

APPENDIX

PREVIOUS WORK ON MANSEL

As was indicated in the introduction the present monograph is by no means the first investigation and criticism of Mansel's work. It will give perspective to the present study to review briefly previous writings on Mansel.

FREDERICK DENISON MAURICE

Immediately upon publication of Mansel's lectures, F. D. Maurice took issue with them in what became one of the most talked about controversies of the period. Maurice regarded it as the most important controversy of his academic life.¹ Years later A. V. G. Allan writes of the debate in these words: "The controversy which took place between [Mansel] and Mr. Maurice, in which the latter called attention to the question, 'What is Revelation?' is perhaps the most significant one in the whole history of the Church since Athanasias stood up to resist the Arians on a similar, if not the same, identical issue."²

The dispute between the two respected gentlemen was unfortunate in many respects. It cannot be said that either succeeded for even a minute in understanding what the other was talking about. Furthermore, the battle was marked more by emotional name-calling than calm reasoning. Maurice considered Mansel's position to strike at the very root of his own method and, as Leslie Stephen writes, "for once in his life . . . [Maurice] was betrayed into an angry controversy, but the anger indeed was returned with interest: and Dean Mansel went so far as to charge his antagonist with wilful lying."³ Maurice could not believe that Mansel was serious, but continued to think that Mansel was playing to the gallery of public opinion. This very unfair

¹ H. G. Wood, *Frederick Denison Maurice* (Cambridge: University Press, 1950), p. 115.

² A. V. G. Allan, *The Continuity of Christian Thought* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1884), pp. 422, 423.

³ Quoted in Wood, *Maurice*, p. 114.

judgment called forth the worst in Mansel. The tone of the battle was so harsh that Maurice, who outlived Mansel, felt constrained to insert a note in a later book to the following effect: "As I had the misfortune many years ago in a book long forgotten to enter into controversy with Dean Mansel, I am anxious to express my regret for any language which I may have used in the course of it which though no wise injurious to his reputation, may have given pain to some of his friends."⁴

Maurice first formulated his criticism in a quickly written book entitled *What is Revelation?*. The book is cast into the form of a series of letters to a young theological student. The student, if he existed, must have been somewhat dull, for the letters are replete with exhortations and are highly repetitious. Mansel replied to Maurice's charges with a book of his own.⁵ Maurice later wrote a *Sequel* to his original work.

The basic issue between the two men was whether or not it is possible to gain knowledge of God. Maurice strongly rejected Mansel's position which he saw as combining utter agnosticism with a blind trust in the Bible. He pointed out that one could not always be sure what the revelation is, and that without some knowledge of God Christianity is empty. Both men made much of the doctrine of the Incarnation of Christ, but Maurice insisted that from the Incarnation one actually gains knowledge of the nature of God. What neither of the antagonists realized is that they were laboring under different meanings of "knowledge" and "revelation." Maurice no longer looked upon revelation as a set of propositions as did Mansel. Furthermore, Mansel's idea of truth was, to use the distinction of Kant, either speculative or regulative; for Maurice it was neither, but personal. This basic difference in orientation prevented the men from ever understanding each other, and although their controversy ran for many pages, very little of significance came of it. As Ramsey points out, Maurice's books on Mansel are important chiefly as a mirror for studying the character and convictions of Maurice.⁶ They have little significance for scholarship on Mansel.

JOHN YOUNG

In 1860, in a book entitled *The Province of Reason*, John Young undertook a criticism of Mansel's lectures. This was done in connection with Young's own investigation of the same subject. Young was in a curious po-

⁴ F. D. Maurice, *Moral and Metaphysical Philosophy* (New edition; London: Macmillan, 1886), p. xiii.

⁵ Mansel, *An Examination of the Rev. F. D. Maurice's Strictures on the Bampton Lectures of 1858* (London: John Murray, 1859).

⁶ Arthur Michael Ramsey, *F. D. Maurice* (Cambridge: University Press, 1951), p. 79.

sition with regard to Mansel. It is clear that he agreed with Mansel's main conclusions.⁷ Both Young and Mansel had inherited much from Hamilton. In his book Young objects to the way in which Mansel establishes his conclusions. The strength of his objections is seen when he writes that he will prove ". . . the Bampton Lecture, justly celebrated on many accounts, is not a safe guide, either in philosophy or in theology, is not accurate in its reasoning, and not philosophical in its conclusions and its spirit."⁸ One suspects that such sharp antagonism, in the face of essential agreement, is partially generated by Mansel's having stated the position first. Young even goes so far at one point as to write of Mansel's book, "it is blasphemy against human reason! blasphemy against the Being who formed the mind of man!"⁹

One of Young's repeated complaints against Mansel is that Mansel simply repeats arguments taken from Hamilton. It is difficult to understand why this is so damning as Young apparently feels it is, particularly when Young admits that Mansel has made original application of the arguments. Young's strongest criticism was to notice, as many of Mansel's critics did, the limitations in Mansel's definition of the "Infinite." Young points out that in addition to a concept of quantitative Infinite, which Mansel discusses, there is also the concept of a qualitative Infinite. Young argues that the latter should be used in connection with the deity, and that the use of this concept avoids the difficulties raised by Mansel. As was seen in Chapter Two, this is not a serious objection to Mansel's position.

Young's criticisms of Mansel frequently reveal a lack of understanding of Mansel's position. For example, Young accuses Mansel of abandoning his announced plan of dealing with the limits of religious thought by discussing German rationalism. Young was not able to see that the criticism of German rationalism was very much to the point and was Mansel's way of exposing the weaknesses in rational theology in general. Another example is that Young depicts Mansel as a complete sceptic. This is both incorrect and unfair. Mansel was sceptical of human thought only when it attempts to think in terms of the Absolute-Infinite.

HERBERT SPENCER

The same year, 1860, there was notice of another kind taken of Mansel's work. That year Herbert Spencer published a prospectus of a work which came out two years later under the title *First Principles*. The book was ac-

⁷ John Young, *The Province of Reason* (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1860), pp. 68, 69, 83f.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

knowledgely influenced by Mansel. Spencer writes, “. . . in the foregoing pages, the arguments used by those writers [Hamilton and Mansel] to show that the Absolute is unknowable, have been approvingly quoted.”¹⁰ It is interesting to note that Spencer thought Mansel had gone too far and would conclude with utter scepticism. However, his “correction” of Mansel appears to be but a variation of Mansel’s basic theme. Spencer writes of qualification of Mansel’s position thus, “Besides that *definite* consciousness of which Logic formulates the laws, there is also an *indefinite* consciousness which cannot be formulated. Besides complete thoughts, . . . there are thoughts which it is impossible to complete; and yet which are still real . . .”¹¹ Granting differences in language, this is a formulation of an answer which is essentially Mansel’s own. Spencer’s primary interest for scholarship on Mansel is that he illustrates the ease with which Mansel’s arguments can be appropriated for purposes other than Christian apology.

P. W. BOLTON

The following year, 1861, three criticisms of Mansel were published. One of these was the work of P. W. Bolton who published under the pseudonym of Timologus a work entitled *Examination of the Principles of the Scoto-Oxonian Philosophy*. The book discusses three points in Mansel’s work: the nature of belief, Mansel’s view of the Infinite Person, and the nature of truth. In each area, Bolton seeks to show that Mansel is logically contradictory. His method is to draw out the consequences of one area of Mansel’s thought and then to show how these contradict another portion. His principal criticism of Mansel consists in his claim that the strictures which Mansel sets upon thought equally adhere to belief. For example, Mansel claims that one cannot think of the Absolute-Infinite, for thought implies a relation. Bolton insists that belief also implies a relation.¹²

Mr. Bolton mainly wishes to show that Mansel, instead of being an opponent of the philosophy of Spinoza, Schelling and Hegel, really argues for their philosophy.¹³ He argues this point by indicating weaknesses in Mansel’s position. It is impossible to see any logical connection between the weaknesses of Mansel’s position and the strength of the philosophy of the Infinite, yet it is just this connection which Bolton wishes to make. Such arbitrary claims,

¹⁰ Herbert Spencer, *First Principles* (4th ed.; New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1888), p. 87.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

¹² P. W. Bolton, *Examination of the Principles of the Scoto-Oxonian Philosophy* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1861), pp. 4, 5.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

plus his highly rhetorical language, weaken the effect of his critique; however aspects of his logical analysis are cogent.

HENRY CALDERWOOD

A second work of criticism which appeared in 1861 came from Henry Calderwood. Calderwood was a Scottish Philosopher and Divine who rose eventually to considerable academic stature.¹⁴ His first book had appeared in 1854 under the title of *The Philosophy of the Infinite*. The book is a development of his own thought together with a running criticism of the work of Sir William Hamilton. After Mansel gave his Bampton Lectures in 1858, in which many of Hamilton's ideas were developed, Calderwood published in 1861 a second edition of his work. This edition was much enlarged and included a criticism of Mansel's *The Limits of Religious Thought*.

In this latter work, Calderwood develops his position that man can and does have a positive notion of the Infinite. The notion of the Infinite is not merely negative as was claimed by Mansel. Calderwood grants that this notion is not received in the same way as everyday concepts are, but he argues that there is a direct apprehension of the Infinite on the part of the human mind. Calderwood's position is therefore an example of what Mansel had declared to be impossible. It was understandable that, in the development of his own philosophy, Calderwood would attack Mansel.

His principal attack consists in holding up along side Mansel's philosophy an alternative approach. However, Calderwood was also an astute philosophical critic and makes several very cogent observations on Mansel's work. One of the most interesting of these observations is an adumbration on Calderwood's part of the doctrine of internal and external relations. Calderwood sought to show that such a distinction would allow knowledge of the Absolute without compromising the nature of the Absolute as being out of relation; thus escaping Mansel's dictum that knowledge of the Absolute is impossible because knowledge presupposes relation. It was seen in Chapter Two that Mansel, in a manner he did not personally realize, was correct. Calderwood's attempt is nevertheless original and interesting.

Calderwood also attacks Mansel for having an excessively restrictive definition of the Infinite. Calderwood points out, as did many critics, that Mansel need not define the Infinite as the "sum of all existence." Calderwood further argues that Mansel contradicts himself by admitting that the Infinite does not

¹⁴ In 1880 Calderwood gave the Morse Lectures at Union Theological Seminary; these lectures were published under the title *Science and Religion*.

exist along side the finite.¹⁵ Calderwood did not realize that such a criticism in no way weakens Mansel's position. Mansel was aware of such tensions and took them as indicating the limits of the human mind. While Calderwood did not understand Mansel's basic position, he came closer than most critics to meeting Mansel directly.

GOLDWIN SMITH

Most of the criticism of Mansel came from men of the Church. The criticism of Goldwin Smith is an exception. Smith was Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford. In 1861, he published his *Lectures on the Study of History*. Here he defended the thesis that divine and human justice are identical. Holding such a view, he was naturally opposed to Mansel's principles. For example, Mansel had written, "Human morality, even in its highest elevation, is not identical with, nor adequate to measure, the Absolute Morality of God."¹⁶ Smith noted this difference in a postscript to his book and leveled a harsh attack on Mansel's work. Mansel replied and Smith in turn published a book on the subject. The book added little substance to his previous remarks, but much in rhetoric. Smith chose to direct his main attack not at Mansel's view of the relation between divine and human morality, but at what he considered to be the core of Mansel's position, *viz.*, Mansel's claim that the Absolute-Infinite is inconceivable. The gist of his criticisms is seen when he writes, "If God is 'inconceivable,' I fail to apprehend how we can believe in him."¹⁷ Smith further claims that "it is to blank materialism and empiricism that such reasoning inevitably lead. Morality, truth, God are swept away."¹⁸ In substance, Smith's remarks are not too different from Bolton's; however, Bolton has greater respect for logic. Smith's work appears to arise largely out of aroused religious feelings and shows little philosophical ability.

JESSE H. JONES

The discussion of Mansel's Bampton Lectures was not limited to England. Shortly after their presentation, the lectures were published in America and received an "immediate and extensive circulation."¹⁹ In 1865 Jesse Jones, professor at Andover Theological Seminary, published a book, *Know the Truth*, which included a criticism of Mansel's philosophy. The circulation of

¹⁵ Henry Calderwood, *The Philosophy of the Infinite* (2nd ed., New York: Macmillan, 1861), p. 87.

¹⁶ Mansel, *The Limits of Religious Thought*, p. 145.

¹⁷ Goldwin Smith, *Rational Religion* (Oxford: Wheeler, 1861), p. 5.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

¹⁹ Jesse H. Jones, *Know the Truth* (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1865), p. 1.

Mansel's lectures was sufficiently wide that Jones assumed general knowledge of them among his readers.

Jones's attack on the Bampton Lectures is vehement, but ineffectual. His attack consists largely in confronting Mansel's position with his own. There is almost no effort at internal criticism. The position which Jones championed is a beautiful example of what Mansel was against. It is a thoroughgoing rationalism which speaks the truths of the Church and seeks sanction from the Bible. Jones is confident that the human soul includes a faculty of "Pure Reason" which does have certain and sure knowledge of metaphysical first principles.²⁰ He builds to his own satisfaction a philosophical position, and then he proceeds to indicate how this system overcomes the difficulties which Mansel has exposed. The value of the criticism for scholarship on Mansel lies in its indication of the extent to which Mansel's work was read and the importance with which it was credited.

JOHN STUART MILL

The limited extent to which Mansel is known today is due primarily to those more famous than he with whom he engaged in controversy. One such figure was Maurice; another was John Stuart Mill. In 1866, Mill published his *An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy*, part of which is devoted to Mansel. Mill's principal complaint against Mansel is on the issue of equivocation of terms in talking of God. Mansel, of course, had insisted that words never mean the same when applied to God as when applied to humans. Mill interpreted Mansel to mean that one could never know what the terms mean in connection with God. The doctrine was anathema to Mill and prompted his oft-quoted retort: "Whatever power such a being [one in whom goodness means something different than in humans] may have over us, 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."²¹

Beneath the heated language, Mill has very little constructive to say to Mansel. It was apparently impossible for him to understand what Mansel was driving at. Mill did, however, raise one cogent point for Mansel to consider. He indicated the possibility of a position which accepts the relativity of human knowledge, yet is not therefore led to utter agnosticism. He saw, for example, that one may not fully understand human personality, but this does

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 10, 57.

²¹ J. S. Mill, *An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy* (Boston: Spenser, 1866), p. 131.

not prevent one from understanding something of human personality. In the same way, argues Mill, one might not understand fully the nature of God, but still could know something of God's nature. This point notwithstanding, Mill's principal role in the study of Mansel is to direct attention to Mansel's work.

RECENT ATTENTION

In 1877 an unsigned pamphlet addressed the problems raised in the Mansel-Mill controversy.²² This pamphlet signaled the end of the many criticisms which Mansel's religious position had prompted. The intellectual climate no longer had room for even a criticism of Mansel. However, references to him in more recent literature have been both more accurate and more honorific than the earlier comments. Edwyn Bevan, in his impressive book, *Symbolism and Belief*, devotes a chapter to Mansel. Bevan is very sympathetic with Mansel and writes at one point, "it seems to me the strongest position which any theism can hold today is a position for which Mansel . . . has indicated the general lines."²³

Bevan is most attracted to the element of religious pragmatism which is present in Mansel's position. According to Mansel, one decides issues of religious authenticity by their result in human life. Bevan is also attracted to the positive place which Mansel affords to anthropomorphism in religious language. He notes with approval that Mansel recommends the use of traditional and homely language in reference to God in preference to metaphysical propositions; since all language shares equally in the limitations of the human mind, one may select his religious language for reasons other than literal accuracy.

While on the whole Bevan is uncritical of Mansel, he does note that Mansel has not left enough room for the intellectual wants of man. Unlike Mansel, Bevan is not content to rest simply with a negative conclusion.

G. L. Phillips is another contemporary writer who confesses himself in Mansel's debt. In a book, *Seeing and Believing*, published in 1953, one finds a very appreciative exposition of some of Mansel's main themes. For Phillips the point of main attraction is Mansel's insistence that the certainty which one has in religion is of a different nature from that which one has in mathematics or in science. Phillips also notes with approval Mansel's discussion of

²² "Is Theism Immoral: An Examination of Mr. J. S. Mill's Argument against Mansel's View of Religion," 1877; Unsigned pamphlet in the collection of the New York City Public Library.

²³ Edwyn Bevan, *Symbolism and Belief* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), p. 328.

the role of religious perspective in the life of faith. He concludes his remarks by writing:

[Mansel] may not have been so conformed to the spirit of his age as Maurice or the liberals like Stanley and Arnold. But it was not his vocation to allow himself to be so blown upon as these by the winds of doctrine. From his own particular standpoint he was able to look at St. Thomas Aquinas, at Kant, at Hume, at Schleiermacher and the rest and set them in a true perspective. He cannot be dismissed simply as a person with whom Maurice has a controversy. What he said then is being said by many people now. He should be given credit for saying it when he did.²⁴

There appeared in 1956 a pamphlet by Dean W. R. Matthews entitled *The Religious Philosophy of Dean Mansel*. This is a brief exposition of Mansel's chief points and is also appreciative of Mansel's virtues and kind toward his faults. Some time is spent with the Mansel–Maurice controversy which Matthews feels is quite important. It is not a critical article but valuable as indicating a continuing interest in and appreciation of the work and thought of Mansel.

The most appropriate recent attention to Mansel is his inclusion in Reardon's book, *Religious Thought in the Nineteenth Century*. This is a book of readings. The task of selecting those to appear in such a broad volume was immense. That Mansel was selected is indicative of the re-assessment of his role which is occurring. It is now clear that there can be no adequate treatment of nineteenth-century religious thought which does not include a discussion of Mansel.

²⁴ G. L. Phillips, *Seeing and Believing* (London: Dacre Press, 1953), p. 66.