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**CHARLES KINGSLEY: THUMOS,
SEX, AND MASCULINITY**

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CHARLES KINGSLEY: THUMOS, SEX, AND MASCULINITY

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Introduction

Context

Charles Kingsley (1819-75) was an Anglican priest, polemicist, radical, and novelist. Though not from particularly wealthy origins, Kingsley went on to accumulate considerable social capital through his Cambridge education and consequent entry into the Church of England. Alongside these factors, his impressive amount of writing, fictional, religious, political and otherwise, made Kingsley integral to the late Victorian public sphere. Both in private and in public, he conversed with men and women such as Charles Darwin, Thomas Carlyle, Millicent Fawcett, and John Henry Newman, all of whom were central to Victorian ideas and sentiment. This was the age of the non-specialised public intellectual, in which people, predominantly men, such as John Stuart Mill, dominated public discourse across a great range of issues.¹ Despite residing for most of his life in the rural and remote parish of Eversley, Hampshire, and troubled by pecuniary issues until later life, Kingsley was, in his own right, a public mind and a part of the nation's bourgeois cultural elite.

The Church of England was in a period of dislocation during the 1840s, as Kingsley grew in eminence. The evangelical party, or 'low church', with their stern emphasis on scripture, waged theological war against the Catholic-sympathising Tractarians, or 'high church', who stressed the value of liturgy and religious ceremony and an ever more amicable relationship with Rome.² Between the two arose a kind of *via media* called the 'broad church', to which Kingsley belonged. This church party, whilst vague in aim, was markedly liberal in outlook with Kingsley himself being one of the few to seek to synthesise Darwinian advancements into Christianity.³ His association with the broad church, along with his concern for the state of the working class, befriended him to fellow Anglicans F.D. Maurice and J.M. Ludlow. With Maurice as the architect, they pioneered the Christian socialist movement. This began in 1848, as revolutions abroad, and the Chartist movement domestically, roused them to a state

¹ J.P.C. Roach, 'Victorian Universities and the National Intelligentsia', *Victorian Studies*, 3.2 (1959), p.147.

² Jeremy Morris, 'The Spirit of Comprehension', *Anglican and Episcopal History*, 75.3 (2006), p.425.

³ Laura Fasick, 'Charles Kingsley's Scientific Treatment of Gender', in *Muscular Christianity*, ed. by Donald E. Hall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p.92.

of urgency. As difficult to define as the broad church movement due to the varying aims of its principal figures,⁴ Christian socialism can be best described as a reformist movement that sought to improve the lot of the working class. There was no idealisation of revolution, but the movement played a keen role in the creation of many working class cooperatives.⁵ Owen Chadwick aptly characterises the structure of the movement by referring to Maurice as the theological master, Ludlow as the practically-minded director of 'social ideas', and Kingsley as the polemicist, who spewed 'the prophetic fire'.⁶ In 1848, they briefly, due to financial issues, ran a newspaper entitled *Politics for the People* in which they sought to reaffirm the Christian message to the increasingly sceptical English working class but failed to attract a wide readership. Their second attempt, *The Christian Socialist*, 1850-51, was more successful. This success owed much to the greater involvement of Kingsley.

Alongside his affiliation with the Christian socialists, Kingsley was also associated with the 'muscular Christian' movement of the latter half of the nineteenth century. As Fitzjames Stephen, the philosopher and lawyer, astutely observed, the movement was more a 'school of feeling than one of thought'.⁷ Headed by Kingsley and his good friend, and fellow Christian socialist, Thomas Hughes, muscular Christianity embraced Christian manliness with particular focus on physical strength, engagement in the world, and religious certainty, which influenced the late Victorian 'cult of manliness'.⁸ Kingsley's works of fiction, especially in his later years, such as his imperialist-sympathising, force-worshipping, *Two Years Ago* (1857), are considered typical of this muscular Christian sentiment. Moreover, muscular Christianity was integral to English educational change. Hughes' *Tom Brown's School Days* (1857) provided a blueprint for school reform, inspired by Thomas Arnold, the reformer and headmaster of Rugby School when Hughes had been a student there, that prioritised courage and strength over a flourishing intellect.⁹

⁴ Peter R. Allen, 'F.D. Maurice and J.M. Ludlow', *Victorian Studies*, 11.4 (1968), pp.461-462.

⁵ Jonathan Parry, 'Christian Socialism', in *The 1848 Revolutions and European Political Thought*, ed. by Douglas Moggach and Gareth Stedman Jones (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p.164.

⁶ Owen Chadwick, *The Victorian Church, Part I, 1829-59* (London: SCM Press, 1987), p.351.

⁷ Fitzjames Stephen, 'Tom Brown's Schooldays', *Edinburgh Review*, 107 (1858), p.190.

⁸ Ronald Hyam, *Empire and Sexuality* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), p.72.

⁹ William E. Winn, 'Tom Brown's Schooldays', *Church History*, 29 (1960), pp.64-73.

Kingsley as a historical subject, due to his popularly received novels, has received far more attention from literary scholars than historians.¹⁰ This provides the historian ample opportunity to apply a more strictly historical perspective to the ideas of Kingsley, whilst utilising analytical insights from works focused on his literature. Accordingly, this dissertation will use some secondary works from other disciplines, such as studies concerning religion and literature, but incorporate them within a historical framework. Those historians that have focused on Kingsley have generally done so either in the context of Christian socialism or muscular Christianity exclusively.¹¹ Works of the latter kind have usefully addressed Kingsley's influence on Victorian masculinity, which is one of the focal points of this dissertation (along with contemporary sexuality). However, much of this literature ignores Kingsley's theological presuppositions. This is, in part, due to the widely held view that Kingsley was more of a 'cultural gladiator',¹² in the polemical sense, than a 'thinker'.¹³ Whilst he was certainly not as intellectually sophisticated as some of the figures, notably the Catholic convert, John Henry Newman, with whom he publicly quarrelled with, this dissertation finds an enticing unity to Kingsley's theology that had direct consequences on his perception of masculinity and sex through his reappraisal of the role and importance of the body.

This ties into a broader issue prevalent in the more recent historiography on Victorian sexuality. Namely, its divorce of Christianity from conceptions of sexuality (and gender). In large part, this is due to the influence of Michel Foucault, especially on histories of sexuality. Foucault argued, albeit with complications, that until the spurring of sexual discourse by sexologists and scientists towards the end of the nineteenth century, sexuality was an issue

¹⁰ See: Hugh Walker, *The Literature of the Victorian Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910); Jerome H. Buckley, *The Victorian Temper* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1952); Richard Griffiths, *The Pen and the Cross* (London: Continuum, 2010).

¹¹ A noteworthy exception has been the work of Donald E. Hall. See: Donald E. Hall, 'On the Making and Unmaking of Monsters', in *Muscular Christianity*, ed. by Donald E. Hall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp.45-65.

¹² Herbert F. Tucker, 'When the Soul Had Hips', in *Sexualities in Victorian Britain*, ed. by Andrew H. Miller and James Eli Adams (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), p.170.

¹³ Walter E. Houghton, 'The Issue Between Kingsley and Newman', *Theology Today*, 4 (1947), p.82.

not to be discussed. This 'ethic of purity',¹⁴ prior to the late nineteenth century has been noted elsewhere. Foucault's emphasis on the role of sexologists and scientists in redefining sexual discourse, what he refers to as the 'discursive explosion',¹⁵ has excluded clergymen and religious thought. This confined the clergyman's influence to their confessional function (which is, of course, not even applicable to Anglican priests). Katz and Seidman have since similarly deprioritised the impact of religious thought on Victorian sexuality, insisting that Christianity focused solely on the spiritual element of sexuality.¹⁶ This dissertation argues that this is incorrect, and seeks to explore the links between Victorian religious thought and the body, a theme investigated in the exceptional work of Bruce Haley,¹⁷ with its implications for both contemporary sexuality and gender.¹⁸ Kingsley due to his irrepressible and, in many respects, life-affirming ideas that resonated with Victorian society, is the perfect case study through which to redress this historiographical error.

Methodology

This essay relies on two main bodies of primary sources. The first is Kingsley's articles from *The Christian Socialist*. Given the extent of academic interest in Christian socialism, this newspaper has been strangely neglected. Torben Christensen, the authoritative voice on the history of the movement, is one of the few to have utilised it.¹⁹ However, Christensen does not address Kingsley's series of articles entitled 'Bible Politics', that analyse the Book of Joshua. In 2001, Jan Marten Ivo Klaver brought attention to these articles, arguing their relevance to Kingsley's ideas on democracy, but they have not been referenced since.²⁰ A

¹⁴ Walter E. Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind* (Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1957), p.355.

¹⁵ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, trans. by Robert Hurley, vol.I (London: Penguin, 2008), p.17.

¹⁶ H.G. Cocks, 'Religion and Spirituality', in *The Modern History of Sexuality*, ed. by H.G. Cocks and Matt Houlbrook (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp.157-162.

¹⁷ Bruce Haley, *The Healthy Body and Victorian Culture* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1978).

¹⁸ In using the terms masculinity and sexuality, their meanings must be regarded as palimpsestic. Over time, embellishments and fluctuations in their meaning are inevitable and it is for the historian to locate their specific meanings within a historical context. Accordingly, I keep initial definitions of sexuality and masculinity relatively loose to avoid presentism. See: David Halperin, *How to Do the History of Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), p.106.

¹⁹ Torben Christensen, *Origin and History of Christian Socialism* (Leiden: Brill, 1962).

²⁰ Jan Marten Ivo Klaver, 'Charles Kingsley and the Limits of Humanity', *Dutch Review of Church History*, 81.2 (2001), pp.115-141.

reason for this may be that Frances Grenfell,²¹ Kingsley's wife, chose against referring to them in her well known collection of Kingsley's letters despite frequently incorporating segments of his articles from *Politics for the People*, thereby making 'Bible Politics' more elusive to researchers.²² This dissertation utilises these articles in a way different to Klaver, and explores previously unanalysed sections, to understand Kingsley's conception of *thumos* (or worldly striving).

The second body of sources that this dissertation relies on heavily are the aforementioned letters edited by Frances Grenfell. In using private letters, the 'truth' of Charles Kingsley is not revealed but rather one sees his performative self, that is, how he presents himself to the recipient of each particular letter.²³ I have tried to mitigate this inevitable obstacle by using these letters in concert with *The Christian Socialist*, making it possible to locate consistencies between Kingsley's public and private selves (which I believe to be underpinned by his conception of *thumos*). Within the collected letters, edited after Kingsley's death, Grenfell provided a carefully curated version of her husband. Peter Gay argues that in presenting the 'statue' of his life, Grenfell revealed only 'a decent torso'.²⁴ This is completely true. Outspoken and conflicted as Kingsley was, his wife sought to protect his legacy by presenting a polished, morally assured individual. Only by including some of his unpublished private letters, many of which, such as the drawing I include, have not yet been explored by historians, does the rugged, sensual side of Kingsley become apparent.

Argument

This dissertation seeks to understand Kingsley's theological ideas and the consequences this had for his appraisal of masculinity and sexuality. The first chapter will look at Kingsley's conception of man and God using 'Bible Politics', alongside his personal letters. These ideas

²¹ I have decided to use her maiden name for means of clarity.

²² Klaver, op. cit., p.117.

²³ Erla Hulda Halldorsdottir, 'Fragments of Lives', *Nordic Journal of Women's Studies*, 15 (2007), p.41.

²⁴ Peter Gay, *The Bourgeois Experience*, vol.II: *The Tender Passion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p.298.

will be placed in the context of contemporary thought in order to clarify Kingsley's stance and his own brand of asceticism, underpinned by *thumos*, from those of similar thinkers. Essentially, this chapter is an explication of Kingsley's religious thought. Accordingly, it follows the established method of the Cambridge School of intellectual history, as articulated by Quentin Skinner.²⁵

With Kingsley's theological framework established, the second chapter unravels its consequences for his conception of masculinity and sexuality. Following critiques made by queer theorists of the Foucauldian method, this dissertation seeks to unearth the 'complex intersections of sexual behaviour and ideas of gender'.²⁶ This will be done by first exploring the sexual aspect of Kingsley's marriage to Grenfell and his justification for it. Next, I show how Kingsley's interpretation of sexuality interacted with his sense of masculinity by exploring his famed, and, for Kingsley, embarrassingly public, war of words with John Henry Newman, who was antithetical to Kingsley's masculine ideal due to his opposing theological view of the body and, consequently, his 'effeminate' sexuality. By understanding Kingsley, and acknowledging his tremendous influence during his lifetime, this dissertation aims to show how central Christianity was to the Victorian cultural elite's ideas of masculinity and sexuality as well as how theological frameworks, especially body/spirit dualism, entwined them both together.

²⁵ Quentin Skinner, 'Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas', *History and Theory*, 8 (1969), pp.3-53.

²⁶ Heike Bauer, 'Theorizing Female Inversion', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 18 (2009), p.84.

Chapter One: Kingsley's Conception of Man and God²⁷

And they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, ox and sheep and donkey, with the edge of the sword. – Joshua 6:21

In 1850, J.M. Ludlow set up *The Christian Socialist*. Ludlow envisioned a more progressive paper than its predecessor, *Politics for the People*, arguing for more active reforms, such as the establishment of working class cooperatives.²⁸ Kingsley was enthusiastic about this project, seeking any means to re-establish communications with working communities from his rural parsonage.²⁹ F.D. Maurice was more dubious about the penny paper, favouring instead a series of tracts addressed to the affluent and liberally-minded. Eventually, Ludlow persuaded Maurice of the necessity of the paper who in turn encouraged Kingsley to come up with a series of articles addressing the importance of the Bible.³⁰ Consequently, Kingsley produced 'Bible Politics: Or God Justified to the People'. These articles sought to reveal the true nature of God to working people, allaying widely held suspicions of the Bible and reaffirming it as 'the history of the People's cause'.³¹ Reuniting the radical element of the working classes with a strong Christian faith was his motive. In doing so, Kingsley revealed his own attitude towards man and God.

Throughout his life, Kingsley was troubled by what he referred to as 'priestcraft'.³² Too many clergymen, within the Church of England and without, were guilty of perverting the Bible to their personal or sectarian ends. Particularly, he worried about the influence of the popular Protestant theologian from Germany, David Strauss. His *Das Leben Jesu* (1835) portrayed Jesus as a historical figure through critical analysis of scripture, alongside other contemporary texts, and claimed the miracles of the New Testament to be myth.³³ Working class men that

²⁷ The term 'man' is meant in its universal sense.

²⁸ Christensen, *Origin and History of Christian Socialism*, p.152.

²⁹ Ibid., p.150.

³⁰ Klaver, 'Charles Kingsley and the Limits of Humanity', p.120.

³¹ *The Christian Socialist*, 9 November 1850, British Library, Add. P.P.638.e. (All references to CS refer to this manuscript.)

³² Ibid., 26 April 1851.

³³ John Hawley, 'Charles Kingsley and the Via Media', *Thought*, 67.266 (1992), p.298.

were in contact with Kingsley received this analysis with an enthusiasm that worried him.³⁴ Kingsley was worried because this approach failed to address the necessity of faith, focusing instead on the factually accurate. Kingsley more than most understood the cruciality of faith, having struggled with belief in his youth which led to a dissolute first couple of years at Cambridge University.³⁵ Those, like Strauss, made God 'a dead, lazy, wooden pedant' who 'cares for nothing, provided that his world-machine spins to his own satisfaction'. This God was uninspiring to working people and at odds with Kingsley's own conception. Against the Straussian God, Kingsley rebelled, and should such a God exist, he would 'rise up against him, like Prometheus against unjust Jove.'³⁶ Kingsley did not want to show Christ or God as figures in history. Rather, Kingsley wanted to show, as he related in a letter to Ludlow, 1852, 'God's absolute love of our happiness and hatred of our misery'.³⁷ Convinced that the working classes would listen to a benevolent God, which Kingsley sincerely believed God to be, he went about proving this in 'Bible Politics'. Typically assured of his convictions, Kingsley chose to prove this omnipresent divine love in the most unlikely corner of the Bible. Namely, the slaughter of the Canaanites by the Jewish people.

This story would have been familiar at the time. The Jewish people, under the leadership of Joshua, came across the Jordan River to lay claim to Canaan following their exodus as God had promised this land to Abraham. Since then, Canaan had been inhabited by the Canaanite people. Accordingly, God ordered their destruction, 'both man and woman, young and old', and so the Jewish people violently took the land for their own. Kingsley sought to show that this massacre was not simply the 'cruel destruction of human life'.³⁸ Rather, it was an act of divine 'mercy', in which a 'rotting race' was destroyed in favour of a divinely inspired people.³⁹ For Kingsley, there could be no evil in the act for it was ordered by God and, put bluntly, 'Right is God'.⁴⁰ This was overly simplistic, and by no means Kingsley's finest argument. Indeed,

³⁴ Charles Kingsley, *His Letters and Memories of His Life*, ed. by Frances Kingsley, vol.I (London: C. Kegan Paul & Co., 1877), p.248. (All references to *Letters* refer to this source.)

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.49.

³⁶ CS, 23 November 1850.

³⁷ *Letters*, vol.I, p.334.

³⁸ CS, 15 March 1851.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 22 March 1851.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 22 February 1851.

throughout 'Bible Politics', he often contradicted himself. Take his initial justification for the murder of the Canaanites by placing it in lineage to what he saw as the inherent justice of the French Revolution or Cerdic's slaughter of the Britons at Andrea. He went so far as to declare there existed 'a right to kill'.⁴¹ Later on in the articles, he abandoned this line of argument claiming, 'I read nowhere in the Old Testament of any destruction of *human* life' but '*animal* life in plenty was destroyed.'⁴² This ambivalence over how best to justify the destruction of the Canaanites is only one of the logical weaknesses found in 'Bible Politics'.

Such contradictions are characteristic of Kingsley, yet his analysis does betray a unifying ideal. Indeed, to Kingsley, God was a simplistic, all-benevolent force. If tragedies arose, as at Canaan, it was not because they were inherently tragic, but that their truth and goodness were hidden from human minds. It thus makes sense that he was so attracted to Maurice's theology that proclaimed the existence of a loving God and the rejection of the doctrine of Hell.⁴³ In theological matters, Kingsley always deferred to Maurice, his 'Master'.⁴⁴ Through him, Kingsley had learnt 'God's absolute love of our happiness'. Such was his conviction in the idea of a sympathetic God, that he was often accused by contemporaries of providing a secure insurance against sin. Even his friend, Thomas Cooper, Chartist and poet, wrote to Kingsley in 1855, accusing him of allowing evil people to do evil things for, according to Kingsley's ideas, an all-loving God would surely accept their repentance regardless of the severity of the sin.⁴⁵

This cheerful God was at odds with the times. The evangelicals and the Tractarians both saw, largely due to Augustinian teaching, a lapsarian world riddled with evil. Of course, God was love, but humanity was corrupted and God was not guaranteed to be sympathetic in his judgement unless they took repentance exceptionally seriously.⁴⁶ In the words of Norman Vance, Tractarians and evangelicals alike, 'sought to recapture the spiritual urgency of the

⁴¹ Ibid., 15 March 1851.

⁴² Ibid., 22 March 1851.

⁴³ Hawley, 'Charles Kingsley and the Via Media', pp.291-292.

⁴⁴ *Letters*, vol.I, p.242.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p.382.

⁴⁶ For the state of fear concerning eternal damnation in the Victorian era, see: Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind*, pp.61-64.

apostolic emergency' of the early church.⁴⁷ With this, Kingsley disagreed.⁴⁸ He rejected the notion that engrained in man and the world was any kind of inherent evil.⁴⁹ Derisively, Kingsley declared these ideas 'Manichaeic', referring to the religion of Mani, for they hystericized a sharply demarcated dualism of good and evil between the spiritual and the physical.⁵⁰

The reason for Kingsley's disdain of this doctrine was clear: his sincere belief in the restorative function of Jesus Christ. His 1854 article, 'Who Causes Pestilence?', stated concisely: 'the Son of God has redeemed mankind'.⁵¹ As such, man was divine. In people and in the physical world more generally, evil may reside but it existed only to be purged. As Kingsley himself wrote, 'Evil, as such, has no existence; but men can and do resist God's will' leading to their 'disharmony' with God and the natural world. Such disharmony was only temporary for a repentant humankind were assured to be the 'inheritors of the kingdom of heaven'.⁵² Due to the anti-doctrinal emphasis of Kingsley's Christianity, again due to the influence of Maurice,⁵³ this interpretation related closely to personal experience. Kingsley had disdained of his university days as spent in the 'devil's sewer', but his later faith, and adherence to it, assured his communion with God.⁵⁴

This liberal, universalist, interpretation of man and God as both divine and largely harmonious in their relationship, led Kingsley to conceive of the natural world, the meeting place of these two entities, as something sublime. 'Manichaeism' stressed a world fraught with temptation and danger and taught that to repent was to become 'otherworldly'. That is, to retire from the physical to the spiritual realm of existence. Kingsley instead sought to weave together the spiritual and physical realms of existence, not to cleave them asunder. A frequent remark of

⁴⁷ Norman Vance, *Sinews of the Spirit* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p.32.

⁴⁸ John Maynard, *Victorian Discourses on Sexuality and Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p.105.

⁴⁹ Houghton, 'The Issue Between Kingsley and Newman', p.87.

⁵⁰ Charles Kingsley, 'The Poetry of Sacred and Legendary Art' in *Miscellanies* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1852), p.214.

⁵¹ *Letters*, vol.I, p.415.

⁵² Quoted in: Houghton, op. cit., p.97.

⁵³ Stephen Prickett, *Romanticism and Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p.121.

⁵⁴ Quoted in: Vance, op. cit., p.329.

his, adopted from one of his intellectual idols, Francis Bacon, stressed his position succinctly: 'Nature is the Word of God revealing in things'.⁵⁵ As an author, Kingsley stressed the necessity of making his audience understand the 'miraculous & divine element underlying all physical nature'.⁵⁶ The physical world was the acting ground from which to reach closer to God. Human relationships symbolised divine relationships. For example, with his usual directness, Kingsley took literally the lesson from Ephesians 5: 25-33, and wrote in 1851 of his notion of 'God as our father, men as our brothers, Christ as the Bridegroom of the Church'.⁵⁷ Only by engaging one's father, the church, and society at large, could one understand the corresponding spiritual relationships.

This emphasis on the harmonic nature of Christianity permeates his analysis of the Canaanites. The story told in the Book of Joshua reflected a notion held dear to Kingsley, that man acting through God was infallible. The realisation of primitive desires such as violence was not only permitted but demanded, so long as they were channelled through the will of God. Such desires were rooted in the physical world and were to be acted on at God's signal. Adherence to tradition and meticulous doctrines meant little to Kingsley, but a practical faith in God was invaluable. Instinct was godlier than the practice of rites. Accordingly, his priestly duties always centred on the needs of his parish, where he excelled, and rarely on the theological specificities of the day or the meticulous carrying out of religious ceremony.⁵⁸ For Kingsley, such tasks were not divine but performative. A kind of false asceticism.

This leads us to Kingsley's understanding of *thumos*, an idea that permeated Kingsley's life. By 1857, he still wrote despairingly to Thomas Hughes of the middle class tendency to keep 'down manly *thumos*', further defined by Kingsley as 'rage', or 'pluck'. To Kingsley, and apparently to Plato, *thumos* was 'the root of all virtue'.⁵⁹ This was a natural drive to strive in the world. To fight, to love, to will. Thus, Kingsley defined man as '*the spirit-animal*', claiming

⁵⁵ Houghton, op. cit., p.93.

⁵⁶ Letter to F.D. Maurice, approx. 1863, British Library, Add. MS 41297, f.147.

⁵⁷ *Letters*, vol.I, p.256.

⁵⁸ Owen Chadwick, 'Charles Kingsley at Cambridge', *The Historical Journal*, 18.2 (1975), p.315.

⁵⁹ *Letters*, vol.II, pp.26-27.

in 1848, 'the flesh was not meant merely to be the slave of the spirit, it was meant to be its symbol – its outward expression.'⁶⁰ *Thumos* as 'striving in the world' is a great way to understand Kingsley's conception of man and God. God demanded a channelled, Christianised, version of *thumos* that could only be enacted by engaging with the physical element of existence. When Kingsley's analysis of the Canaanite slaughter is viewed through the lens of *thumos*, the necessity of the slaughter is made clear. It was a worldly response to an otherworldly demand. Such a perspective sees the relationship between the spiritual and the physical world rendered harmonious through the medium of divinely-instructed *thumos*. Whilst Kingsley certainly acknowledged the dualism of the spiritual and physical, as did most of his contemporaries, with the most notable exception of Thomas Carlyle, he maintained that these realms could cooperate as a divine whole. By acting on *thumos*, that is, by engaging with the physical world, one became closer to God and thus enriched their spiritual existence.

Kingsley himself lived with this ideal held close. His conception of his function as a priest was accordingly not confined to the spiritual realm. In his 1849 sermon, his understanding of his profession was made clear to his parishioners. Not only was Kingsley devoted to their 'spiritual welfare' but also, he looked to their 'physical and intellectual improvement'.⁶¹ These were not simply empty words. Following Henry Mayhew's articles for the *Morning Chronicle* revealing the extent of the 1849 cholera epidemic in Bermondsey, Kingsley decided to visit and was horrified by what he saw.⁶² Consequently, Kingsley engrossed himself in sanitary reform for his own parish, as well as at a national level.⁶³ Moreover, his parish benefitted from his consistent efforts to educate and inform. His wife proudly relays that through the winter of 1844, Kingsley ran a night school at his rectory for three nights a week and offered weekly lectures in the outer regions of the parish for those unable to attend the rectory.⁶⁴ Clergymen who concerned themselves with solely spiritual affairs, embodied in the example of John Henry Newman, who will be looked at more closely in the next chapter, rejected *thumos* or

⁶⁰ Ibid., vol.I, pp.187-8.

⁶¹ Ibid., p.415.

⁶² Edward Norman, *The Victorian Christian Socialists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p.45.

⁶³ C.E. Vulliamy, 'Charles Kingsley and Christian Socialism', *Fabian Society*, Tract No.174 (1914), p.11.

⁶⁴ *Letters*, vol.I, p.123.

worldly living and thus were antithetical to Kingsley's creed. Their lack of worldly force, and repugnance to it, rendered them less useful unto God.

This notion of the necessity of force had Victorian antecedents. The plethora of contemporary male writers and thinkers who fantasised over a worship of force have a common lineage that traces back to a titan of the Victorian public sphere. Namely, the polemicist and man of letters, Thomas Carlyle. Carlyle's overriding philosophy was simple: 'Man is created to fight; he is perhaps best of all definable as a born-soldier'.⁶⁵ Great literary figures such as Robert Browning and Alfred Tennyson, along with Kingsley, were deeply influenced by Carlyle's message.⁶⁶ The 'good fight' became a literary staple. Perhaps this is best epitomised in Tennyson's 'Ulysses', in which the aged protagonist and his crew once again set out in pursuit of worldly adventure: 'To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield'.⁶⁷ Indeed, in his own poem, 'The Day of the Lord is at Hand', Kingsley poised the Christian mission in openly combative terms. 'Chivalry, justice, and truth' appeared in opposition to 'Hirelings and mammonites, pedants and knaves', as each was urged to 'Haste to the battle-field' and 'renew' the earth through battle.⁶⁸ Many even saw Kingsley as a Carlylean imitator, framing reality in an atavistic, bloodthirsty lens. The *Saturday Review* shared their frustration at Kingsley's comment that the modern-day farmer was at heart a ferocious Viking.⁶⁹ This use of the Viking trope as a means of establishing continuity with force-defined antiquity was not an anomaly. Fredrika Bremer, a Swedish writer who became closely acquainted with Kingsley in 1851, gifted him a book inscribed, 'To the Viking of the New Age'.⁷⁰ One can easily imagine how this flattered the young priest whose idea of *thumos*, much like the ideas of Carlyle, framed life as a battle upon the landscape of the physical world.

⁶⁵ Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present* (Chicago: Belford, Clarke & Co., 1890), p.184.

⁶⁶ Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind*, p.206, p.211.

⁶⁷ Alfred Tennyson, *Ulysses* (California: Blackwood Press, 1979).

⁶⁸ Charles Kingsley, 'The Day of the Lord is at Hand', in *Hymns of the Ages*, ed. by F.D. Huntingdon, vol.III (Boston: James R. Osgood, 1877), pp.3-4.

⁶⁹ 'Kingsley's Miscellanies', *Saturday Review*, 8 (1859), p.582.

⁷⁰ *Letters*, vol.I, p.350.

However, Kingsley did differ from Carlyle in one crucial aspect. Carlyle's worship of force had led him to a pantheistic perspective that saw man and nature as enthused with 'divine energy'.⁷¹ Houghton, among others, has accused Kingsley of sharing a similar interpretation. Kingsley's romantic love of nature and appreciation of science were at best deistic.⁷² Essentially, Houghton argued Kingsley was a false Christian whose emphasis on worldliness made his spiritual position untenable.⁷³ But this is unfair. Unlike Carlyle, Kingsley's conception of *thumos* never strayed beyond its Christian parameters.⁷⁴ Force was not to be worshipped in itself but only when in allegiance with God's will. Kingsley made this clear in 'Bible Politics', as he distinguished godless, 'hoggish animalism' from the divinely-inspired action that rendered reality harmonious.⁷⁵

This idea of life as a divine fight centred on worldly action was central to Kingsley. Man was not put on this earth to think but to follow instinct. *Thumos* was the carrying out of action, not the deciding of it. God was orchestrator; man was actor. This is a point well made in the work of James Eli Adams.⁷⁶ Adams, from a literary perspective, points out that to follow Kingsley's ideal was to declare war on the self in order to make it fit for God. Fittingly, Kingsley's injunction to his novel *Westward Ho!* (1855), reads: 'The prerogative of a man is to be bold against himself.'⁷⁷ This was an example of what Max Weber referred to as virtuoso asceticism.⁷⁸ According to Weber, virtuoso asceticism was the refining of worldly conduct through acute self-observation to spiritually enrich the outside world. This seems strange when applied to Kingsley as he seems ill-suited to the ascetic model. His brashness and his encouragement of sex and violence all seem incongruent with it. Yet, Kingsley did preach a kind of virtuoso asceticism. He urged, as he wrote to a friend in 1844, to 'leave self – forget self, you must discipline self till she lays down'.⁷⁹ Kingsley's asceticism was based on a

⁷¹ Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind*, p.207.

⁷² Houghton, 'The Issue Between Kingsley and Newman', pp.82-7.

⁷³ Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind*, p.207.

⁷⁴ Michael Roper and John Tosh, 'Introduction', in *Manful Assertions*, ed. by Michael Roper and John Tosh (London: Routledge, 1991), p.17.

⁷⁵ CS, 23 November 1850.

⁷⁶ James Eli Adams, *Dandies and Desert Saints* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1995), p.10.

⁷⁷ Quoted from: *Ibid.*, p.7.

⁷⁸ Max Weber, *From Max Weber* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), p.287.

⁷⁹ *Letters*, vol.I, p.132.

continual breaking down of pride and knowledge for at root, beneath the performative pretensions learnt from everyday life, lied innate goodness based on the belief of the divinity of man. To live by *thumos*, one had to dispense with their grandiose illusions of absolute knowledge and face the world as a thing ultimately unknowable. Only at this stage, could one consider themselves sincere in their Christian belief.

This asceticism based on the baring, or stripping down, of the self, led Kingsley to become a virulent anti-intellectual. Simplicity is what he sought in his companions. Take his letter to Thomas Hughes, 1856, in which he wrote 'you are so jolly; and most people want to make me *wiser* when they write, as if I hadn't found out with Solomon that all is vanity and vexation'.⁸⁰ That is not to say Kingsley was not for the intellectual developments of his day, indeed his correspondence with Charles Darwin shows his deep admiration for scientific research.⁸¹ Furthermore, John Martineau, a pupil of his who stayed at the rectory in Eversley between January 1850 and June 1851, fondly recalled the landing-net that Kingsley kept in his study for his own scientific observations.⁸² This was because for Kingsley there was a crucial distinction between the discovery of knowledge and the systemisation of knowledge. Such a distinction may well be owed to Maurice, nonetheless it became integral to Kingsley's understanding.⁸³ Thomas Babington Macaulay's essay, 'Lord Bacon', well illustrates Kingsley's own position. In it, Macaulay imagines Epictetus and Francis Bacon visiting a town plagued by smallpox. Bacon represents practical knowledge; systematised knowledge is embodied by Epictetus. Enlightening the townspeople, the Stoic teaches them of the inevitability of death and how it is not a bad nor evil thing. All the while, Bacon starts vaccinating them with his lancet.⁸⁴ Kingsley urged an ascetic adherence to the Baconian model. Knowledge's physical utility was paramount. The practical outshone the abstract. The abstract represented a futile diagnosing of an unknowable world. Such theorising served to withdraw thinkers from the world instead of thriving within it. That the influence of *thumos* defined Kingsley's epistemological stance is testimony to its centrality in his thought.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p.480.

⁸¹ See: Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species* (London: John Murray, 1860), p.481.

⁸² *Letters*, vol.I, p.302.

⁸³ Prickett, *Romanticism and Religion*, p.121.

⁸⁴ Thomas Babington Macaulay, 'Lord Bacon', in *Literary Essays* (London: Oxford University Press, 1945), p.386.

Chapter Two: Masculinity, Sex, and John Henry Newman

Thumos resonated with the Victorian public at large. This is most obviously demonstrated through the success of Kingsley's novels that expanded upon this ideal. Popular novelist George Alfred Lawrence even adopted Amyas Leigh, Kingsley's *thumos*-enthused protagonist in *Westward Ho!* (1855), as the inspiration to his own commercially successful protagonist: Guy Livingstone.⁸⁵ Kingsley's newspaper articles, with his writing being the most popular of the Christian Socialists, were also received with enthusiasm. In 1851, Kingsley received a letter, among the many, praising 'Bible Politics'. In it, the writer, a male, found that 'here now was a *man*, not a mere empty evangelical tub-thumper (as we of the North call Ranters), but a bona fide *man*, with a man's intellect'.⁸⁶ His straightforward Christianity, that praised the innate goodness of humanity was understandably inspiring especially in comparison to the condemning, and often apocalyptic, 'tub-thumpers'. But interestingly too, *thumos* was immediately pounced upon as a gendered idea. It was that of a '*man*'. Through his celebration of *thumos*, Kingsley 'placed the male body into widespread circulation as an object of celebration and desire'.⁸⁷ The mid-Victorian fashion of growing great, bushy beards took direct inspiration from his books, as men sought to liberate their outward appearance, and thus their spirit, from 'effeminate' shaving practices.⁸⁸ Moreover, the 'manly' sport of mountaineering was similarly influenced by the vicar of Eversley as mountaineers envisioned the establishment of an 'all-male preserve' in the sky.⁸⁹ Such trends and movements saw a newfound confidence in Victorian masculinity with Kingsley at the helm.

Kingsley's association with the fashioning of contemporary masculinity was made obvious through the muscular Christian movement. The term 'muscular Christian' was initially applied to Kingsley and Thomas Hughes pejoratively.⁹⁰ In the 1850s, Kingsley especially was accused

⁸⁵ David Rosen, 'The Volcano and the Cathedral', in *Muscular Christianity*, ed. by Donald E. Hall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p.36.

⁸⁶ *Letters*, vol.I, p.256.

⁸⁷ Adams, *Dandies and Desert Saints*, p.150.

⁸⁸ Christopher Oldstone-Moore, 'The Beard Movement in Victorian Britain', *Victorian Studies*, 48 (2005), pp.13-22.

⁸⁹ Michael S. Reidy, 'Mountaineering, Masculinity, and the Male Body', *Osiris*, 30 (2015), pp.158-162.

⁹⁰ H.G. Cocks, 'Religion and Spirituality', p.166. Kingsley personally despised this term on account of its connotations, see: Rosen, 'The Volcano and the Cathedral', p.28.

by contemporaries of 'boiling over with animal eagerness and fierce aggressive instincts'.⁹¹ Essentially, it was argued that he had given over to a kind of fierce sensuality. However, by the 1860s, Kingsley was to many a figure of genuine inspiration. As a professor of history at Cambridge, a bizarre post given that his credentials amounted to several historical novels, his sermons on King David in 1866 earned fervent applause from the, predominantly male, audience at every utterance of the term 'muscular Christian'.⁹² This sentiment was not confined to the lecture room. Poet John Addington Symonds went so far as to concoct the phrase 'Kingsleiolatreia', or Kingsley worship, that he saw as rife in the late 1860s, though this idolatry must be confined to the middle/upper class intelligentsia.⁹³ Nonetheless, this legacy was not fleeting: his letters underwent sixteen printings after just twelve years of their original publication in 1876.⁹⁴

This gendered understanding of Kingsley's idea wasn't simply a public misapprehension. As Kingsley once confided to Maurice, he did 'have a little of the wolf-vein in him'.⁹⁵ In most respects, he was a 'manly' man, and he certainly thought it important that he presented himself as such. He loved to fish; he shared a love for beer and a disdain for teetotallers; his speech to the Working Men's Association, 1851, was, to a barrister present, 'the manliest thing I have ever heard'; he delighted in the feasts of 'braxy mutton, young taters, Welsh porter' and 'brandy of more strength than legality' on a camping trip to Snowdonia with Thomas Hughes.⁹⁶ Manliness for Kingsley was the realisation of 'masculine' attributes, rendering masculinity and manliness synonymous.⁹⁷

Owing to Judith Butler, we shall treat gender as a 'persistent impersonation' that must be continually reinforced in the mind of the individual.⁹⁸ Religion, specifically, Kingsley's personalised conception of *thumos*, was central to his own masculine impersonation. To

⁹¹ Quoted in: Susan Chitty, *The Beast and the Monk* (New York: Mason/Charter, 1975), p.171.

⁹² Rosen, op. cit., p.17.

⁹³ Ibid., p.18.

⁹⁴ Gay, *The Bourgeois Experience*, vol.II, p.298.

⁹⁵ *Letters*, vol.I, p.233.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p.206, p.271, p.287, p.465.

⁹⁷ David Newsome, *Godliness and Good Learning* (London: John Murray, 1961), p.209.

⁹⁸ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York: Routledge, 1990), p.x.

better understand the gendered aspects, and their fundamental connection to the sexual aspects, of *thumos*, it is crucial to understand Kingsley's marriage to Frances Grenfell. This interpretation lies in contradistinction to those who abide by the Foucauldian interpretation and limit religion's influence on sexuality, and gender, to its confessional aspect. Thus, this chapter explores the largely overlooked relationship between 'sexual ethics and general shifts in mental outlook', that scholars such as Dabhoiwala have highlighted as something overlooked in recent histories of sexuality.⁹⁹

Susan Chitty, a biographer of Kingsley, has done more than most to show the explicitly sexual relationship between him and his wife, Frances Grenfell. In publishing the drawings Kingsley drew for his wife, the inner workings of their marriage have been laid bare. Kingsley frequently depicted Frances and himself naked, in lovemaking or sadomasochistic scenarios.¹⁰⁰ The drawings are corroborated by letters exchanged between the two. In one letter, Kingsley commanded Frances, 'to forget that you ever wore a garment, and open your lips for my kisses and spread out each limb that I may lie between your breasts all night'.¹⁰¹ Letters like these were not one-sided. Frances Grenfell wrote lasciviously of their embraces with her 'willing limbs entangled with yours, + my lips clinging to yours, + the warm life flowing into my very soul'.¹⁰² Nor did their passion for one another, albeit perhaps less frequently expressing itself in explicitly sexual terms, fade with time. As late as 1863, twelve years before his death, Kingsley wrote to his wife, 'I love you ... I love you. I loved you last night. I loved you this morning.'¹⁰³

It seems strange, according to scholarly consensus, that their marriage could be both sexually fulfilling and simultaneously founded upon religious conviction. Cocks puts it succinctly when he writes that 'ideas of sexuality appear to follow the same pattern as the decline of religion'.¹⁰⁴ Yet, Kingsley's conception of *thumos*, indeed, the very argument that persuaded

⁹⁹ Faramerz Dabhoiwala, 'Lust and Liberty', *Past & Present*, 207 (2010), p.95

¹⁰⁰ Chitty, *The Beast and the Monk*, pp.161-168.

¹⁰¹ Quoted in: *Ibid.*, p.80.

¹⁰² Letter to Charles Kingsley, [no date], British Library, Add. MS 62552, f.177.

¹⁰³ Letter to Frances Kingsley, 1863, British Library, Add. MS 62555, f.225.

¹⁰⁴ Cocks, 'Religion and Spirituality', p.157.

Grenfell to marry instead of join a Tractarian nunnery,¹⁰⁵ declared that Christianity and passionate sexuality could not only coexist, but complement one another. Kingsley believed that man and woman were both divine. As such, sex was naturally good and one should 'trust in his own instincts and natural desires'.¹⁰⁶ However, such 'natural desires' could only be considered 'sanctified' if acted on in accordance with the will of God. *Thumos* thus required a 'sancifying framework' for physical actions such as sex and violence.¹⁰⁷ At Canaan, sanctification had been provided directly by the word of God. In the case of sex, the divine framework within which *thumos* operated was obvious. It was marriage, a God-given institution. Outside of marriage, sex was certainly a sin. Kingsley's acute guilt at losing his virginity before his marriage, a fact which he admitted to his wife-to-be, and which Chitty dubiously alleged was with a prostitute, is evidence of this.¹⁰⁸ But within marriage, sex was fundamentally redemptive in a religious sense.

Sex was not simply 'utilitarian',¹⁰⁹ in its procreative function, but also necessitous to a closer relationship with God. As Kingsley wrote to his wife, sex represented an eternal 'communion', not 'a mere temporary self-indulgence'.¹¹⁰ Again, Kingsley's *thumos* saw physical action as enthused with spiritual significance, urging a harmonic conception of Christian dualism (as opposed to the 'Manichaeists'). This idea hearkened back to the pre-lapsarian epoch, 'The Eden, where the Spirit and flesh, Are one again'.¹¹¹ As such, sex within marriage was endowed with moral sanctity. This has led Maynard to conclude that Kingsley simply moulded religion to suit his libido.¹¹² Maynard's interpretation is overly cynical. Admittedly, this concoction of religious adherence and sexual permissiveness manifested itself quite strangely at times. Most notably, Kingsley once instructed his wife to lie on her bed and dream of their having sex, whilst singing *Te Deum* aloud.¹¹³ But whilst this sexual enthusiasm is shocking, the religious aspect was not necessarily an insincere loophole through which to justify sexual

¹⁰⁵ Chadwick, 'Charles Kingsley at Cambridge', pp.319-320.

¹⁰⁶ Mary Wheat Hanawalt, 'Charles Kingsley and Science', *Studies in Philology*, 34.4 (1937), p.601.

¹⁰⁷ Charles Barker, 'Erotic Martyrdom', *Victorian Studies*, 44.3 (2002), p.465.

¹⁰⁸ Maynard, *Victorian Discourses on Sexuality and Religion*, p.90.

¹⁰⁹ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol.I, p.3.

¹¹⁰ Quoted in: Barker, op. cit.

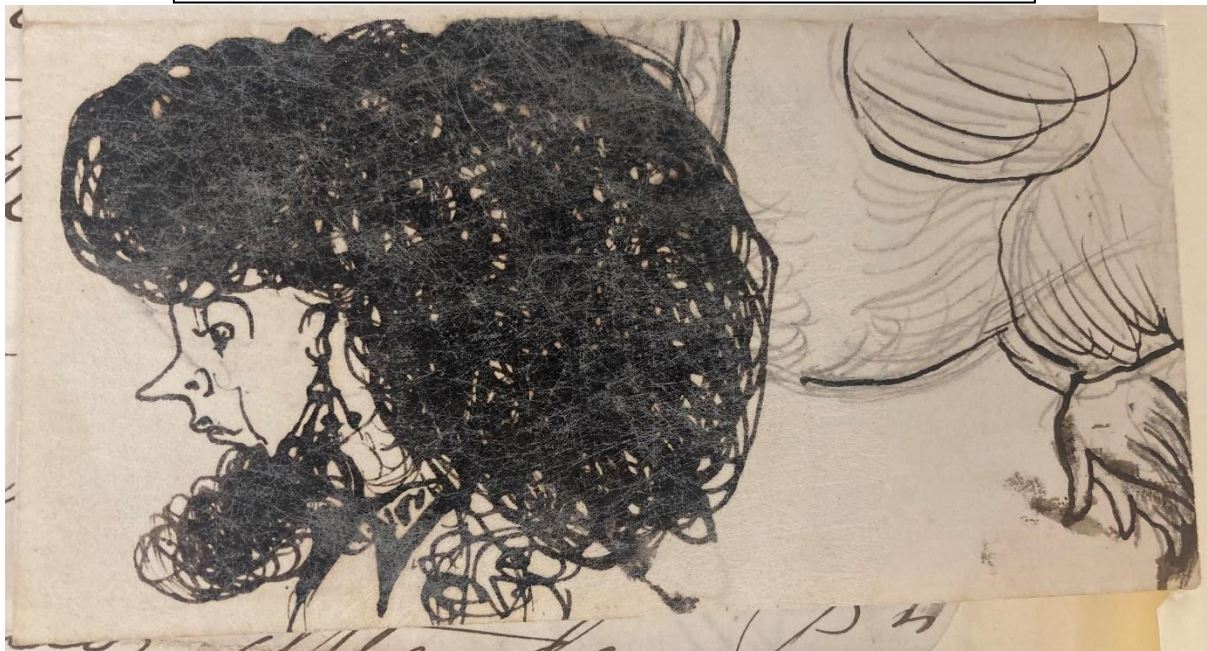
¹¹¹ *Letters*, vol.I, p.189.

¹¹² Maynard, op. cit., p.94.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, pp.94-95.

gratification. *Thumos* as a concept did not only encompass the sexual aspect of existence but, as was shown in the first chapter, more generally applied to engagement with the material world. Only by focusing on Kingsley's sexuality alone can his religious ideas be seen as a vindication of desire. With sincerity assured, it follows that marriage, the divine framework in which this instinct may, and must, manifest itself was central to Kingsley's Christianity.¹¹⁴

Figure 1: Letter to Frances Kingsley, September 1867, British Library, Add. MS 62555



But what effect did this have for Kingsley's conception of gender? Was *thumos* in the context of marriage necessarily gendered if both men and women were encouraged to engage their sexual instincts? Gender lives in a dialectical relationship with one's conceptions of sexuality. Matt Houlbrook's work on London's homosexual subcultures in the early twentieth century provides an abundance of examples of how this can manifest itself. Take men who engaged in homosexual practice as the 'active' participant and consequently did not regard themselves as queer.¹¹⁵ Gender identity was a means of detaching oneself from homosexual acts, whilst the specific sexual role of the actor was determined by considering oneself a 'manly' man. For Kingsley, marital sex was integral to a healthy, and godly, masculinity. A way of distinguishing 'real', or manly, men from the effeminate. Norman Vance is right in saying that this type of

¹¹⁴ *Letters*, vol.I, p.255.

¹¹⁵ Matt Houlbrook, *Queer London* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), pp.169-170.

masculinity was formed not in opposition to the femininity of women, but rather to the effeminacy of men.¹¹⁶ Defining masculinity on an intragender basis, as masculinity is a relational construct,¹¹⁷ meant effeminacy to be the perversion of men in relation to their innate attributes. Figure I shows a drawing found at the British Library that has not been addressed. It accompanied a letter sent to Grenfell in September 1867, and reveals Kingsley's ideal of masculinity. 'Last night I dreamt of you', reads the text. In the drawing, Kingsley depicts himself as he imagines himself to be. Rugged, bearded, with wild overflowing hair. This is the appearance of a man endowed with *thumos*. Sporting martial dress, Kingsley makes himself a soldier; the epitome of physical action. Behind him is Grenfell in a nightdress with clasped hands. A suggestive, erotic, image promising divine comfort and delight. To be a man was to be rife with natural instinct: to dream of sexual experience, for one's hair to grow and tangle, and yet, simultaneously, and just as importantly, to be disciplined in accordance with *thumos*. This is the significance of the martial dress: it represents the orderly enactment of instinct. This is the asceticism, based on the stripping down of self, that Kingsley preached. 'True manhood', as James finds in the work of Kingsley's literary contemporaries such as Tennyson,¹¹⁸ was not the taming and repression of manly instinct, but honing these instincts into appropriate tools for divinely-inspired physical action. Without such direction, manful energy would be wasted, and result in effeminacy, such as the kind of intellectualism Kingsley derided, or be expended in immoral pursuits. The latter end of the nineteenth century's 'cult of manliness' in England owed much to such ideas.

Such an interpretation of masculinity led Kingsley into direct conflict with John Henry Newman, resulting in a famed exchange and Newman's vindicating autobiography, *Apologia Pro Sua Vita*. John Henry Newman was one of the most talented and controversial clergymen of his time. Originally a leader, along with Edward Pusey, of the Tractarian movement, his sympathies for Catholicism reached their apotheosis in 1845 when he decided to leave the Church of England to join the 'Romish' church.¹¹⁹ Newman represented the antithesis of

¹¹⁶ Vance, *Sinews of the Spirit*, p.8. Buckton correctly argues that intragender, as opposed to intergender, categorisations of 'perversity' are far more 'violent' as 'self-policing mechanisms'. See: Buckton, "'An Unnatural State'", *Victorian Studies*, 35.4 (1992), p.371.

¹¹⁷ Roper and Tosh, 'Introduction', p.2.

¹¹⁸ Adams, *Dandies and Desert Saints*, p.17.

¹¹⁹ Buckton, "'An Unnatural State'", p.362.

Kingsley's appraisal of masculinity. This was due to his fundamentally differing theological beliefs, not, as many have argued, due to the association of Newman and the Tractarians with homosexuality.¹²⁰ Their dispute began in 1864, when Kingsley reviewed J.A. Froude's ardently Protestant *History of England*. In *Macmillan's Magazine*, a liberal, upper class, periodical which enjoyed considerable circulation at the time,¹²¹ Kingsley took the opportunity to attack the integrity of Newman and the Catholic priesthood. Specifically, he pointed to Newman's 'endorsement' of cunning as 'the weapon which Heaven has given to the saints wherewith to withstand the brute male force of the wicked world which marries and is given in marriage'.¹²² This mocking of Newman and his allegedly dishonest cowardice led to an exchange in which Newman's superior intellect shone through and embarrassed Kingsley. However, the reasons for Kingsley's attack warrant further inspection.

The Catholic church was not widely popular in late Victorian England. Shuttleworth has shown, that this was in large part due to a specifically English dislike for the intrusive 'foreign practice' of confession.¹²³ Nevertheless, since the 1840s, Kingsley held the Catholic church in especial contempt. Derogatory comments addressing the 'Romanists' plague his published letters.¹²⁴ Owen Chadwick rightly pointed out that this disdain stood incongruent with Kingsley's seemingly liberal, Darwin-sympathising, sexually permissive, outlook.¹²⁵ Even the Catholic-sympathising Tractarians, contained 'an element of foppery... a fastidious, maundering, die-away effeminacy' with which Kingsley was 'unable to cope'.¹²⁶ Rebelling against her father, Kingsley's second daughter, Mary, would similarly regard Catholicism as effeminate but found in this her path to spiritual redemption.¹²⁷ Kingsley's spiteful, gendered,

¹²⁰ E.g. David Hilliard, 'Unenglish and Unmanly', *Victorian Studies*, 25.2 (1982), pp.181-210.

¹²¹ Alvar Ellegard, 'The Readership of the Periodical Press in Mid-Victorian Britain', *Victorian Periodicals Newsletter*, 13 (1971), p.19.

¹²² Quoted in: John Henry Newman, *Apologia Pro Sua Vita*, ed. by David J. DeLaura (New York: Newton, 1968), p.349.

¹²³ Sally Shuttleworth, 'Spiritual Pathology', *Victorian Studies*, 54.4 (2012), p.648.

¹²⁴ E.g. *Letters*, vol.I, p.196.

¹²⁵ Owen Chadwick, *The Spirit of the Oxford Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p.126.

¹²⁶ *Letters*, vol.I, p.249.

¹²⁷ Patricia Srebrnik, 'The Re-subjection of "Lucas Malet"', in *Muscular Christianity*, ed. by Donald E. Hall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp.194-214.

hatred of the Tractarians and the Catholic church was further spurred by the fact that his marriage had nearly failed to come into being due to Grenfell's initial plan to join a nunnery.

But the personal issue of his marriage alone does not explain Kingsley's derision. The Tractarians and the Catholics, embodied by Newman, represented the aforementioned 'Manichaeist' branch of Christianity. Newman adhered to the Augustinian dualism of, crudely put, an evil physical world and a divine spiritual one.¹²⁸ Consequently, man was not divine but was burdened with an 'evil principle' in the form of destructive instincts.¹²⁹ Humanity was not simply good. To Newman, this was a ridiculous oversimplification.¹³⁰ Bruce Haley shows that this idea was cemented in Newman's mind by the thought of Aristotle and Plato, both of whom abided by a similar dualism which prioritised the perfection of the mind not the body.¹³¹ This idea of antiquity implicitly acknowledged the 'evil principle', for it demanded the conquering of natural urges. It is therefore logical that Newman sought to transcend his physical existence, through the conquering of instinct and passion, and to dwell solely in the spiritual realm. It is worth quoting from his novel, *Loss and Gain* (1848) to clarify this:

*'surely the idea of an Apostle, unmarried, pure, in fast and nakedness, and at length a martyr, is a higher idea than that of one of the old Israelites sitting under his vine and fig-tree, full of temporal goods, and surrounded by sons and grandsons?'*¹³²

Newman idolised the archetype of the apostle, with his thoughts focused on 'myself and my Creator' alone.¹³³ Such a solely spiritual ideal was contrary to Kingsley's harmonic dualism. Anyone who followed Kingsley's ideas condemned themselves to become what Newman referred to as 'the natural man'.¹³⁴ That is, those who sensually gratify themselves without fear of God, through belief in His infinite sympathy, preventing their attainment of true communion with Him.

¹²⁸ Vance, *Sinews of the Spirit*, p.30.

¹²⁹ Quoted in: Houghton, 'The Issue Between Kingsley and Newman', p.87.

¹³⁰ For his general scepticism towards human pretensions of knowledge concerning their own nature, see: Andrew H. Miller, 'John Henry Newman', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 45 (2003), pp.92-113.

¹³¹ Bruce Haley, *The Healthy Body and Victorian Culture*, p.101.

¹³² John Henry Newman, *Loss and Gain*, ed. by Alan G. Hill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p.139.

¹³³ Newman, *Apologia*, p.16.

¹³⁴ Quoted in: Houghton, 'The Issue Between Kingsley and Newman', p.100.

Unsurprisingly, Newman's otherworldliness led to a drastically different conception of sex and marriage from that of Kingsley. Newman was celibate and, at heart, he held 'a repugnance to a clergyman's marrying'.¹³⁵ So acute was this repugnance that Sheridan Gilley has argued Newman's position would have shocked his closest friends and sympathisers.¹³⁶ Conversely, celibacy was repugnant to Kingsley, or, in the words of his friend and fellow priest, H. Percy Smith, he considered it 'un-English and unmanly'.¹³⁷ This subversion of *thumos*, through avoidance of marriage, led to an impoverished understanding of human nature and an insidious pruriency.¹³⁸ Through earthly deeds, like marriage, and marital sex, experience was gained that led to a true knowledge of man and God. Without this, Kingsley saw men as doomed to a corrosive, 'effeminate', state of inaction as opposed to his own 'pro-sexual Christianity'.¹³⁹ Effeminacy was thus for Kingsley the perversion of masculine drives.

The 'repression thesis'¹⁴⁰ that scholars have used to categorise Victorian society's attitude to sexuality clearly did not apply to Charles Kingsley and his wife. This is not to say Kingsley was the first who sought to reconcile the sensual element of existence with the moral. The surgeon and author, James Hinton, and the painter, William Etty, were precursors in this mission.¹⁴¹ Yet Kingsley was distinct from these in his public presence. As a prominent Anglican priest and later a professor at Cambridge, and even as a tutor to the Prince of Wales,¹⁴² Kingsley was far more institutionally engrained in the mesh of late Victorian society. His conception of masculinity penetrated theological, educational, and imperial discourses.¹⁴³ But more importantly, his interpretation of *thumos* and his consequent rejection of Newman's Manichaeist 'bodily self-denial'¹⁴⁴ highlights the centrality of religion to issues of the body in late Victorian England, which has been denied by historians such as John Tosh.¹⁴⁵

¹³⁵ John Henry Newman, *Autobiographical Writings*, ed. by Henry Tristram (New York: Sheed, 1957), p.137.

¹³⁶ Sheridan Gilley, *Newman and His Age* (London: Darton, 1990), p.121.

¹³⁷ *Letters*, vol.I, p.238.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.203.

¹³⁹ Monika Mazurek, 'Perverts to Rome', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 44 (2016), p.715.

¹⁴⁰ Dabhoiwala, 'Lust and Liberty', p.98.

¹⁴¹ Anna Clark, 'James Hinton and Victorian Individuality', *Victorian Studies*, 54 (2011), pp.35-61; Dominic Janes, 'William Etty's Magdalens', *Religion and the Arts*, 15.3 (2011), pp.277-305.

¹⁴² Christopher Hamlin, 'Charles Kingsley', *Victorian Studies*, 54.2 (2012), p.256.

¹⁴³ David Alderson, *Mansex Fine* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), p.60.

¹⁴⁴ Maynard, *Victorian Discourses on Sexuality and Religion*, p.111.

¹⁴⁵ John Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2005), p.87.

Kingsley's reappraisal of the body was inspired by the influence of broad church theologians such as F.D. Maurice who stressed the benevolence of God over the omnipresence of evil thus unbalancing previous conceptions of body/spirit dualism. The body was holy, and so were its instincts. As such, the worldly was compatible with the spiritual. This created a liberated conception of sexuality for both men and women. Simultaneously, Kingsley's *thumos* demanded of men that they fulfil physical demands, be they violent, as in the Canaan story, or sexual, through the institution of marriage. Masculinity and sexuality were not static issues within the church but rather issues undergoing constant revision albeit from a more holistic perspective than that of sexologists, such as Havelock Ellis, who would come to dominate sexual discourse at the *fin de siècle*. To argue otherwise is to ignore the efforts of Kingsley, as well as Newman, in locating man's place across both the spiritual and physical planes, and the consequences for contemporary perceptions of gender and sexuality.

Conclusion

The first chapter of this dissertation sought to locate and define man in relation to God by utilising Kingsley's 'Bible Politics', a series of articles that have been neglected in the historiography. Historical inspection of Kingsley alone is warranted due to his comparative neglect by historians in contrast to literary scholars. This inspection has led to an understanding of Kingsley's conception of *thumos*. That is, a worldly, life-affirming, striving based on a harmonic conception of the dualism between the spiritual and the material. Or, as Kingsley put it, the idea that 'matter is holy'.¹⁴⁶ To further refine it, *thumos* was compared with the ideas of Carlyle as Kingsley is too often taken for a Carlylean replica.¹⁴⁷ *Thumos* as an idea led Kingsley to a particular notion of asceticism unique from most of his contemporaries and based on the honing of the self to make one fit for worldly action based on divine inspiration. Such an asceticism derided grand systems of knowledge but praised worldly improvement as his own work in his parish and in matters of sanitation bear testimony. This emphasis on physical action is responsible for a large part of Kingsley's popularity.

In the latter half of the dissertation, using Kingsley's letters and drawings, I argued that *thumos* was central to Kingsley's understanding of masculinity and sexuality. 'Real' masculinity was defined in opposition to effeminacy. Effeminacy was a male characteristic, thus 'real' masculinity, or manliness, was formulated on intragender terms rather than in opposition to 'female traits'. There is a stark difference between the repugnant effeminacy, as spiritual perversion, and adored femininity, personified in Frances Grenfell. Feminine sexuality was necessary for Kingsley's conception of sexual 'communion'. Embodied by John Henry Newman, effeminacy was the urge to transcend the physical world. To live an otherworldly existence. Such an existence was epitomised by celibacy, a sexual stance incompatible with *thumos*. Manliness was simply the opposite. It was a willingness to act in the world. This was the worldly asceticism that Kingsley advocated. In sexual terms, this meant marital sex. Marital sex was the act of merging physical and spiritual realms, that is,

¹⁴⁶ Letter to Frances Kingsley, 1844, British Library, Add. MS 62552.

¹⁴⁷ Boyd Hilton, 'Manliness, Masculinity, and the Mid-Victorian Temperament' in *The Blind Victorian*, ed. by Lawrence Goldman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p.70.

breaching the Manichaeist's dualism, which centred on a celebration of the body as divine. Here lay the crux of Kingsley's public message: that sensual elements of existence were to be enjoyed but only within divine parameters. His asceticism was one of honing instincts, not dispensing with them. The self was a thing to be dutifully stripped bare to reveal its innate goodness. Thus, sex for Kingsley, and those influenced by him, was not something to be repressed but rather something to be enjoyed whilst simultaneously revered.

Not only does this help to push back against some scholars' insistence on the omnipresence of the 'repression thesis' in Victorian society, fortunately an academic process already well underway, but more importantly, and more uniquely, this dissertation shows the centrality of religion with regards to masculinity and sexuality for the, predominantly male, Victorian cultural elite. Specifically, I point to the importance of physical/spiritual demarcation and its impact on conceptions of the body. Historians such as John Tosh have overlooked this, perhaps due to the influence of Foucault who urged a reconceptualization of sexuality that focused on the 'discursive explosion' of the late nineteenth century in sexology and other branches of the sciences. To understand masculinity as both a relational construct and a 'subjective identity',¹⁴⁸ along with its implications for sexuality, it is necessary to understand the far-reaching, holistic, influence of Christianity, Anglican or otherwise, in England during the mid to late nineteenth century. Both Kingsley and Newman were tremendously influential voices, and their influence on the public's conception of gender and sex cannot be understated.

This study also hopes to inspire future scholarship to unravel the complex and intersecting layers of gender, sexuality and religion to better understand the politics of the Victorian body. Particularly welcome would be a complementary focus on women and femininity as well as looking at individuals from differing Christian denominations that would give a wider perspective on the relationship between faith and the body. Different methodologies too would be welcome, focusing less on high-profile individuals than on groups of people perhaps through collecting parish sermons by like-minded priests, or religious newspapers that

¹⁴⁸ Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities*, p.47.

address issues of the body. Whilst such projects might less freely cross the boundary between the private and public spheres and thus be prone to presenting more performative discourses on sexuality, as this dissertation has avoided through the use of personal letters, they would be invaluable to assess the sentiments of specific locales.

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