was wrong if it went against Gladstone. When Gladstone lost his seat in the vote of 1865, Maurice hoped it would cure Liberals of their belief in votes.

This went far beyond any hesitation about democracy expressed by Mansel. Maurice believed in theocracy: everyone was subject to God, the great dominator of all. He said that ‘the highest ruler of the land, and every subordinate magistrate, derives his authority from an Invisible Person, to whom he is under a fearful responsibility for the fulfilment of his duties.’¹³² He thought ‘social levelling... positively harmful.’¹³³ Both Carlyle and Maurice therefore believed in subjection to leaders. The leader was to be believed with an absolute certainty and was unquestionable. In Maurice, the principle of certainty necessitated an absolute claim of knowledge of what was right for everyone. Of this, Mansel was rightly sceptical. But Maurice, and Carlyle too, sustained their belief in ultimate certainty with reference to German Idealism. Carlyle derived his idea of the literary Hero from Fichte. ‘Fichte calls the Man of Letters... a

¹²⁸ T. Carlyle, *Past and Present*, p. 185.

¹²⁹ B. Reardon, *From Coleridge to Gore*, pp. 380-81.

¹³⁰ F. Maurice, *Life of F. D. Maurice*, volume II, p. 440.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 497.

¹³² F. D. Maurice, *The Prayer Book: Considered Especially in Reference to the Romish System and the Lord’s Prayer* (London: Macmillan, 1880), p. 388.

Prophet... continually unfolding the God-like to men: Men of Letters are a perpetual Priesthood, from age to age, teaching all men that a God is still present in their life.’¹³⁴ He wrote:

According to Fichte, there is a ‘Divine Idea’ pervading the visible Universe; which visible Universe is indeed but its symbol and sensible manifestation, having in itself no meaning, or even true existence independent of it. To the mass of men this Divine Idea of the world lies hidden: yet to discern it, to seize it, and live wholly in it, is the condition of all genuine virtue, knowledge, freedom; and the end, therefore, of all spiritual effort in every age. Literary Men are the appointed interpreters of this Divine Idea; a perpetual priesthood, we might say, standing forth, generation after generation, as the dispensers and living types of God’s everlasting wisdom, to show it in their writings and actions, in such particular form as their own particular times require it in.¹³⁵

The influence of Fichte on Carlyle and thence on Maurice was telling. Fichte, the Idealist critic of Jacobi, had argued that the whole world was the world perceived by his own ego. There was nothing but the “I”. The consequences were important and damaging. ‘If Carlyle were to believe in God it would have to be a God of his own conceiving’.¹³⁶ ‘Carlyle – it is hard to resist the conclusion – was an egomaniac, a would be man of action at perpetual odds with the times but by temperament as by circumstance unable to fulfil the heroic role – of a Cromwell or a Frederick – for

¹³³ E. Norman, *The Victorian Christian Socialists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 17.

¹³⁴ T. Carlyle, *On Heroes*, p. 145.

¹³⁵ T. Carlyle, *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays*, volume I (London: Chapman and Hall, 1839), pp. 49-50.

¹³⁶ B. M. G. Reardon, *From Coleridge to Gore*, p. 377.

which, in his own dreamworld, he cast himself.'¹³⁷ Some Victorians, however, treated him as the prophet and priest of a new religion.¹³⁸ Although in *Past and Present*, Carlyle insisted that his readers needed no new religion, it is hard to resist the conclusion that that was just what he was making.¹³⁹

In 1864, Pusey openly declared that he (Pusey) and Maurice 'worshipped different Gods'.¹⁴⁰ Perhaps he perceived that Maurice was, after all, less a Christian than a disciple of Carlyle. But Pusey was not the only one to come out against Maurice. Others took a subtler approach, simply pointing out the confusing nonsense that Maurice was capable of spouting. Mansel no longer had to fight his corner alone. Disraeli got involved, taking to the platform and dismissing Maurice as a 'nebulous professor'.¹⁴¹ Maurice was now on the receiving end of some pretty severe public blows, and, within a year, in the summer of 1865, Gladstone would be ejected from his Oxford seat. But that election of 1865 would not be fought without another theological and philosophical controversy for Mansel, and this time his opponent would be more formidable than Maurice. In 1865, the intellectual battle was to be fought with John Stuart Mill.

¹³⁷ Ibid., p. 380.

¹³⁸ See A. Shelston, 'Introduction', p. 7.

¹³⁹ T. Carlyle, *Past and Present*, p. 199.

¹⁴⁰ F. Maurice, *Life of Frederick Denison Maurice*, volume II, pp. 466-67.

¹⁴¹ G. E. Buckle, *The Life of Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield*, volume IV, p. 372-73.

Chapter VII: The 1865 Election and the Mill Controversy

The Palmerston government which Gladstone joined as Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1859 lasted through to the General Election which took place just before Palmerston's own death in 1865. According to Michael Bentley, the Liberal government under Palmerston 'side-stepped radicalism' and 'continued to offer an image of executive Whiggery' rather than the more radical politics offered by Bright. But Radicals of Bright's type, then supporting Palmerston from the backbenches, became increasingly influential behind the scenes: 'the centre of gravity of the Liberal parliamentary party' slowly 'eased leftwards'.¹ But "left" and "right" meant something different in the mid-Victorian period: the Radicals actually pursued a free market agenda that served the economic interests of the middle classes. Bright was committed to the *laissez-faire* economics of free trade, and was resistant to all forms of protectionism. A Quaker, he was against the privileges of the landed aristocracy, against Anglicanism, and against Church Establishment, yet from 1864 he 'entered into close consultation with Gladstone', and settled Liberal financial policy in favour of trade and low taxation for the rest of the decade.² It was Bright's Radicals that Mill joined when elected to Parliament as Liberal MP for Westminster in 1865.³

As a whole the party represented the interests and aspirations of 'commonplace wealthy Englishmen whose political actions were bound neither by affiliation to great houses nor by theoretical intransigence'.⁴ Within the broader party, the more radical Liberals were held together by 'anti-aristocratic feelings'. Middle-class Radicals

¹ M. Bentley, *Politics Without Democracy* (London: Fontana, 1984), p. 167 and p. 176.

² J. Vincent, *The Formation of the British Liberal Party, 1857-68* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), p. 237.

³ M. Bentley, *Politics Without Democracy*, p. 176.

viewed their greatest struggle as the fight against ‘aristocratic domination’, and drew on ‘notions of individual effort and self-improvement’. Radicalism meant self-reliance and self-help, was often a politics of individualism rather than anything approaching socialism, and could actually take forms which showed little commitment to social concern.⁵ Some interpreted Liberalism as primarily liberty from the Church, and the ‘rich Nonconformist employers’ were ‘Radical chiefly by reason of their Dissent’.⁶ Mill was a curious member of the party, but ticked all the right boxes. He was self-educated, and, through his widely circulated books, was a hero to self-educators and self-improvers. He was famously anti-Anglican and anti-Church Establishment. Moreover, like some other Liberals, he ‘had a far more vivid sense of the possibility of injustice being committed by the poor against the rich, than of the reverse process’, and focused on theoretical issues rather than practical matters of actually improving the lot of the poor.⁷ As John Vincent has explained:

Just as Gladstone strained every nerve to relieve the middle-class income-tax payer while sincerely stating that the welfare of the working class was his chief concern, so Mill was precisely most successful when drawing attention to problems which, though of general relevance to any society, had little relevance to the particular needs of the urban poor.⁸

Although the Tories were paternalistic, they at least took an interest in practical matters of social reform – thus Carnarvon took on prison reform and Chandos

⁴ J. Vincent, *The Formation of the British Liberal Party*, p. 34.

⁵ K. Theodore Hoppen, *The Mid-Victorian Generation, 1846-1886* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 141 and p. 241.

⁶ J. Vincent, *The Formation of the British Liberal Party*, p. 34.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 186-87.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 187-88.

housing. Mill, by contrast, was a political theorist, ‘crying over the unspilt milk of the future’.⁹ He was also a good party man, describing Gladstone as the ‘statesman in whom the spirit of improvement was incarnate’, and as the ‘greatest parliamentary leader the country had had in the present century, or, perhaps, since the time of the Stuarts’. ‘Mill the politician’ preached with ‘enthusiasm the... creed furnished and embodied by Gladstone in action’.¹⁰ Mill was just as capable as any other politician of abandoning his own philosophical principles in favour of the party line, and behaved himself as a loyal, partisan, Gladstonian Liberal.

Mill understood the power of ideas and, in his own *Considerations on Representative Government* (1861) had written, ‘speculative thought is one of the chief elements of social power... It is what men think that determines how they act’.¹¹ Unsurprisingly, then, he sought to use philosophical argument in the political arena, and himself described the 1865 election as ‘propaganda’ for his own political opinions.¹² Political events like the election helped promote his writings, and his choice of subjects – even his choice of apparently abstract philosophical questions – were made to fit the events. There was a complex relationship between the reality of political life and speculative philosophy in Mill’s work. When it came, his attack on Mansel was, as John Robson has argued, ‘an important issue in his parliamentary campaign’.¹³ Mansel was carefully selected as a philosophical and political target, and was not dealt with as a matter of “neutral” philosophical critique. Rather, philosophical

⁹ Ibid., p. 187.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 194.

¹¹ J. S. Mill, ‘Considerations on Representative Government’ in J. M. Robson (ed.), *Essays on Politics and Society, Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, vol. XIX (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), p. 382.

¹² J. S. Mill to Thomas Hare, 29th May, 1865, in F. E. Mineka and D. N. Lindley (eds.), *Later Letters 1848-1873, Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, vol. XVI (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), pp. 1060-61.

¹³ J. S. Mill, *Autobiography*, ed. J. Robson (London: Penguin, 1989), p. 204, n. 10.

critique here served the interests of Mill's electioneering. It is a real question whether Mill would have written his *Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy* if it were not for the 1865 election. Certainly, outside of the election context it would have been written as a very different book. Mill's *Examination* seems to have been carefully crafted to contain political "sound-bites" suitable for press reports on his campaign. The famous 'to hell I will go' paragraph – directed at Mansel – was clearly meant to be controversial, eye-catching, and memorable, and mid-Victorian journalists took the bait and obligingly circulated the phrase in newspaper reports on Mill just as he was seeking election. It almost became his unofficial campaign slogan. Read in context, Mill's *Examination* was just as much a piece of electoral literature as it was a piece of formal philosophy. Like Maurice's *What is Revelation?* of 1859, it was published during an electoral campaign, and was originally read in that context.

Mansel was an obvious target. In 1859, he had been the official spokesman for the Tory campaign against Gladstone at Oxford. As a consequence of that election, Mansel had fought a battle of ideas with Maurice and other supporters of Gladstone like Goldwin Smith. This war of ideas between Tories and Liberals was to be continued in the election of 1865. Mansel was once again acting as a chairman for the Tory election committee in Oxford, providing public support for Gathorne Hardy against Gladstone, and representing official, ecclesiastical, Tory ideology. What better target for Mill? Mill duly wrote his *Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy* to fight Gladstone's corner at Oxford, and even appears to have lifted his title from Mansel's own *Examination of the Rev. F. D. Maurice's Strictures on the Bampton Lectures*. The link must have been clear to everyone.

Just as in 1859, the 1865 election helped sell books. The election became a publishing event from which Mill benefited. The sequence of events which unfolded ran as follows. Mill's agreement to stand for Parliament was confirmed with the Liberal election committee at Westminster in March 1865.¹⁴ The publication of the first edition of Mill's *Examination* came one month later, on 13th April. This edition was of only 1000 copies, and sold out within two months. The book was immediately and extensively reviewed: indeed 'it elicited more reviews and critical replies in a short period of time than his *Principle of Political Economy*, *System of Logic*, and even *On Liberty*'.¹⁵ Sales of other titles by Mill also went up as the election stirred interest in him. On 29th May, 1865, Mill wrote to Hare, saying, 'this election... is selling my cheap editions, and indeed the dearer ones too, in a most splendid manner'.¹⁶ Seizing the opportunity, Mill's publishers at Longmans, Green and Co. produced a third edition of *Considerations on Representative Government*, a sixth edition of the *System of Logic*, together with popular editions of the *Principles of Political Economy*, *On Liberty*, and *Representative Government*. Mill was a high-brow publishing phenomenon in 1865. A second edition of the *Examination* appeared on 24th July, within a fortnight of the election results. After the election, Mill took the further step of publishing the first edition of *Auguste Comte and Positivism*, a book which should be considered as a companion volume to his *Examination* since both works hinge on criticism of traditional religious belief.

In the election context, newspaper reports on Mill's *Examination* were more important than the book itself. One passage in particular – the 'to hell I will go

¹⁴ R. Reeves, *John Stuart Mill: Victorian Firebrand* (London: Atlantic Books, 2007), p. 356.

¹⁵ J. Robson, 'Textual Introduction' in J. S. Mill, *An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy*, p. lxix.

passage' – became the focus of the propaganda battle, featuring in a series of newspaper reports, editorials, and letters, which swirled around in May and June of the election year. The notorious passage occurred in chapter seven of Mill's *Examination*, 'The Philosophy of the Conditioned, as Applied by Mr. Mansel to the Limits of Religious Thought'. After several pages of criticism of Mansel, Mill wrote:

If, instead of the "glad tidings" that there exists a Being in whom all the excellences which the highest human mind can conceive, exist in a degree inconceivable to us, I am informed that the world is ruled by a being whose attributes are infinite, but what they are we cannot learn, nor what are the principles of his government, except that "the highest human morality which we are capable of conceiving" does not sanction them; convince me of it, and I will bear my fate as I may. But when I am told that I must believe this, and at the same time call this being by the names which express and affirm the highest human morality, I say in plain terms that I will not. Whatever power such a being may have over me, there is one thing which he shall not do: he shall not compel me to worship him. I will call no being good, who is not what I mean when I apply that epithet to my fellow-creatures; and if such a being can sentence me to hell for not so calling him, to hell I will go.¹⁷

In theological terms, this was a straightforward attack on the analogical status of theological language in favour of a doctrine of univocity. But the theological meaning of the text was not what was important about it. Read politically, this was a signal of Mill's agreement with Maurice. The Liberals claimed to know what the "Good" was,

¹⁶ J. S. Mill to Thomas Hare, 29th May, 1865, in *Later Letters, Collected Works*, vol. XVI, pp. 1060-1061.

whatever the situation, whatever the context. How was it received by its original readership?

The book was published on 13th April. Maurice, still sore from the *What is Revelation?* debate, was quick to pick up on the vital message of Mill's *Examination*. On 6th May, he wrote to Kingsley, crowing, 'Mill, I see has used some very noble language in his new work on Sir W. Hamilton, in protesting against a God to whom we attribute qualities which have a certain signification in man, and then say that they have an altogether different signification in Him'. Two days later, Maurice decided to send the book to Kingsley with instructions to read the chapter on Mansel saying that it was 'as masterly as anything which has been written in our day' and adding that the "to hell I will go" paragraph on pp. 102-103 of the 1865 editions was 'a grand and affecting theological statement'. The provocative passage had been picked out, and, as intended, began to be circulated amongst the Liberal intelligentsia. Out of the whole book, it was the "sound-bite" passage – and that alone – that Maurice recommended to Kingsley. Maurice had not yet read the whole book and he asked Kingsley to return it. Nevertheless, he added that 'Mill has said with such emphasis in a few words what I was trying to say in a long series of letters'.¹⁸

On the 27th May 1865, the liberal *Spectator* suggested that the 'to hell I will go' paragraph represented 'the true language of prophets and apostles about God'.¹⁹ The Tory press reacted in a swift and bruising manner. On the 2nd June 1865 the *Record* responded with the suggestion that Mill should be considered the leader of 'the Satanic School'. The *Record* went on to name and shame the members of this school,

¹⁷ J. S. Mill, *An Examination of Sir William Hamilton*, p. 103.

¹⁸ F. Maurice, *The Life of Frederick Denison Maurice*, vol. II, p. 498-499.

including ‘the Rev. F. D. Maurice, the Rev. J. L. Davis, the Rev. Leslie Stephen, the Attorney-General... with the appended sanction of the Dean of Westminster [Stanley], and the *Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone!*’²⁰ On the next day, 3rd June, the *Morning Advertiser* ran a leader on ‘The Religious Views of Mr Mill’ which declared ‘we have never, in the whole course of our reading, met with ranker Atheism.’²¹ The following week, on the 10th June, the *Spectator* came to Mill’s defence, saying he ‘expressed the faith of thousands, theologians, mystics, practical men, both in the past and present, who have deeply considered and passionately rejected Mr Mansel’s peculiar heresy.’²²

In the run-up to the election, Mill’s network of Liberal allies kicked into action, supporting his campaign with letters to the press. Broad church Anglican support for Mill was particularly important to him, as it would draw additional church votes to his cause. What Mill needed was the official sanction of leading broad churchmen, showing that he had the approval of ecclesiastical figures. His narrow circle of church friends duly obliged. In retrospect, it is fascinating to observe just how tight this network was, formed from personal friendships and relationships, and it is worth describing in some detail.

Mill had known Maurice since 1828, when, together with Carlyle, they had been part of the same political network in London.²³ At the time, he had become increasingly friendly with Maurice, and he later recalled that he had ‘deep... respect for Maurice’s

¹⁹ *Spectator* 27th May 1865, p. 585.

²⁰ *Record*, 2nd June 1865, p. 3.

²¹ *Morning Advertiser*, 3rd June 1865.

²² *Spectator*, 10th June 1865, p. 631.

²³ J. S. Mill, *Autobiography*, pp. 108-10.

character and purposes' even though he was completely perplexed by Maurice's adherence to Anglicanism.

I have always thought that there was more intellectual power wasted in Maurice than in any other of my contemporaries. Few of them certainly have had so much to waste. Great powers of generalization, rare ingenuity and subtlety, and a wide perception of important and unobvious truths, served him not for putting something better into the place of the worthless heap of received opinions on the great subjects of thought, but for proving to his own mind that the Church of England had known everything from the first.²⁴

But whatever Mill made of Maurice's conclusions and intellectual position, in 1865 he needed his political support, and that is exactly what he got. Besides Maurice and Kingsley, who else was involved? George Grote was key. Although George Grote was a Comtean positivist historian and a long-term personal friend of Mill, he had excellent connections with senior broad churchmen, and there is even evidence that he and Mill deliberately marshalled and directed his friendship network to solicit support for Mill. Grote had attended Charterhouse School with Connop Thirlwall, the Bishop of St. David's, and Julius Hare, Maurice's brother-in-law. So close was Grote to Thirlwall that the pair of friends – the Comtean positivist and the Anglican Bishop – were ultimately buried in the same grave. Grote's school friend, Bishop Thirlwall, became an important voice in the campaign – a key churchman providing public support for Mill.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 124.

Immediately prior to the election, on 17th June, 1865, the *Spectator* printed a letter from Thirlwall declaring his support for Mill. Thirlwall confirmed that Mill's 'to hell I will go' passage ought to be interpreted as breathing 'the purest spirit of Christian morality'.²⁵ This was exactly what Mill had been fishing for: support from a Bishop. The next day Mill wrote to George Grote, saying he was 'much amused' by the reaction, adding, 'All this is pretty much as I expected, and wished'.²⁶ Via Grote, Mill had successfully manipulated the friendship network to his own advantage. He then himself wrote to the *London Star* on 21st June trumpeting Thirlwall's support, whilst swiping at the *Record*, the *Morning Advertiser*, and Mansel. It was key to his strategy to draw as much attention to Thirlwall's intervention as possible, and make sure it was widely reported.

Once Bishop Thirlwall had gone public, other churchmen followed. A little over a week later, on 1st July, Thirlwall's great friend Arthur Penrhyn Stanley wrote to *The Times*, saying that he recommended Mill to the electorate. The Dean of Westminster Abbey would himself support Mill in the Westminster constituency vote 'on account of his distinguished abilities'. Referring specifically to the 'to hell I will go' passage, Stanley said in his letter to *The Times* that it contained 'a forcible exposition of the foundation of all true religion. The substance of it is, that God is good, and that we are called upon to worship Him because of His goodness'.²⁷

Despite this public support for Mill, in private both Thirlwall and Stanley were later much more cautious about him. Within three years, in a letter to Stanley, Thirlwall pointed out what he thought to be Mill's chief defects: 'if he only would have kept

²⁵ Letter to the Editor, *Spectator*, 17th June, 1865.

²⁶ J. S. Mill to George Grote, 18th June, 1865, in *Later Letters, Collected Works*, vol. XVI, p. 1068.

quiet, and not gone out of his way to give offence to his friends!', wrote Thirlwall. He continued, 'People... supposed him to be a man of cool temperament. He is evidently, like Gladstone... a man of vehemently passionate susceptibility. The snow covers a volcano.'²⁸ After Mill's death, Thirlwall again wrote to Stanley, saying he (Mill), 'had the misfortune of being educated by a narrow-minded pedant'.²⁹ But these later, revised opinions, were not evident in 1865. At the election, both Thirlwall and Stanley had done what Mill, via Grote, had asked of them.

Predictably, George Grote himself got involved, and it can be no accident that his own published criticisms of Mansel's philosophy appeared in the election year of 1865. In Grote's book, *Plato and the Other Companions of Sokrates* (1865), the underlying concern was support for Mill's *Examination*, against Mansel, who was represented as a modern relativist.³⁰ Grote's younger brother, John Grote, the Cambridge philosopher and disciple of Maurice, was also called upon to lend support. John Grote's *Exploratio Philosophica* also appeared in the election year. The author stated in the introduction that the book was with the printers when he became aware of Mill's *Examination*, but Mill was obviously important to the reception of Grote's criticisms of Mansel in the text.³¹ Grote's book became another philosophical text of relevance to the party political battle of ideas.

John Grote's Cambridge friend, F. J. A. Hort, eagerly read Mill's *Examination* as the election was taking place, and corresponded with B. F. Westcott about it. Hort

²⁷ R. E. Prothero, *Arthur Penryhn Stanley*, vol. II (London: John Murray, 1893), pp. 265-66.

²⁸ A. P. Stanley, *Letters to a Friend by Connop Thirlwall* (London: Richard Bentley, 1881), p. 171.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 295.

³⁰ G. Grote, *Plato and the Other Companions of Sokrates*, new edition, vol. III (London: John Murray, 1888), pp. 121-33.

³¹ J. Grote, *Exploratio Philosophica*, Part I (Cambridge: Deighton, Bell, and Co., 1865), p. xxx.

provides clear evidence of how broad churchmen read Mill's *Examination* in the context of the election as a partisan political text. Westcott had told Hort that during the campaign the 'Conservatives placarded Westminster with, "If you wish to lose your Sunday, vote for J. S. Mill."' Hort wrote back to Westcott on 23rd July as news of the election results were coming in, saying he was 'delighted' with Mill's victory in Westminster. He added, 'I have nearly finished his book on Hamilton... perhaps I liked it the better for recognizing some favourite thoughts of my own'.³² It was surely no accident that Hort was reading Mill at the time of the election. In the narrow circles of the educated mid-Victorian electorate, Mill's philosophical text was being read as a piece of sophisticated campaign literature, circulated amongst a close network of intellectual partisan Liberals.

Although Mill's *Examination* achieved its intended political goals in Westminster and amongst broad church circles in Cambridge, there was one place where the electoral strategem seriously backfired with costly consequences. Gladstone was fighting his Oxford seat for the last time in 1865, and the Oxford Tories were not impressed that he and Mill were now connected as members of the same Liberal party. Mill's *Examination* was taken as an attack on Mansel, then serving as one of the chairs of Gathorne Hardy's committee. On the 23rd June, Lord Radstock wrote to Gladstone explaining that Mill's *Examination* had been received very badly at the University and was causing offence.³³ Radstock drew particular attention to Mill's 'to hell I will go' passage, and even sent Gladstone a copy of it. The rhetoric was extremely awkward for Gladstone as a high churchman, and it was politically necessary for him to set out his own views on the matter for his Oxford electorate. It is worth quoting Gladstone's

³² A. F. Hort, *Life and Letters of Fenton John Anthony Hort*, vol. II (London: Macmillan, 1896), p. 38.

³³ Radstock to Gladstone, 23rd June, 1865, BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44406, ff. 317-20.

response to Radstock at length, not least because it has hitherto been ignored in scholarship on Mill's election. Gladstone began cautiously, claiming ignorance of the matter and pointing out that he did not know the context of Mill's argument:

I have considered the passage which you kindly sent me, and which I understand to be extracted from a recent work of Mr Mill.

When I expressed, and allowed to be published, my opinion of Mr Mill's claims to represent Westminster, I was not aware that exception had been taken, on religious grounds, to any passage in his works. But had I seen the passage now before me, it would not, with the view I take of it until better advised, have altered my course of proceeding.

I will say nothing on the form or language of this extract, or on the necessity or propriety of the hypothesis on which it turns; for, after all, I could not properly judge of these matters without the knowledge of the context, which I do not possess.

With these strategic disclaimers and get-out clauses in place, Gladstone proceeded to supply his theological judgement on Mill's statement:

But the substance of the passage seems to me to be just and sound, and not only not to involve unbelief, but to be based on what is really the fundamental principle of all belief. The nature of man is the work of God, and it is not that nature, but only the evil in it, which is not His work. What can be more seemly, to say the least, than the proposition that, when the great Physician and Restorer of that nature comes, He should be known, not merely by exhibitions of power, but by the radical correspondence of what He does and

teaches with all that is recognized, by the great and never-failing, though often obscured, tradition of humanity, as good in that nature which we bear?³⁴

Human notions of goodness were continuous with the divine goodness. In Gladstone's eyes, Mill was broadly correct.

The whole Bible, and the first ideas of Revelation, imply that there is in man a moral standard by means of which its divinity can be recognized... God is [in] my mind nothing else than a name for Good attached to Personality, and invested with the perfection of every other attribute. But good is the essence; and the interpretation of good must, if it is to govern us, have the sanction and attestation of all that remains of good either in the speculative or in the active being of man – of all that in us which in our best hours we recognize as alone entitled to govern.³⁵

Gladstone reassured Radstock that although Mill's choice of words might have startled, he was slow to condemn the passage in part 'because a person of so powerful and dispassionate mind as the Bishop of St. David's' had also withheld his condemnation. Thirlwall's defence of Mill therefore propped up Gladstone's defence of Mill. But did Gladstone know that Thirlwall's support had been solicited by Mill via Grote?

It did not matter. The novel use of postal votes for the Oxford election 'strengthened the clerical vote', and this cost Gladstone his seat on the 18th July. As John Morley

³⁴ Gladstone to Radstock, June 24th 1865, in D. C. Lathbury, *Correspondence on Church and Religion of William Ewart Gladstone*, vol. II (London: John Murray, 1910), p. 85.

observed, Gladstone had by this stage acquired a reputation amongst conservative clergy for holding a ‘sympathy with disestablishment’.³⁶ The defeat had been expected, and Gladstone immediately travelled to the Lancashire constituency, where, on the 20th July, he was returned as Member of Parliament. As a resident of Westminster, he had himself voted for Mill, congratulated him on his election, and now hoped to meet often in the new Parliament.³⁷ On the 1st February, 1866, the MPs were sworn in, and Mill swore the Parliamentary oath ‘on the true faith of a Christian’ even though he was no such thing. When challenged on the matter by Jacob Holyoake, the atheist campaigner, Mill replied that he was ‘as much entitled to call my own opinion about Christ the true faith of a Christian, as any other person is entitled to call his so’.³⁸ This would not have impressed churchmen. By June 1866, the Tories were back in power under Derby, with Mansel’s allies, Chandos, Disraeli, Carnarvon, Gathorne Hardy, and Lord Cranborne, holding five of the fourteen Cabinet positions. Within three years, Mill lost his Parliamentary seat to the Tory newsagent, W. H. Smith, and Mansel was sent to St Paul’s Cathedral.

The Mansel-Mill Controversy in Political Context

The fact that an argument is presented in rational terms does not mean that it does not have motives which are not rational at all, but personal, political, or religious. Mansel knew this. In the Bampton Lectures, he made his own commitments clear, and wished that others would be as honest about theirs as he was:

³⁵ Ibid., p. 86.

³⁶ J. Morley, *The Life of William Ewart Gladstone*, vol. I (London: Macmillan, 1905), p. 779.

³⁷ Gladstone to J. S. Mill, 11th July, 1865, BL, Gladstone Papers, Add. MS 44535, f. 85.

³⁸ R. Reeves, *John Stuart Mill: Victorian Firebrand*, p. 368.

The so-called freethinker is as often as any other man the slave of some self-chosen master, and many who scorn the imputation of believing anything merely because it is found in the Bible, would find it hard to give any better reason for their own unbelief than the *ipse dixit* of some infidel philosopher.³⁹

Behind the apparently “objective” or “neutral” argument of Mill’s *Examination* lay a number of not very carefully hidden motivating factors that had little to do with abstract philosophy and everything to do with Mill’s own beliefs and ambitions. According to Mill’s *Autobiography*, ‘intuitional metaphysics’ represented a particular political vision which Mill felt it necessary to attack. For him, ‘intuitional metaphysics... characterized the reaction of the nineteenth century against the eighteenth’, and expressed ‘conservative interests’.⁴⁰ Mill was explicit that his attack on philosophical intuitionism was ‘not a mere matter of abstract speculation’, but was ‘full of practical consequences’, and was ‘the foundation of all the greatest differences of practical opinion in an age of progress’.⁴¹ Anti-intuitionism meant anti-Toryism. In an important study, Linda Raeder has argued that Mill’s treatment of intuition was driven by anti-theological biases and motives: ‘Mill’s public hostility to intuitionism derived from the sustenance that intuitionism provided to a theologically based ethic’.⁴² Very significantly, it was Mill himself who first argued for a polarised distinction between intuitionism and empiricism, and thereby created the categories through which the epistemological debates of the period have often been studied. Mill developed the notion of two schools of thought, distinct, separate, and mutually

³⁹ H. L. Mansel, *Limits of Religious Thought*, fifth edition (London: John Murray, 1867), p. 6.

⁴⁰ J. S. Mill, *Autobiography*, p. 203.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 202.

⁴² L. C. Raeder, *John Stuart Mill and the Religion of Humanity* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002), p. 147.

opposed. He imposed this binary scheme on contemporary British philosophy with dogmatic and unflinching rigour. According to R. P. Anschutz:

Mill's doctrine of the two schools comprises three main tenets: first, that all differences of opinion on philosophical topics are reducible to a fundamental dichotomy; secondly, that this dichotomy is intimately related to the political differences between progressives and conservatives; thirdly, that it originates in the epistemological difference between experientialists and intuitionists. Mill's references to these two schools are so constant and consistent throughout his life that they appear to be fixed poles of his intellectual world.⁴³

According to Bernard Lightman:

Mill... did not see the struggle between intuitionists and empiricists merely as an academic issue; in his view it had profound consequences for social, political, moral, religious, and scientific principles as well... he believed that the key to undermining orthodox Christianity and conservatism in political and social thought was to demolish the epistemology on which they rested. Whereas the *Logic* was written to combat German philosophers as well as English thinkers like Whewell who used intuitionism in order to defend conservative and Anglican institutions during the forties, the *Examination* represented Mill's sense that it was necessary to return to the attack on the same front in the sixties.⁴⁴

⁴³ R. P. Anschutz, *The Philosophy of J. S. Mill*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), p. 65.

Later, Mill provided a retrospective account of his decisions to write the *System of Logic* which emphasised that his intention had been to attack existing institutions. In the *Autobiography*, he wrote:

The notion that truths external to the mind may be known by intuition or consciousness, independently of observation and experience, is, I am persuaded, in these times, the great intellectual support of false doctrines and bad institutions. By the aid of this theory, every inveterate belief and every intense feeling, of which the origin is not remembered, is enabled to dispense with the obligation of justifying itself by reason, and is erected into its own all-sufficient voucher and justification. There never was such an instrument devised for consecrating all deep seated prejudices.⁴⁵

When he described the motivations for writing the *Examination*, Mill suggested it was an extension of the same principle. When writing of the *Examination*, Mill polarised his two schools theory.

Now, the difference between these two schools of philosophy, that of Intuition, and that of Experience and Association, is not a mere matter of abstract speculation; it is full of practical consequences, and lies at the foundation of all the greatest differences of practical opinion in an age of progress. The practical reformer has continually to demand that changes be made in things which are supported by powerful and widely spread feelings, or to question the apparent necessity and indefeasibleness of established facts;

⁴⁵B. Lightman, *The Origins of Agnosticism: Victorian Unbelief and the Limits of Knowledge* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1987), p. 104.

and it is often an indispensable part of his argument to shew, how those powerful feelings had their origin, and how those facts came to seem necessary and indefeasible. There is therefore a natural hostility between him and a philosophy which discourages the explanation of feelings and moral facts by circumstances and association, and prefers to treat them as ultimate elements of human nature; a philosophy which is addicted to holding up favourite doctrines as intuitive truths and deems intuition to be the voice of Nature and of God, speaking with an authority higher than that of our reason.⁴⁶

For Mill, therefore, anti-intuitionism was anti-toryism. For him, the word “intuition” approximated to means of knowledge established by neither experiment nor exact science. But it also meant more than that. Far more important than the epistemological connotations of the word were its political connotations. Mill was self-consciously engaged in an ideological struggle. Ideas had a power of their own, and could be used to exercise control over others. Mill’s philosophical works were always simultaneously political works. He thought that if you changed people’s ideas and beliefs, you would also change their lives.

Outline of a Controversy

Mill had first thought of writing on Hamilton in 1861 and had intermittently studied his works over the following two years.⁴⁷ In retrospect, Mill considered Hamilton’s writings to be ‘the great fortress of intuitional philosophy in this country’.⁴⁸ His reading of Hamilton was thoroughly negative, and when he encountered Mansel’s

⁴⁵ J. S. Mill, *Autobiography*, pp. 171-172.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 202-203.

⁴⁷ See J. Robson, ‘Textual Introduction’, in J. S. Mill, *An Examination of Sir William Hamilton’s Philosophy, Collected Works*, vol. IX, pp.lxxii-lxxvii.

writings, this negativity was extended and increased. In early 1863, he read Mansel's *Limits of Religious Thought*, which he described in a letter to Bain as a 'detestable... absolutely loathsome book'.⁴⁹ Mill held Mansel's 'view of religion' to be 'profoundly immoral'.⁵⁰ If Hamilton was philosophically wrong, Mansel was just plain wicked. From Mill's point of view, the issue which had to be made explicit in the controversy was ethical, and Mill's writings against Mansel always focus on this issue.

From Mansel's point of view, things looked very different. If intuitionism was abandoned in favour of experientialism, human conscience would be informed not by God, but by experience of the world, and would thereby be determined by such experience. Such determinism struck at the doctrine of freewill, which rendered individuals responsible for their own actions, and constituted them as moral persons. Mansel's motivations when responding to Mill were therefore also ethical. Mansel provided an acute and concise account of the ideas underlying his disagreement with Mill in a letter to Lord Carnarvon dated 25th February 1866. The letter is worth quoting because it represents an especially clear statement of Mansel's views.

I believe that the real basis of the whole controversy against the prevalent Materialism of the present day lies in the question of the *Human Will*. Once concede that the will of Man is free; and no Philosophy, say what it may of fixed laws, can ever really upset the truths dictated by man's religious instincts. This is why I look on the philosophy of such people as Mr. Mill as so utterly mischievous; because the question of *Free will* or *No free will*, is really the question of *Belief* or *No belief*. If I am a person capable, within

⁴⁸ J. S. Mill, *Autobiography*, p. 202.

⁴⁹ J. S. Mill to A. Bain, 7th January 1863, J. S. Mill, *Later Letters, Collected Works*, vol. XV, p. 817.

certain limits, of influencing the phenomena of Nature by my personal will, I can believe in a Personal God who can influence them still more. If I am a thing subject to purely material laws, the sooner I go the way of other things the better. If I am merely a part of the Universe, I am content to be resolved, as soon as may be, into the gases which pervade the Universe. My free will is the only thing which makes me better than a gas.’⁵¹

This letter was written immediately after Mansel had completed his most significant reply to Mill, *The Philosophy of the Conditioned*, which first appeared in the *Contemporary Review* in January and February of 1866, and was later published as a book that same year. Mansel had often expressed his worries about what appeared to him to be a tendency in Mill to reduce human personhood to a mere phenomena determined by natural causes. In the fourth and revised version of Mansel’s edition of a standard Oxford textbook on logic, *Artis Logicae Rudimenta, From the Text of Aldrich with Notes and Marginal References*, he modified the introduction to criticize Mill. Mill was at fault because he regarded the ‘so-called laws of thought as being in reality laws of external nature’. In other words, thought was determined in the same way that nature was determined by physical laws of cause and effect. Mansel thought that in Mill’s philosophy ‘the laws of physical causation are introduced without modification into the moral and intellectual world’.

...instead of an ideal science of man as he ought to think or act, we are presented with an empirical science of the observed relations between thoughts or actions as they actually take place. Thus in the place of a system of

⁵⁰ J. S. Mill, *Autobiography*, p. 203.

⁵¹ J. W. Burgon, *Lives of Twelve Good Men*, (London: John Murray, 1891), p. 360.

Ethics based upon the theory of a free will as it ought to be determined by moral obligations, is substituted Ethology, or the science of the actual phenomena of habits formed by a necessary agent under the laws of an invariable causation.⁵²

Ethology was the subject of Book VI, Chapter V, of Mill's *System of Logic*. There were empirical laws of human nature which accorded to mental science, and which led to social science. Essentially, it was the study of habit (ethos), and was a term then employed in zoology to describe characteristic animal behaviour. In Mansel's view, to discuss human behaviour in such terms was to reduce them to animals, beings less than rational. Mansel gave a full treatment of these questions in the Appendix to his *Prolegomena Logica*, where 'Note D' dealt extensively with the problem as it emerged from Mill's *Logic*. What was the difference between acting in conformity to character, and fatalism?

The conduct of a man, we are told, is the invariable consequent of motives present to his mind; so that, given the motives and the man's character, we could certainly predict the action. *Character*, it must be observed, is not here to be understood in Aristotle's sense, as a disposition caused by a series of voluntary acts; it must be something coeval with the first act of so-called volition. At the earliest period at which I am capable of acting, I possess a character of some sort; and that character, together with the motives presented, determines certainly how I shall act.⁵³

⁵² H. L. Mansel, *Artis Logicae Rudimenta, From the Text of Aldrich; With Notes and Marginal References*, fourth Edition, corrected and enlarged (London: Rivingtons, no date), p.lxxvi.

If our volition was the result of causes we are the slaves of either fatalism or destiny. This, thought Mansel, was necessary to Mill's attempt to treat human conduct as the subject of a predictable science of Ethology.

Ethology, as he conceives it, in relation to *individuals*, as the science of characters as they *must be* according to laws of physical and mental causation, I do believe to be, in its idea and pretensions, chimerical; but Ethics, as a science of such characters as they *ought to be* according to the laws of moral obligation, remains undisturbed, or, rather, more securely established.⁵⁴

The problem with Ethology was that it was essentially anti-personalist. Persons were reduced to objects that could be studied as items in the physical world. "I"s became mere "It"s. If Mansel's rejection of Ethology secured his notion of freewill, Mill's understanding of character was curiously scripted, determined by the author of circumstance. People's choices were determined by their preferences, and their preferences were typically utilitarian. In the *Examination*, Mill described freewill in tentative terms:

...this conviction, whether termed consciousness or only belief, that our will is free – what is it? Of what are we convinced? I am told that whether I decide to do or to abstain, I feel I could have decided the other way, I ask my consciousness what I do feel, and I find, indeed, that I feel (or am convinced) that I could, and even should, have chosen the other course if I had preferred

⁵³ H. L. Mansel, *Prolegomena Logica* (Boston: Gould and Lincoln, 1860), p. 272.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 274.

it, that is if I had liked it better; but not that I could have chosen one course while I preferred the other.⁵⁵

In the *Examination*, therefore, freedom of choice, freedom of the will, was reduced to a mere matter of preference which could potentially be predicted. In the other book Mill published in 1865, *Auguste Comte and Positivism*, he associated belief in free will with belief in God. He described the ‘Theological’ vision of the world as the ‘Personal, or Volitional explanation of facts’. He wrote, ‘The Theological, which is the original and spontaneous form of thought, regards the facts of the universe as governed not by invariable laws of sequence, but by single and direct volitions of beings, real or imaginary, possessed of life and intelligence’. This was an accurate description of Mansel’s understanding of miracles as acts of God’s free will. It showed Mill understood Mansel’s theistic personalist view of the world. But since personalism was equated with theology it was dismissed by Mill in favour of a ‘Positive’, ‘Phaenomenal’ and ‘Experiential’ vision.⁵⁶

Mansel’s supporters were alarmed at what seemed to them to be Mill’s disbelief in genuine free will. If preferences were themselves determined, how could there be any such thing as free choice? In his book *Mill and Carlyle* (1866), Patrick Proctor Alexander accused Mill of ‘argumentative suicide’.⁵⁷ How could Mill choose not to worship God if there was no such thing as choice? Alexander could not help but mock Mill: ‘When Mr Mill, in a remarkable and much admired passage of his book...says decisively, “to hell I will go” – be it far from us to answer – Go then! though we can

⁵⁵ J. S. Mill, *An Examination of Sir William Hamilton*, p. 450.

⁵⁶ J. S. Mill, *Auguste Comte and Positivism* (Toronto: Ambassador Books, 1961), p. 10.

fancy that to not a few pious minds it might seem that, by some such curt rejoinder, the whole demands of the case were satisfied'.⁵⁸

Mill's arguments obliged Mansel to deliver a lecture at Magdalen College in May 1866, 'On Utility as a Ground of Moral Obligation'. Mansel questioned how the sense of moral obligation arose in the mind without reference to consequences. Where did the sense of moral obligation come from? Mill had reduced virtue to a means of pleasure which only by association appeared to be desirable as an end in itself. According to Mansel, Mill failed to show 'how we come to have the idea of a moral obligation to practice virtue'.⁵⁹ And for Mansel, of course, the source of the sense of personal responsibility and moral obligation, was God.

Mill and the Comtean Religion of Humanity

For a middle-class mid-Victorian, John Stuart Mill had very peculiar religious views. He declared in his *Autobiography* that he was 'one of the very few examples, in this country, of one who has, not thrown off religion, but never had it'.⁶⁰ This was not quite true. For many years, Mill had been an adherent of Comte's Religion of Humanity. He began to read Comte in 1837, and was quickly converted to revolutionary religion. He wrote to Comte:

You know, dear Sir, that religion has so far had deeper roots in our country than in the rest of Europe, even though it has lost, here as elsewhere, its

⁵⁷ P. P. Alexander, *Mill and Carlyle: An Examination of Mr John Stuart Mill's Doctrine of Causation in Relation to Moral Freedom (With an Occasional Discourse on Sauerteig by Smelfungus)* (Edinburgh: William P. Nimmo, 1866), p. 35.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 124-125.

traditional cultural value, and I consider it regrettable that the revolutionary philosophy, which a dozen or so years ago still was in full swing, today has fallen into neglect before completing its task. It is all the more urgent that we replace it by embarking on the path of positive philosophy: and it is with great pleasure that I can tell you that, in spite of the openly antireligious spirit of your work, this great monument of the truly modern philosophy begins to make headway here.⁶¹

Mill was convinced that French Comteanism was a new religion replacing the old. Positive philosophy, wrote Mill, 'is capable of fully assuming the high social function that so far only religions have fulfilled, and, quite imperfectly so.'⁶² Comte was the major prophet, and Mill the minor prophet of the new religion. As prophets, however, Comte and Mill did not speak for God, but for themselves. They preached their own authority.

The clash between Mansel and Mill was not just a battle between a partisan Tory and a partisan Liberal. It was also a struggle between two competing religious traditions, the one Christian, and the other Comtean. There was an irrational core to Mill's rationalism: his religious belief. Mill preached anti-Christianity with all the conviction of a fundamentalist. In Maurice Cowling's judgement, 'He was hostile to Christendom, not indifferent.'⁶³ This hostility was sometimes hidden from public view, but was openly acknowledged in private. There was a curious inflexibility in

⁵⁹ H. L. Mansel, 'On Utility as a Ground of Moral Obligation' in H. W. Chandler (ed.), *Letters, Lectures and Reviews, Including the Phrontisterion, Or, Oxford in the 19th Century* (London: John Murray, 1873), pp.373-374.

⁶⁰ J. S. Mill, *Autobiography*, p. 52.

⁶¹ Cited in L. C. Raeder, *John Stuart Mill and the Religion of Humanity*, p. 52.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 53.

Mill's character; when speaking of Liberal politics, he could come across as 'dogmatic and sententious' and 'almost enthusiastic'.⁶⁴ When reading Mill's published works on religion it is important to take a critical stance, and proceed with suspicion of Mill's motives. He did not always say what he meant, and was capable of writing subtle arguments in support of his hidden agenda. In 1845 he wrote, 'Today, I believe, one ought to keep total silence on the question of religion when writing for an English audience, though indirectly one may strike any blow one wishes at religious beliefs.'⁶⁵ He was capable of dissembling to further his proselytizing agenda.

Mill can be seen as a manipulative strategist who carefully crafted his arguments to obscure his genuine views while attempting to lead the unsuspecting reader closer to his own position... Mill's published writings must therefore be interpreted with some care, that is, with an awareness of the subterranean current running throughout his corpus – its antitheological and especially its anti-Christian themes.⁶⁶

Mill's great disciple, John Morley, stated that, 'Probably no English writer that ever lived has done so much as Mr Mill to cut at the very root of the theological spirit.'⁶⁷

As Linda Raeder has explained, Mill aimed at:

the eradication of theology and metaphysics and all that such transcendent orientations implied for human existence. In the case of Mill, Comte, and

⁶³ M. Cowling, *Mill and Liberalism*, second edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 81.

⁶⁴ J. Vincent (ed.), *Disraeli, Derby and the Conservative Party* (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1978), p. 252.

⁶⁵ Cited in L.C. Raeder, *John Stuart Mill and the Religion of Humanity*, p.57.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

Saint-Simon, the realisation of this aim involved the replacement of an allegedly obsolete theological orientation with a “positivist” equivalent defined in explicit opposition to the former. In short, the establishment of the positivist religion, like that of the Benthamite religion, required not only the replacement of theological morality with a militantly innerworldly substitute of human construction, but also the reorientation of religious aspirations and sentiments away from otherworldly concerns towards those “confined within the limits of the earth”. The former was to be achieved, in Mill’s case, by the establishment of nontheological utilitarianism and the latter by the social establishment of the Religion of Humanity.⁶⁸

As Cowling has explained, ‘Mill’s religion [was] a religion of Sense-Experience.’⁶⁹

Raeder agrees with this explanation: Mill was a dogmatic phenomenalist, who believed that ‘phenomenological positivism could serve as the spiritual replacement for Christianity.’⁷⁰

The difference between Mill and Mansel has been described as ‘the gulf between Mill’s utterly secular, this-worldly temperament and [Mansel’s] sense of the final mysteriousness of the world’.⁷¹ Mill created a new god to ‘satisfy the demands of his intellectual and moral preconceptions, and to provide free rein for his own towering ambitions’.⁷² His ultimate goal was the ‘replacement of a theological with a purely

⁶⁷ J. Morley, ‘The Death of Mr Mill’ in Peter Stansky (ed.), *Nineteenth-Century Essays* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), p. 105.

⁶⁸ L. C. Raeder, *John Stuart Mill and the Religion of Humanity*, p. 39.

⁶⁹ M. Cowling, *Mill and Liberalism*, p. 82-83.

⁷⁰ L. C. Raeder, *John Stuart Mill and the Religion of Humanity*, p. 53.

⁷¹ A. Ryan, ‘Introduction’, in *An Examination of Sir William Hamilton’s Philosophy, Collected Works*, vol. IX, p. xx.

⁷² L. C. Raeder, *John Stuart Mill and the Religion of Humanity*, p. 157.

human orientation'.⁷³ His utilitarian creed presupposed a belief in humanity: 'the ultimate appeal on all ethical questions,' must be 'grounded in the permanent interests of man as a progressive being'.⁷⁴ According to Alan Sell, Mill was creating a 'godless religion of Humanity' and 'playing God'.⁷⁵

At the heart of the controversy was a single question, was God good? Mill, like Maurice, insisted that human beings knew what was meant by the "Good"; for Mansel, the issue was more perplexing, more mysterious. For, if God was good as we understand the term, then how come evil? Interestingly, Leslie Stephen later recognised that there was a Manichean element in Mill's thought. To account for the existence of evil in the world, Mill had to claim that God (whatever he meant by the term) was not all-powerful. Alongside God, there must have been some independent cause of evil in the world. Mansel was not prepared to follow this line: Manicheanism explained nothing. As Leslie Stephen observed:

Mill supposes that God must be good, but reconciles this to facts by assuming that God is not all-powerful. Mansel will not give up the power, and to preserve the goodness has to assume a radical incapacity in the intellect – a necessity of believing where there is an impotence of conceiving. Mill, that is, is content with the empirical deity, who is necessarily limited; and Mansel keeps the deity of ontology but admits that he cannot be known.⁷⁶

⁷³ Ibid., p. 163.

⁷⁴ J. S. Mill, *On Liberty, Essays on Politics and Society, Collected Works*, vol. XVIII, p. 224,

⁷⁵ A. P. F. Sell, *Mill on God* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), p. 95.

⁷⁶ L. Stephen, *The English Utilitarians*, vol. 3 (London: Duckworth, 1900), p. 450.

Stephen sided with Mansel: ‘Manicheanism is a clear confession of philosophical bankruptcy’, wrote Stephen in 1900. What Stephen did not mention was that Mansel had preached on the mysteriousness of the origin of evil in 1866, just after he had written his reply to Mill. ‘The mystery of iniquity’, wrote Mansel, was ‘not explained’.⁷⁷ He warned ‘how little we really know of the nature and origin of that sin which is in us and among us, with which we have walked hand in hand, till familiarity has half divested it of its horrors.’⁷⁸ The origin of evil, in other words, was beyond the limits of religious thought. Nevertheless, Mansel simultaneously thought it necessary to ‘preclude the possibility of any Manichean fiction of an evil power coeternal with good’.⁷⁹ It was necessary to believe that good was greater than evil and triumphant over evil. But how evil came to be, was a mystery.

Mansel was a realist about evil. There was not, could not be, any simplistic solution to the problem of evil in theology. Rather than attempt any such solution, Mansel had a sense that the existence of evil meant that the human condition was tragic; the existence of evil meant that life was either an absurdity or a mystery. The tragedy of evil could not be resolved; either there was no solution to it, and life was ultimately meaningless, or there was a solution to it, but it was beyond human knowledge. The hope that good would prevail, and a sense of discontent with the apparent absurdity of life, were good enough reasons for a gritty resistance to evil. The mystery of duty to conscience dragged one from accepting an absurd view of life: there must be something better, and it was found in Jesus Christ, in accordance with conscience.

⁷⁷ H. L. Mansel, ‘The Conflict and Defeat in Eden’ in S Wilberforce (ed.), *Oxford Lent Sermons, 1866: The Conflict of Christ in His Church* (Oxford: James Parker, 1866), p. 21.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

Good would triumph. ‘Alienated as man is from God by sin, he is yet more alienated from the devil by humanity... As the servant of Christ, he obeys One who shares his nature, who has partaken of his feelings, his sufferings, his sorrows, his temptations’.⁸⁰ ‘God be thanked, over against this mystery of evil is that other surpassing mystery of godliness, “God manifest in the flesh.”’⁸¹

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 26.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 29.

Conclusion

In this conclusion I will summarise the major findings of this thesis, drawing particular attention to what I believe are the highlights of this study of Mansel. I will proceed to make some remarks on how Mansel has been sidelined in histories of Victorian Anglican theology, and raise the question of how his reputation was obscured by his political opponents. I have shown that there was considerably more to say about Mansel than many standard accounts have suggested, and I believe that he anticipated key developments in later theology. As an early Anglican personalist, and as an anticipator of features of Barth's theology, Mansel was both of his time and ahead of his time, and it is perplexing that the vagaries of historical theology have meant that his name has been largely forgotten. It was unfortunate that he died at the age of fifty, and that he founded no school; nevertheless, from a later perspective his theology shows much promise, and could become a valuable resource for Anglican personalist theology today. Mansel allows us to rethink the story of Victorian theology, and in my revisioning of his life and work in context, I believe I have made a contribution to the study of intellectual history of England in the 1850s and 60s. But I also hope that I have indicated that Mansel has a viable theological voice today, and that more serious consideration of his work is required.

Key Findings

In the course of this study a number of important ideas and facts have been established. Throughout I have been aiming to place Mansel in context, and the more I thought about it, the more it became apparent that Mansel's life and thought had to be understood together. A theological statement could, at the time, be a political

statement, and Mansel's literary controversies were as much political theology as abstract philosophy. This insight led me to think about the political motivations of Mansel's opponents, and interpret their works written against him as political tracts. It made me think about motivations, and helped me develop a keen sense of the sometimes complicated aspects of professional and personal relationships that had to be accounted for when seeking to understand Mansel in context.

My discovery of Herbert Spencer's romantic attachment to Mansel's sister, Katherine, potentially changes many things. This discovery means that the history of agnosticism needs to be rewritten. Standard accounts such as those by Lightman and Livingston have failed to notice the highly personal, sensitive, and delicate nature of the matter, and have turned Mansel into something he was not.¹ It simply will not do to say that the 'common sense tradition of which Hamilton and Henry Longueville Mansel were latter-day exponents resulted in the much ridiculed mysticism of Herbert Spencer's unknowable unmoved mover',² or that 'the common-sense tradition of Hamilton and Mansel proved itself epistemically too weak to offer up anything more than the emptiness of Herbert Spencer's "unknowable"',³ or that '*The Limits of Religious Thought* (1858) were... historically... important for the way in which they unwittingly laid the foundations for something more sceptical... the "unknowable" of Spencer's *First Principles* (1862)'.⁴ As I have explained, Mansel had good reason not to draw attention to Herbert Spencer, and therefore could not respond to him in print in the way he responded to Maurice or Mill. The fact that Spencer went unanswered

¹ J. C. Livingston, 'British Agnosticism' in N. Smart et al., *Nineteenth Century Religious Thought in the West*, volume II, pp. 231-270; B. Lightman, *The Origins of Agnosticism*, pp. 32-67.

² D. Boucher, 'The Scottish Contribution to British Idealism' in G. Graham (ed.), *Scottish Philosophy in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 154-181, p. 174.

³ W. J. Mander, *British Idealism: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 138.

allowed Spencer's version of Mansel – the agnostic version – to gain ground. Mansel's honourable behaviour protecting his sister's reputation had far-reaching consequences for his own reputation. He was remembered as Spencer perversely wanted him to be remembered, as a confused “Kantist” and Anglican agnostic. Mansel was nothing of the sort, but he was prevented from saying so in print in public refutation of Spencer. Mansel's propriety was sensible. Spencer's twisted caricature of Mansel amounted to deliberate distortion. Mansel's philosophical theology was rich and profound. Meanwhile, Herbert Spencer was ‘a downright evil man widely admired, whose passion for eugenics and elimination made him the daydreamer of things to come’.⁵

In truth, Mansel was less an agnostic indebted to Kant than a theistic personalist indebted to Jacobi. His personalism – a generation before the emergence of personal idealism in Britain – should have been recognised as one of the great achievements of Anglican theology in the 1860s. It took a sophisticated theological mind to recognise the significance of what Mansel was saying, and to struggle with the implications of his religious vision. I believe that Mansel's ablest critic was not Spencer, not Maurice, not Mill, but someone quite different. The evidence suggesting that Newman's *Grammar of Assent* was a response to Mansel is compelling, and is indicative of the promise of Mansel's works to stimulate the most profound level of theological thought.

Unfortunately, Mansel's promise as a theologian has been obscured by a great amount of partisan political mudslinging. Fitzjames Stephen's equation of empiricist

⁴ W. J. Mander, ‘Introduction’ in Mander ed., *The Oxford Handbook of British Philosophy in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 1-20, p. 18.

philosophy with the Whigs and intuitionist philosophy with the Tories in a review of Mansel's *Metaphysics*, betrays the political aspect of philosophical writing at the time. Maurice's attack on Mansel coincided with the electoral contest at Oxford in 1859. Mansel had led the charge at Gladstone; Maurice represented a Gladstonian response. Likewise, Mill's attack on Mansel coincided with the general election of 1865, and his *Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy* can be read as an elaborate and sophisticated political tract. In both cases Mansel responded with theological works insisting on the unconditioned nature of freewill, censoring his critics as determinists and necessitarians. This was not just a defence of one of the central principles of Tory thought. As Mansel understood it, the question of freewill or no freewill was actually the question of belief or no belief. Faith itself was an act of freedom, made possible by the Truth that sets people free (St John 8:32).

In this, Mansel anticipated key developments in twentieth century theology: what has been said of Karl Barth could well be applied to Mansel. Both affirmed the freedom of God to reveal himself as Jesus Christ, calling others into free personal relationship with God. Both affirmed freedom and autonomy, human and divine. Both found true freedom, true personhood, in prayer. Barth's words could almost be Mansel's: 'God's eternal will is the act of prayer (in which confidence in self gives way before confidence in God). This act is the birth of a genuine human self-awareness'.⁶ Mansel, like Barth:

presented forcefully and cogently the perspective of Christian Revelation.

Humanity exists in relationship with God, not in isolation. Concretely, that

⁵ E. Pearce, 'Nietzsche is Radically Unsound' in *The Guardian* (July 8th, 1992).

⁶ K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, II/2 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark), p. 180.

relationship is established by the call of God, who reveals himself in Jesus Christ. Within the framework of that relationship autonomy can be affirmed. The human being is called to be the free partner of God in prayer, in praise, in witness and in action.⁷

Barth once described Christian faith as a meeting with the Divine Person, a meeting which gave the human person new freedom: 'Christian faith is the gift of the meeting in which men become free to hear the word of grace which God has spoken in Jesus Christ'.⁸

It is a meeting in which men become free to hear God's Word. The gift and the becoming free belong to each other. The gift is the gift of a freedom, of the great freedom in which all other freedoms are included... It rests not upon a human possibility and human initiative, nor on the fact that we men bear in us a capacity to meet God, to hear His Word... Without any possibility on our side God's great possibility comes into view, making possible what is impossible from our side. It is God's gift, God's free gift... [a] work absolutely new to us men, inaccessible and inconceivable to us.⁹

Faith, for Barth, as for Mansel, was grounded in revelation alone.¹⁰ This placed strict limits on the knowledge of God, for 'He cannot be known by the powers of human knowledge, but is apprehensible and apprehended solely because of His own freedom,

⁷ J. Macken, *The Autonomy Theme in the Church Dogmatics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 181.

⁸ K. Barth, *Dogmatics in Outline* (London: SCM, 1949), p. 15.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

decision and action'.¹¹ 'When we believe, we must believe in spite of God's hiddenness. This hiddenness of God necessarily reminds us of our human limitation'.¹² As for Mansel, Barth believed revelation was accommodated to human limits. As such, the 'Knowledge of God [which] takes place where divine revelation takes place... remains a relative knowledge, a knowledge imprisoned within the limits of the creaturely. Of course it is especially true here that we are carrying heavenly treasures in earthen vessels'.¹³

The recovery of Mansel as an English Barthian working some hundred years before Barth wrote the *Church Dogmatics* indicates some of his promise for Anglican theology today. Anglicanism has sometimes struggled to claim Barth as a kindred spirit, but knowledge of Mansel makes this possible. Recognition of what they shared in common allows one to affirm that Barth was in line with a particular form of very traditional Anglican theology. In this light, Chadwick's appraisal of Mansel's *Limits of Religious Thought* as the 'most instructive lectures of the century' deserves attention.¹⁴ Mansel, the conservative traditionalist, was ahead of his time.

A Reputation Sidelined

Perhaps one must admit that Mansel was primarily a theologian, and only secondarily a philosopher. It is little wonder that later philosophers have struggled to make sense of Mansel, for his solutions to philosophical problems were essentially theological, witnessing to prayerful relationship with the living, personal God. He provided

¹⁰ Long before Barth had started his career, Mansel had already been described by Alfred Caldecott as an example of a theologian whose theology was based on the 'resort to revelation only'. See Alfred Caldecott, *The Philosophy of Religion in England and America* (London: Methuen, 1901), pp. 400-15.

¹¹ K. Barth, *Dogmatics in Outline*, p. 23.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 20.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

theological answers to philosophical questions. Read in the light of Augustine or Jacobi or Karl Barth, he makes a great deal of sense. Read in the light of J. S. Mill, T. H. Green, and later secularising philosophers, it is all too easy to misunderstand him. As such, Mansel has not been served well by historians of philosophy, who have often viewed him in hostile terms. But Mansel was viewed as a more significant figure in his own lifetime than he was by the next generation of British philosophers who were eager disciples of Hegel, and party political Gladstonians. We must admit that for the most part, the initial history of mid-Victorian philosophy was written by Gladstonians who had little time for followers of Disraeli like Mansel. As I have shown, informed contemporaries found in Disraeli's speeches echoes of Mansel, and the two men demonstrably knew of each other from 1853 (or before) until Mansel's death in 1871. This connection did not help Mansel's later reputation, but it indicates something of his importance in the 1860s. If he had a legacy, it was in helping to shape the school of thought which formed the intellectual worldview of the more intelligent Tory leaders of the next generation, Oxford high church conservatives like Gathorne Hardy, Carnarvon, and the Victorian titan, Lord Salisbury.

Perhaps Mansel might have fared better if he had had available the technical vocabulary of later personalism. If he had been able to describe himself formally as a "personalist", or "personal realist", or "theistic personalist", or even as a "dialectical theologian", he would have been better able to counter the Kantian label attached to him by Herbert Spencer. But of course, Mansel did not have such terms to hand. He might also have been better if his contemporary critics had a better knowledge of the orthodox Christian tradition. If Maurice, or Jowett, or Hort, or Hutton, had understood

¹⁴ O. Chadwick, *The Victorian Church*, part I, p. 556.

that negative theology – the apophatic *via negativa* – was an intrinsic, essential feature of orthodox theology in the tradition of an Augustine or a Thomas Aquinas or a Richard Hooker, they may have been less hasty in their condemnations of him. That they were heedless to Mansel’s demonstrations of his own orthodoxy – shown in the ‘Testimonies of Theologians’ which Mansel listed in the fifth edition of the *Limits of Religious Thought* and in his book on *Gnostic Heresies* – only reveals their own slender grasp of Christian theology. This may well have been because they themselves owed more to the Gnostic elements in the thought of Schelling and Hegel, than they did to more orthodox Christian theology. That many of Mansel’s critics were Idealists is not irrelevant: they were disciples of Hegel, and as Mansel knew, Hegel shared some things in common with the early heretics.¹⁵ If he had lived longer, Mansel might have been able to address this more extensively.

The sidelining of Mansel has been unfortunate. But, as John Gibbins has observed, ‘intellectual history is a moving feast’, representing the fashions and interests of later generations. ‘In philosophy, as with the related disciplines of political and social theory, when tastes change and new schools or styles emerge to prominence, there tends to be a re-writing of the history of the discipline. Past masters are re-graded in the hierarchy of excellence, new figures join in the ranks and others are relegated to obscurity’.¹⁶ As Alasdair MacIntyre has said, ‘Each age, sometimes each generation has its own canon of the great philosophical writers and indeed of the great

¹⁵ On Schelling’s gnosticism, see H. L. Mansel, *Gnostic Heresies*, p. 147. On Hegel’s gnosticism, see p. 35, p. 107, p. 147, and p. 165. Mansel presumably derived the idea that Schelling and Hegel were gnostics from F. C. Baur’s book on gnosticism. F. C. Baur, *Die Christliche Gnosis*.

¹⁶ J. Gibbins, *John Grote: Cambridge University and the Development of Victorian Thought* (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2007), p. 9.

philosophical books'.¹⁷ In Mansel's own day, he was the chief representative of Hamiltonian philosophy in England, the editor of Hamilton's own works, and the senior representative of the intuitionist or common sense school of thought. As such, he was at the very centre of interest of contemporary philosophy. As reappraisals of Hamilton's philosophy are now just beginning to be formulated, it is timely that Mansel's theology should receive similar treatment.¹⁸ I have shown that there has been a considerable amount to relearn about Mansel, and that he was a more profound figure than later generations have suggested. His early death deprived the Victorian world of one of its most acute theologians who, had he survived, must surely have laid a claim to be remembered in the history of English thought. Unfortunately, he was ahead of his time, and was largely forgotten. As George Santayana once observed, 'Hegel will be to the next generation what Sir William Hamilton was to the last. Nothing will have been disproved, but everything will have been abandoned'.¹⁹ Mansel has not yet been disproved.

St Peter's and St Paul's, Cosgrove

Where to end? Mansel's last day was spent at the church where his father, the Rector, had baptised him fifty years before. He attended the morning and evening services, no doubt accompanied by his wife, mother, and perhaps some of his sisters, and looked around the old church for the last time. We are told he had been writing notes on

¹⁷ A. MacIntyre, 'The Relationship of Philosophy to its Past' in Skinner et al., *Philosophy in History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 33.

¹⁸ See two recent studies by Gordon Graham, 'A Re-examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy' in Graham (ed.), *Scottish Philosophy in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, pp. 47-66; Graham, 'Hamilton, Scottish Common Sense, and the Philosophy of the Conditioned' in W. J. Mander (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of British Philosophy in the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 135-153.

¹⁹ G. Santayana, *Winds of Doctrine* (Gloucester, Massachusetts: Peter Smith, 1971), p. 211.

Berkeley's philosophy, and 'we are told that he was particularly cheerful'.²⁰ Happily, he died in his sleep, but one cannot help feel that he was cut-off in his prime.

Visiting Cosgrove today, one finds an English village that still contains many features Mansel would have known alongside some radical transformations. The nearby modern development of Milton Keynes makes an incongruous new neighbour, out of harmony with what remains of the old village life. In Cosgrove itself, new housing has been developed – some of it on the aptly named Mansel Close – and one gets the impression that here, as everywhere else, life goes on. Cosgrove Hall, Cosgrove Priory, and Cosgrove Rectory are still standing, and the village is still dominated by the church. Inside, one finds a clean, bright, calm, and prayerful place, decorated with memorials to Mansel and his family. Behind the altar is the east window commissioned by Charlotte Augusta in memory of her husband, a large image of the risen Christ. Mansel's grave can be found on the exterior of the north wall of the chancel. It is not like Herbert Spencer's grave, next to Karl Marx's, in Highgate Cemetery in London; neither is it like the great memorials to Dean Church and Canon Liddon in the crypt of St Paul's Cathedral. It is much more modest. I cleared it of brambles and stinging nettles, to reveal the old inscription:

TO THE BELOVED MEMORY OF THE VERY REV HENRY
 LONGUEVILLE MANSEL DD, ELDEST SON OF THE REV HENRY
 LONGUEVILLE MANSEL OF THIS PARISH. BORN AT COSGROVE
 OCTOBER 6 1820. SOMETIME FELLOW AND TUTOR OF S. JOHN
 BAPTIST'S COLLEGE, WAYNFLETE PROFESSOR OF MORAL AND

²⁰ H. P. Liddon, *The Day of Work*, p. 16.

METAPHYSICAL PHILOSOPHY AT S. MARY MAGDALENE
COLLEGE, REGIUS PROFESSOR OF ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY AND
CANON OF CHRIST CHURCH IN THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,
HON CANON OF PETERBOROUGH, DEAN OF S. PAUL'S. DIED AT
COSGROVE JULY 30 1871. FOR NOW WE SEE THROUGH A GLASS,
DARKLY; BUT THEN FACE TO FACE: NOW I KNOW IN PART; BUT
THEN SHALL I KNOW EVEN AS ALSO I AM KNOWN.

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