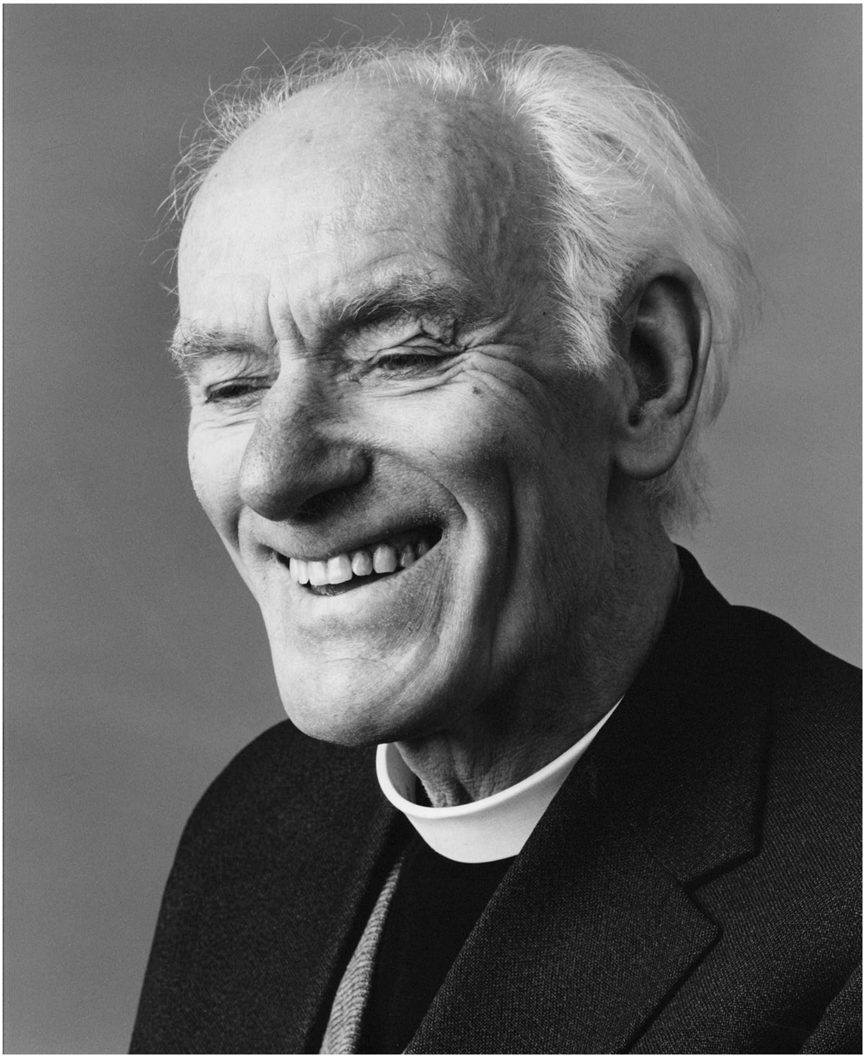

JACK McMANNERS

John McManners
1916–2006

The Reverend Professor John McManners (always familiarly known as Jack), who died on 4 November 2006 just a few weeks short of his ninetieth birthday, was one of the outstanding British religious historians of the twentieth century and an international authority on the eighteenth-century French Church. He was also a man of exceptional humanity, humour and decency who delighted in the whole range of human strengths and weaknesses (evidenced both among colleagues and Gallican clerics) and invariably aroused in those that knew him a degree of admiration, respect and warmth that can have had few equivalents in post-war higher education. For McManners's gifts of temperament and personality made it next to impossible to dislike him on any grounds: he judged men and women charitably, saw human weakness as a perverse sort of strength that seldom taxed his remarkable range of sympathies, and never indulged himself in any sort of intellectual preening at the expense of others. When he glimpsed this foible, it could bring out his deflationary and mischievous side, as at an All Souls dinner when he told an eminent cultural critic expatiating on the importance of plot in narrative that he found Shakespeare required too much attention; an episode of *East Enders* was about as much as he could take. McManners led a fulfilled life, a happy life, and this sunny nature came from deep within himself. Those who coined the nickname of ‘McHappy’ for him while he was at St Edmund Hall as its chaplain after the Second World War (on the ground of his delight in puns) had actually identified the decisive, lifelong core of his character.

Jack McManners was a County Durham man from a skilled working class background who never lost that faint Wearside inflection in his voice.

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He was born in a pitman's cottage at Ferryhill on Christmas Day 1916, the eldest of the three sons of Joseph McManners, a Durham collier, and his school mistress wife. His mother, Annie, was a kind but forceful personality who had definite plans for her husband just as she had them later for Jack. It was she who converted Jack's father to her middle-of-the-road Anglican faith, suggested that he leave the pit and take holy orders (he duly became curate of Ferryhill and moved on to become vicar of another smaller colliery village, West Pelton, in 1934) and made sure that Jack was given every educational opportunity and a close-knit but far from claustrophobic family life in the vicarage where the unemployed were always welcome to share a meal with the McManners. And while she identified Jack's intellectual talent, Joe encouraged his son's sporting abilities both at soccer and, especially, lawn tennis for, as Jack recalled, 'ours was a household devoted to the playing of outdoor games'.[1] From West Pelton he took the two-hour daily journey each way to the grammar school at Spennymoor, the Alderman Wraith School, and in 1935 won an exhibition to St Edmund Hall, Oxford. Though throwing himself into tennis and cricket at the Hall, he was *Proxime Accessit* for the Stanhope Historical Essay Prize 1938 and surprised few when he took a First in Modern History in June 1939. A. B. Emden, the medievalist and Principal of the Hall, was a key influence on his maturation as a historian yet there was never an indication that Jack would take to Emden's academic territory. It seemed more likely that he would be receptive to early modern English history, as taught by George Ramsay, Elizabethan economic historian and tutor in Modern History.

His parents had hoped that after graduation he would proceed to take holy orders but the outbreak of war changed any such expectations and McManners did not hesitate to write off his letter of application for a commission. One was granted and, in the interval before he was asked to report to Fenham Barracks at Newcastle (the depot of the Royal Northumberland Fusiliers), he began to start research on John, Duke of Lauderdale (1616–82), with Keith Feiling as his supervisor. That process stopped abruptly in November 1939 when McManners began his training; learning how to fire Vickers Machine Guns left no time for reflecting on the politics of the Cabal. It would be no exaggeration to claim that for McManners, as for so many men of his generation, the course of his later life was decisively shaped by his experience of combat and command in the Second World War. It was thus not particularly surprising that after his *opus magnum* on the French Church of the eighteenth century appeared in 1998, McManners opted to write autobiographically of himself in the much admired *Fusilier: Recollections and Reflections 1939–1945*.

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[1] J. McManners, *Fusilier: Recollections and Reflections 1939–1945* (Norwich, 2002), p. 15.

McManners was ordered from Fenham Barracks to the Machine Gun Officer Cadet Training Unit at Aldershot in spring 1940 and was sent out to the Western Desert at the end of the year to assume command of a platoon of Y Company in the 1st Battalion, the regular battalion of the Fusiliers, in the defence of Tobruk. McManners saw his first dead Germans very soon afterwards and, on returning to quarters, wrote at once to his old Teddy Hall Tutor, John Brewis (by then Principal of St Chad's College, Durham, 1937–47) 'to say that, if I ever got back, I intended to be ordained, and I wanted him to remind me'.[2] He was soon in action during the siege of Tobruk (where he was wounded on 18 November 1941 during an attempted break out) as officer in charge of a mobile Heavy Machine Gun unit, avoided being taken prisoner (as 25,000 other British troops were), commanded a company in the retreat to Alamein, and fought through to the fall of Tunis. By late 1942 he had been promoted to be adjutant of the 1st battalion of his regiment, and had developed a command of administrative procedures that was later of service to him as an academic. After the North Africa campaign was won, he was not sent to Italy but left the Fusiliers and stayed behind in Alexandria to command the 210 British Liaison Unit (the Greek Mission), which functioned as a core part of British efforts to prepare Greece for the restoration of constitutional monarchy by removing known Communists from what remained of the Greek army in exile stationed in North Africa. The 210 British Liaison Unit came into its own after Nazi Germany's occupation of Greece ended in October 1944 and the rivalry between the communist controlled guerrillas, EAM-ELAS, and the 'Greek Democratic National Army', EDES, burst into the open. Though McManners was never in Greece himself (he was demobilised in the summer of 1945), he was presented in 1948 with the Order of King George I of the Hellenes for his services by the Greek ambassador at a private ceremony in Oxford.

McManners's experiences in the war seconded by family pressure eventually confirmed his sense of ministerial vocation in the Church of England without displacing his primary determination to be a professional historian. He completed a two-year diploma in Theology at St Chad's College, Durham, in June 1947 and then spent a year as curate of Leeds parish church, one of no less than six then on the staff, which turned out to be his one and only experience of pastoral ministry outside a university. There was never a question of his looking for his own parish since he had already been invited to return to St Edmund Hall (SEH) as Chaplain and Lecturer in History in 1948 (Fellow from 1949) and it was in that primarily pastoral role that he was able to start again in turning himself into a historian. He remained at the Hall until 1956, halcyon days both for SEH and its chaplain. McManners's sensitivity and sure-footedness as a pastor within a collegiate setting was first apparent and developed in these years. He became central to the social life of the Hall, a sporting chaplain who invariably gained the affection and respect of its undergraduates whether they were demobbed wartime returnees or students coming up for the first time aged 18 or 19. As a tutor he ranged widely alongside George Ramsey in preparing undergraduates for Schools in a manner that was not so uncommon in the Oxford of the late 1940s. It was a heavy work load that included tutorials in PPE and extra sessions at Somerville and Lady Margaret Hall. The immediate post-war years created what was then considered a very crowded Oxford and there were no fewer than 262 students in residence at the Hall in 1949. And then there were the wider responsibilities within the university with McManners taking over delivery of the heavily subscribed Preliminary lectures on Tocqueville from Felix Markham. His witty, dramatic and unpredictable performance in front of what could be as many as 400 undergraduates did nothing to lessen the popularity of this option. But he was always a tiptop lecturer, able to relate what might seem dry topics to his audiences' interests, with much humour, and great forbearance towards the sources and towards his audiences. In the Preface to his *Men, Machines, and Freedom* he insisted that Thompson's two rules for lectures could not be bettered. The first was to interest the audience and, secondly, 'provoke the emotions of zeal, doubt, anger, curiosity (or whatever else it is) that send his hearers off determined to look at the evidence for themselves'.[3] If McManners could never guarantee the second injunction it was not for want of passing the first test.

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[2] Ibid., p. 59.

There can be no doubt that McManners found exceptional professional fulfilment in his return to Oxford and there was a matching personal happiness arising from his marriage in 1951 to a Durham geographer whom he had first met while at St Chad's, Sarah Carruthers Errington, and the birth over the next decade of his own family of two boys and two girls. His good humour and delight in puns were ever on public display and this became the era of 'McHappy' celebrated in a smoking song current at St Edmund Hall *c.*1950:

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[3] J. McManners, *Lectures on European History, 1788–1914: Men, Machines and Freedom* (Oxford, 1966), p. v.

> McHappy makes puns at High Table,
> He works them all out in his bath;
> Then he steers round the whole conversation
> And hopes that someone will laugh.

But it was also the era when McManners first emerged as a historian of exceptional promise. There would be no return to Lauderdale: he had discovered that his real research interests lay in the field of eighteenth-century French history, particularly the life of the Church. It was John Bromley of Keble College who, more than any other Oxford contemporary, both awakened this fascination and nurtured its progression, with the two of them planning collaborative projects, including contributions to the *New Cambridge Modern History* (Volumes VI and VII). They were both part of an emerging group of young eighteenth-century Oxford historians making their way in different fields, among them Lucy Sutherland, Betty Kemp, and Rohan Butler. Both McManners and Bromley found a willing supporter in the rather older Albert ('Bert') Goodwin, Fellow of Jesus College and University Lecturer, who brought out a book on the French Revolution in 1953, the same year that he moved to the University of Manchester to take up a chair of History vacated by Sir Lewis Namier. At that date, preparations were well advanced for publication of a Goodwin-edited book of essays on *The European Nobility in the Eighteenth Century; Studies of the Nobilities of the Major European States in the Pre-Reform Era*, and it was Goodwin who gave McManners his first opening, drawing (as for six of the ten contributors) on lectures given during Hilary Term 1951 in the university by what Goodwin called 'members of the Eighteenth Century Group'. McManners thus ventured into print for the first time with an essay on the French nobility, joining the other contributors with a pioneering (and then unfashionable) look at elites that did not start a trend and would not for upward of a generation. In literary and stylistic terms, the McManners hallmarks of sprightliness, sympathy, eye for the telling anecdote and the most acute of judgements all stood revealed. He was in no doubt that 'Money is the key to the understanding of French society in the eighteenth century',[4] and the essay for the Goodwin volume is essentially an elaboration on that theme.

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[4] J. McManners, 'France', in A. Goodwin (ed.), *The European Nobility in the Eighteenth Century; Studies of the Nobilities of the Major European States in the Pre-Reform Era* (London, 1953), p. 26.

If it was the Second Estate that McManners wrote about on this first outing, it was the Gallican Church that had primarily engaged his research energies. He planned a study that would microcosmically bring to life an entire eighteenth-century ecclesiastical community and, in so doing, throw vivid light on the institution as a whole. McManners had decided that Angers would be his city and spent most Easter and summer vacations in the city in the late 1940s and early 1950s, principally in the *Archives départementales* of the Maine-et-Loire and in the cathedral archives, both strong in notarial records and family papers. And there were regular supplementary visits to the *Bibliothèque nationale* in Paris. It constituted an exceptional scholarly initiative for its time by any British historian. Ecclesiastical history, certainly in France, retained a confessional or antiquarian dimension to it that made *Marxisant* scholars of the Ancien Régime steer well clear. McManners was not deterred. He had a story to tell and it would be one that would leave nobody in any doubt about the centrality of the First Estate in the life of regional France with its institutional diversity and huge range of characters.

In late 1956 he surprised many in Oxford by leaving St Edmund Hall. It was never a complete break: colleagues at the Hall thought too much of him and he of them for that ever to be the case. Indeed, in later life, while Chaplain at All Souls, he came regularly to SEH for morning coffee as well as to dinners. When John Kelly retired as Principal in 1979 McManners was a candidate to succeed him, and the Hall missed a trick in passing over him, not to mention Sarah. Back in 1956, the main reason for a move was money, hence his putting in for an advertised chair at the University of Tasmania. There were other motives: the admiration McManners had developed in the Desert for the Australian troops fighting alongside his Fusiliers; partly, going further back still, from a boyhood fascination for the country; and not least, from his well-developed adventurous streak. But, above all, he needed to provide for a growing family and the SEH salary was insufficient. Here was a challenge that, with his parents still in fair health, he felt obliged to take on. McManners spent the next four years in Hobart becoming constructively involved in the life of the department and finding Tasmania a deeply congenial discovery. Domestically, it was also a fulfilling few years with the McManners family settled in a beautiful house on Kangaroo Bluff on Hobart's Eastern Shore overlooking the estuary and gaining a reputation for hospitality.

The late 1950s were the years in which his early masterpiece on Angers was written but they were also cankered because of the Orr affair at the university and it left the reluctant McManners with no alternative but to take sides. The Professor of Philosophy, Sydney Sparkes Orr, had allegedly seduced a student. His outraged fellow academics sprang to his defence after his summary dismissal and the unions organised a boycott of the university that McManners thought a crude and damaging response to a complicated situation. It also left him looking for a way out and when an offer came in 1959 to take up the newly created second chair of history at the University of Sydney he eventually accepted it. He was there from 1960 until 1966 and it was a thoroughly enjoyable time. The department was a vigorous one before he arrived (it had grown fourfold in a decade to have forty staff and 2,000 students on its books) and it was no less so when he left and handed over his chair to Patrick Collinson who later described himself as coming to 'one of the biggest and best history departments in the world'.[5] Apart from sharing in the running of the Sydney History department with his colleague J. M. Ward, McManners became well known across Australia following his election to the Humanities Research Council.

The Australian decade saw Jack McManners emerge as a distinct historical presence with the publication in 1960 of the widely acclaimed *French Ecclesiastical Society under the Ancien Régime: a Study of Angers in the Eighteenth Century* (Manchester). He had preceded it with a volume edited jointly with J. M. Wallace-Hadrill entitled *France: Government and Society* (London, 1957), to which McManners had contributed a chapter on 'The Revolution and its antecedents (1774–1794)'. *Angers*, however, took up most of his writing energies while at Hobart, and the end product was a remarkable re-creation of religious institutions and individuals enmeshed in eighteenth-century Angevin society trying to live out a Christian witness while compromised by character and circumstances. Rejecting the quantifying approach to the subject then dominant in France, McManners offered a map to a corner of pre-Revolutionary France that accepted its muddle and delighted in its obsession with precedent and custom without apologising for them. If there was a hint of nostalgia for what the Revolution would sweep away (and sympathy for those who would be the losers by it), McManners took care not to play the historian as either judge or moralist and simply concentrated on bringing to life men and women caught up in events beyond their control who had no idea that so much of what was familiar to them would be so quickly discarded in the 1790s. It was not that far removed from what Richard Cobb would attempt to do in his own recovery of *les très petites gens* among the laity, but McManners was no less a pioneer in such retrieval work. What gained notice at the time was the sheer brilliance of his *Angers* as a salvage operation, an exercise in religious history as cultural history with the revolutionising of *curé* consciousness as another major theme (in as much as one could be discerned) that had no obvious counterpart in 1960 (whether written in English or French).

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[5] Patrick Collinson's eightieth birthday speech, 5 Sept. 2009: <http://www.trin.cam.ac.uk/ show.php?dowid=730>.

After *Angers* he turned to write two contributions for the *New Cambridge Modern History* then in the first throes of publication. The first appeared in Volume VIII, published in 1963, on 'The historiography of the Revolution'.[6] It came out a year before Alfred Cobban's vastly influential *The Social Interpretation of the French Revolution* (Cambridge, 1964) with its celebrated rejection of the whole Marxist approach to the Revolution still being upheld by Lefebvre and Soboul. McManners, typically, was not entirely persuaded by Cobban's revisionism and subsequently justified, in *Men, Machines, and Freedom*, his own resort to what he called a compromise term—'bourgeois'—which, he argued, 'reflects very much what Lefebvre and Soboul's masterly researches really imply, as distinct from their occasional doctrinaire reflections'.[7] McManners's bourgeois were not imagined Marxist financiers but 'a coalition of the educated and the ambitious',[8] men not very dissimilar to himself and his father, the now Canon Joe, one might say. He was also at work on a further essay for another volume of the *New Cambridge Modern History*, submitting 'Religion and the relations of Church and State' to its editor, his old friend John Bromley, who had given him the slot after Dean Norman Sykes dropped out on grounds of ill-health. It was the first of the contributions to reach Bromley although publication of the volume was not until 1970.[9] In 1966 appeared *Lectures on European History, 1789–1914: Men, Machines, and Freedom*, a sequel to J. M. Thompson's *Lectures on European History* (first published as long ago as 1925), based on McManners's undergraduate courses both at Oxford and at Sydney. His thematic and chronological range extended across the whole of the Continent (including Russia). It says a great deal for him as a stylist and as a lecturer that the published version, packed with but never overwhelmed by detail and anecdote, required very little emendation of the originals.

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[6] J. McManners, 'The historiography of the Revolution', in A. Goodwin (ed.), *The New Cambridge Modern History Volume VIII: the American and French Revolutions, 1763–1793* (Cambridge, 1963), pp. 618–51.

[7] McManners, *Lectures on European History, 1788–1914*, p. 23 n.

[8] J. McManners, 'The revolution and its antecedents (1774–1794)', in J. McManners and J. M. Wallace-Hadrill (eds.), *France: Government and Society* (London, 1957), p. 182.

[9] J. McManners, 'Religion and the relations of Church and State', in J. S. Bromley (ed.), *The New Cambridge Modern History Volume VI: The Rise of Great Britain and Russia, 1688–1715/25* (Cambridge, 1970), pp. 119–53.

By the time *Lectures on European History, 1789–1914* appeared McManners was no longer in Sydney but coming to the close of an academic year passed at All Souls College, Oxford as a senior visiting fellow. It had provided an opportunity to work in the Bodleian and other Oxford libraries and refill his notebooks with material for future writing for it had been a decade since McManners had last managed a sustained period of archival research and a post-Angers project had still to take shape in his mind. He needed, as it were, to get back on track and 1965–6 spent at All Souls allowed for ample academic stimulation and confirmed his inclination to move back to a post in Britain. Sir Stephen Roberts, Sydney's vice-chancellor, a specialist in French colonial history, was keen to keep him—as a professor who caused no trouble (as opposed to his other two categories of professors, those who caused justified trouble and those who caused unjustified trouble) but without success: the declining health of Canon Joe McManners reinforced and clinched the considerable academic reasons for coming back to the UK.

In 1967 Jack McManners took up the second chair at the University of Leicester, a post advertised while he was still a visiting fellow at All Souls. He came to a well-established department undergoing moderate expansion as Leicester, like other comparable civic universities, began to cater for rising undergraduate numbers in the wake of the Robbins Report. The plan was for McManners to work alongside another Jack, Jack Simmons (McManners reverted to 'John' to avoid familiar confusion during the Leicester years), offering teaching in Modern European topics, the counterpart to what Simmons was providing in Modern British subjects. Events conspired to prevent such a simple blueprint from functioning thus: Simmons was ill until 1969 and McManners acted as head of department almost from the moment of his appointment (he became a member of the University Senate in 1969 and lost no opportunity it afforded him to argue for improved resources for the History department) and put his own imprint on the Leicester curriculum. He brought in a 'Themes and Ideas' option for second and third year students and operated in creative pedagogic tandem with Aubrey Newman, another eighteenth-century specialist. Beyond Leicester, he was appointed a Trustee of the National Portrait Gallery in 1970, a post he held for eight years.

McManners wrote quite a lot during the Leicester years though there was no sign yet of a comparable successor to *Angers*. That volume had brought him such a *succès d'estime* that coming up with a comparable topic and then handling it so inimitably was a challenge easily deferred. Meanwhile, his Inaugural Lecture at Leicester, *The Social Contract and Rousseau's Revolt against Society* (Leicester, 1968), demonstrated his aptitude in the art of the inaugural, his stylish mastery of the cameo, and his familiarity with subjects that departed from but also complemented eighteenth-century religious history. There were two other works. The first, *The French Revolution and the Church* (London, 1969), was a much-needed synthesis in English of the latest scholarship on the subject that combined knowledge of the Revolution generally with a grasp of the religious dimension that, among Anglophones, McManners uniquely possessed at that date. It contained enough *aperçus* to make it still quite serviceable three or four decades later. The other was his *Church and State in France, 1870–1914* (London, 1972).

His competence and wide-experience as a senior academic, his literary skills, his genial and sincere Anglican witness as well as the affection in which he was held in Oxford readily account for the offer from 10 Downing Street in 1972 of the Regius Professorship of Ecclesiastical History on the retirement of Stanley Greenslade, along with the customary stall at Christ Church. Some initial hesitation in the Theology Faculty over the appointment of an eighteenth-century specialist soon ebbed away while the History Faculty and the Dean of Christ Church, Henry Chadwick, were enthusiastic in their endorsement. McManners took his time before acceptance but found majority opinion urging him to do so, apart from one or two in the Oxford Theology Faculty who had slight misgivings over the appointment of another non-theologian. And with his family growing up fast and Sarah keen to return to Oxford the matter was settled: the McManners moved into their lodgings in Tom Quad in time for the start of the 1972–3 academic year. He was the first holder of the Regius Chair of Ecclesiastical History to be appointed after the University Statutes had been changed so as to remove the requirement that the Professor be a person specialising in the history of the Church during the Patristic Era (as Greenslade had been), thus making his nomination even more of a tribute to his standing.

As a canon of Christ Church until 1983 McManners made up one of the most distinguished capitular bodies at any time in the history of the House with Peter Baelz, John Fenton, John McQuarrie and Maurice Wiles *inter alios* all serving alongside him. McManners took a modest role in the deliberations of both the Chapter and the Governing Body and, in line with the pattern established in Tasmania, steered clear of academic politics. However, he certainly enjoyed the opportunities for preaching to the public and to students that performing his duty as canon-in-residence allowed. He gave the University sermon several times while a Canon of Christ Church, and also deputised more than once at St Mary's church at short notice when the listed preacher had to withdraw. His thoughtful homilies were well regarded though it would be fair to say that the lecture room was more his natural habitat than the pulpit and he resisted calls in retirement to collect and publish his sermons. He saw them as *pièces d'occasion*, not at all in the sense of things not of major importance but rather as vehicles of thoughts and reflections prompted by particular circumstances or a distinctive point in the Church Year. When a sermon had been given, there and then, it was done with. To keep his sermons would perhaps have seemed to him to carry a hint of self-importance, and he was always resolutely set against that.

As a preacher the full range of human sympathies were as conspicuously on display as in the lecture room but McManners knew well enough that the professional requirements of the historian were of a different order to those of the cleric. He was always insistent that the preacher needs to believe in what he is saying, and there was never any suggestion of doctrinal novelty, let alone heterodoxy, originating with him. When preaching, McManners spoke quickly, and generally in a rather monotone voice that could deflect attention away from the substance, not always giving his words air and space enough to breathe. But there were always moments of deeply felt Christian eloquence, for he had a gift for memorably evoking the Christian view of things seen in the largest perspective of the here and the hereafter, often with a moving touch of the poetic in his words.

McManners was always reluctant to talk about the exact content of his Christian faith. If it did not rest on any mystical experience he could recall one occasion in the Libyan desert when he experienced '… the peace passing all understanding, the nearest I can ever hope to come to experiencing the eternal serenity at the heart of the universe, an infinity of reconciliation in which I yearn to be enfolded'.[10] This was a faith that was generous, orthodox but undogmatic, and he treated generously those who had none themselves. It was not ascetic. Ordinary human nature could seldom emulate the likes of St John of the Cross and St Teresa of Avila. For the generality of believers, for Jack McManners '… it is, rather, meditation on the life, teaching, and death of Jesus and the hope that in his resurrection, he will remember them'.[11] He knew a lot about theology without much relishing it. He did, however, serve on the Doctrine Commission of the Church of England for a few years after 1978 once he had been reassured that no one in Church House was confusing him with John McQuarrie. His misgivings were, in a sense, understandable, an indirect acknowledgement that it was the general history of ideas rather than the history of doctrines that he found stimulating. Something of this disinclination can be glimpsed in his 1981 essay, 'The individual in the Church of England', where he wrote that he would not overvalue doctrine believing rather that 'Doctrines should look forward to the time nearer than we think for each of us, when they will have no further meaning.'[12]

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[10] McManners, *Fusilier*, p. 94.

Relations with both deans of Christ Church during these years were cordial. McManners already knew Henry Chadwick as a fellow historian whom he admired, and from 1979 found in Eric Heaton, a Cambridge theologian turned administrator, a classical Anglicanism (seen in his liking for the Book of Common Prayer) that he shared and gifts for careful but unfussy stewardship that he recognised and supported. McManners was well liked by the lay Students and Lecturers of the House. He would dine regularly and frequently in hall (as a canon it often fell to him to preside at the High Table at dinner), manifestly enjoying other people's company, putting guests at their ease and refining his gift for getting on terms with people of different age groups. Academically, the colleague who most closely related to his interests was Alban Krailsheimer, the senior Modern Languages tutor (himself Tutor in French), author of a highly regarded biography of Armand de Rancé. They were good friends anyway, both having spent the entire war years in the Army and taking from it many insights into human behaviour.

Outside the House, McManners was a member of both the Theology and Modern History boards from 1972 to 1983 and chairman of the latter's Faculty Board from 1978 to 1981, a role he once amusingly characterised as a cross between being manager of a football team and a godfather in the Mafia. By this date, he had accumulated formidable reserves of administrative experience and deployed his gifts adroitly and sensitively in the handling of Faculty business. McManners had no desire to be an imperious chairman impatient of colleagues who did not see things his way. He wanted to harness the distinctive gifts of other academics without coercion and his existing reputation for fairness, honesty and competence were only enhanced during these years. His political judgement could be indifferent, including at faculty level, and he could be somewhat naïve about both issues and people, which was odd when in his historical work he was so shrewd. Perhaps he was too kindly and always wanted to think the best of people, and the sort of harsh realism that some situations called for was not easy for him to deploy. In Oxford, as in Sydney and Leicester, McManners was never interested in academic posturing or politics as a power game. He enjoyed the chance to resume lecturing on Tocqueville to new cohorts of Oxford undergraduates in the last years of the unreformed first-year Oxford History syllabus, and showed himself to be a supportive and sensitive postgraduate supervisor. In later years McManners may have regretted missing the opportunity to exercise formally a pastoral ministry but the truth was that it was within academic life that he exercised a genial and sensitive care of souls.

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[11] J. McManners, *Death and the Enlightenment. Changing Attitudes to Death among Christians and Unbelievers in Eighteenth-Century France* (Oxford, 1981), p. 18.

[12] J. McManners, 'The individual in the Church of England', in M. Perham (ed.), *Believing in the Church: the Corporate Nature of Faith* (London, 1981), p. 212.

McManners's scholarship was abundantly honoured during his Christ Church years. He was elected to a Fellowship of the British Academy in 1978 and received a D.Litt. degree from the University of Oxford in 1980. Much of the academic year 1980–1 was spent on leave in Paris as visiting professor [*associé*] in the IVème Section of the *École pratique des Hautes Études*, an appointment facilitated by his friend Bruno Neveu, the historian of the early modern Catholic Church, and Director of Studies of the History and Philological Section at the *École pratique*. Apart from his lecturing duties, he visited the *Bibliothèque nationale* regularly to put the finishing touches to the manuscript of *Death and the Enlightenment. Changing Attitudes to Death among Christians and Unbelievers in Eighteenth-Century France* (based upon his 1975 Birkbeck Lectures in Cambridge), which Oxford University Press published in November 1981 and brought him the award of the 1982 Wolfson History Prize.

Though McManners had been accumulating material for this publication since the late 1960s, it was the appearance of Philippe Ariès' *L'homme devant la mort* (a collection and expansion of his articles that stretched back to the early 1960s) in 1977 (Paris) that had confirmed its fashionability. McManners's offering, of course, was not structured in any *Annaliste* manner, though he was warmly complimentary of the 'methodological ingenuity' he found in contemporary French historians. One hundred pages of footnotes in *Death and the Enlightenment* in no sense overloaded the book or worked against the mellifluous flow of his prose. It affords a matchless overview of death from a variety of angles in eighteenth-century France as men and women from every section of society experienced it, set against a background of evolving views about the life of the world to come and reduced contemporary concern about the horrors of damnation. The text shows that McManners readily adopted the view that 'laicisation' is the key to grasping the essential change in the religious culture of the French Enlightenment (the Sorbonne historian, Bernard Plongeron, as so often, acted as McManners's signpost) and laid out his conviction that 'the work of conversion to a deeper, interior piety was proceeding all the while'.[13] The book encompasses deathbeds, cemeteries, funerals and monuments, and a full cast of characters—from nurses and priests to soldiers and executioners—is deployed to embody his theme, one that covers many other facets of the Enlightenment in addition to death. The backbone of the book was his exceptional familiarity with the writings of the leading *philosophes* here angled towards a subject area—human mortality—that they had generally been thought to overlook. As far as he was concerned, 'Rousseau and Voltaire were better theologians than the apologists' on the subject of hell.[14]

Christ Church afforded McManners an opportunity to enjoy aspects of a capitular life not entirely unlike the one he had depicted in his book on *Angers* but he was under an obligation to move on in 1983 when he attained the retirement age of 67 agreed with the university for all holders of Regius chairs. McManners believed that he had still more to offer professionally and offered a humorous sign of his intent when, at the History faculty dinner thrown to mark his resignation, he read out at his 'farewell speech' the Letters Patent of Appointment promising to 'our trusty and well beloved John McManners' the full enjoyment of his cathedral stall for life. Delivered in a humorous, dead-pan style, it had the ring of plausibility about it. In fact, unknown to his audience, McManners had already agreed a congenial new appointment at All Souls College. The incoming warden, Sir Patrick Neill, had asked McManners to become college chaplain (the vacancy had been caused by the death of the previous permanent incumbent, Frank McCarthy Willis-Bund, in 1981) and he had readily consented. He was already a quondam fellow, because he had been one of a select number who had held a visiting fellowship under the short-lived scheme when such appointees had received a stipend from the college. In the interim, he had come to feasts and so was well-known to the Fellows.

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[13] McManners, *Death and the Enlightenment*, p. 442.

[14] Ibid., p. 443.

Thus was inaugurated an association with All Souls that lasted for nearly a further quarter of a century, indeed for the remainder of McManners's life, a link confirmed by his election to a fellowship in 1986 and subsequently when, on his retirement from the Chaplaincy in 2001 aged 84, the college honoured McManners by making him one of its very rare Honorary Fellows, a remarkable sign of how much he was loved by the whole Fellowship.

These years of 'retirement' were extraordinarily happy and productive to an extent that could hardly have been foreseen. McManners was released from teaching and administrative duties within the university to concentrate on his writing (to which his mornings were invariably dedicated) and his responsibilities within college that, officially, centred on the chapel. On Sundays he read the Prayer Book services at some pace, one that was suited to his congregation, the majority of whom were not strictly Anglicans; his wry humour could show through in the choice of additional prayers and the moral sentences that he would read out as Fellows processed to make offerings in the collections. He undoubtedly exercised influence on nominations on the dozen or so benefices remaining in the gift of All Souls, and worked unobtrusively to reinforce links with All Souls parishes, not least through inviting incumbents and churchwardens into college at regular intervals. Above all, perhaps, he exercised a sensitive, light-handed pastoral ministry among his own colleagues, young and old, new and established, permanent and visiting, in the Fellowship, one that was something more than friendship. Most of those with whom he dealt might not have shared his faith, but he knew exactly how to find the right response for each case. Unsurprisingly, McManners was immensely popular and deeply respected in college, for his learning, his judgement and his good humour, among his many other personal qualities. It also mattered that he was there: he came into lunch and tea most days and dined regularly, and thus got to know younger Fellows particularly well. With all alike, he would provide any comfort or support that was needed. He even got on well in person and by post with A. L. Rowse (his fellowship had expired in 1974), whose neurosis and feelings of persecution he could understand. He would later provide a typically judicious memoir of him for the British Academy.[15]

On the governing body he was not very active on the purely academic side, though making telling interventions when the college was debating the merits of History candidates for various classes of Fellowship. In all instances, he spoke up on the side of charity and understanding where he judged it appropriate, but otherwise took care not to be controversial either in private or in Stated General Meetings of the college. Of course, there were issues about the chapel, and aesthetic questions about which he felt strongly. Controversy centred particularly on the future of the Mengs painting *Noli me tangere*, originally commissioned for the college from the painter, and brought back from Italy to adorn the Baroque chapel. It had languished for many years in the Ashmolean and All Souls was faced both with a huge restoration bill (the painting is on panels which had split) and the question of what to do with it. Tongue slightly in cheek but testifying to his enduring enthusiasm for the fine arts, McManners wound up colleagues by advocating the return of the Mengs to the altar as part of a restoration of the chapel, removing the changes that Gilbert Scott had made in the nineteenth century to the medieval reredos. Such extremism was rejected but the painting was put back in the chapel and suspended in front of the reredos as an experiment. In time, McManners came to agree that this solution did not work. The painting was thereafter placed for two years on an easel in the antechapel before going first to the National Gallery and subsequently to the Ashmolean Museum.

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[15] J. McManners, 'Alfred Leslie Rowse 1903–1997', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 105 (2000), 537–52.

McManners wrote steadily throughout his seventies and was editor of the *Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity* (Oxford, 1990), a project that had its unsteady moments and required him to exercise his undoubted diplomatic talents and to keep his contributors up to the mark. All Souls, as he acknowledged, 'was the ideal base' for the enterprise, for 'where else could one find an unofficial advisory committee of an archaeologist, an anthropologist, a Renaissance scholar, an antiquary and bibliographer, a musicologist and a sociologist meeting almost daily over afternoon tea?'[16] And, withal, he took seriously the illustrated dimension of the book, and how 'Every story needs a picture.'[17] In his Introduction he accepted the essential provisionality of the project: 'Our book has no conclusions, for we did not write to a common formula, and a history of Christianity raises problems which outrun by far the scope of the professional techniques available to us.' McManners knew that faith lay quite beyond history and sensibly observed, 'Each of us could have written an epilogue, but it would not have been as an historian.'[18] Chapter 8, 'Enlightenment: secular and Christian (1600–1800)', was his, as was the ninth, 'The expansion of Christianity (1500–1800)', after the earmarked contributor failed to produce an essay. With this book McManners reached more readers than any other of his publications, and the impressive scholarly line-up of nineteen contributors ensured that its contents stood up well to critical scrutiny. The book was originally intended for the Anglophone general reader across the world and has been constantly in print for over two decades. It was translated into many other languages, including Chinese, and, as with all his books, he took undisguised delight in its sales. This pleasure on his part had nothing at all to do with personal vanity. It was because he was so free of any such thing that he could so openly enjoy the success of a book when it occurred.

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[16] J. McManners, 'Acknowledgements', in J. McManners (ed.), *Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity* (Oxford, 1990), p. 666.

[17] Ibid., 'Introduction', p. 11.

But all this was by way of prelude to his lifetime's crowning achievement, *Church and Society in Eighteenth-Century France* (Oxford, 1998), a massive 1,600 pages of text in two volumes, published when he was 81. For fifty years McManners had been gathering materials on this subject and he ransacked his boxes and files to produce a book that will last as long as his subject is studied. There had been various disclosures of the great enterprise—the Trevelyan Lectures at Cambridge, the classic McManners scintillation found in his 1992 Emden Lecture on eighteenth-century French church music—and historians who heard him perform were understandably eager to know when the book (no one foresaw that there would be in effect TWO books) was going to be out. Its appearance was timely: McManners was getting no younger and indeed his winter propensity to flu and bronchial complications caused him to ponder emergency action so that his publishing intentions could be fulfilled in the event of a mortal illness striking him low. Fortunately for eighteenth-century historians, that recourse was never necessary and the book appeared a year after a Festschrift—*Religious Change in Europe 1650–1914*—in honour of his eightieth birthday.[19]

The coverage in *Church and Society* is comprehensive and deliberately so. McManners had prevailed on OUP to grant him a dispensation from the recommended word limits to titles in the *Oxford History of the Christian Church* series, one within which *Church and Society* nominally sits and at the same time entirely transcends. All his scholarly strengths were on display: immense erudition, shrewd judgement, convincing generalisations, and a thorough mastery of the subject, deployed in his supremely accessible and entertaining style, with an abundance of good stories, often simultaneously droll and moving. His relish for what he had much earlier called the 'bewildering complexity' of the pre-1789 order, 'a living historical growth defying mere analysis' appeared as acute as ever.[20] The planning of the book was meticulous: 1,683 pages, 50 chapters, 183 pages of notes, a work of overwhelming detail yet one of immediate accessibility. The liturgical splendours, the fine musical tradition, the high standard of pastoral care, these and other institutional merits emerge vividly from the pages of this vast synoptic portrait. At the same time we hear about grotesque inequalities, bitter feuds, and the grim hostility to any form of toleration for Protestants.

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[18] Ibid., p. 5.

[19] N. Aston (ed.), *Religious Change in Europe 1650–1914: Essays for John McManners* (Oxford, 1997).

The first volume, *The Clerical Establishment and its Social Ramifications*, beginning with the coronation of the young Louis XVI at Reims in 1775, is essentially descriptive, recreating the multi-layered realities of clerical life in the eighteenth century. McManners gives a nuanced, sympathetic account of the bishops, invariably aristocrats by birth and full of their share of worldly pride who yet usually accepted the obligations of their office. Chapters, canons, and the regular clergy are treated fairly in all their extraordinary variety, being given space in a manner that showed up their inadequate presence in accounts of the early modern French Church published before the late 1990s. Even the unfamiliar ones are present, from the Frères de Saint-Jean-de-Dieu, who ran the best hospitals in France, to the Order of Notre-Dame-de-Merci, who risked their lives to redeem slaves in Algiers. The virtues, faults, and grievances of the lower clergy are evoked sympathetically without any subscription to the myth of the *bon curé*. McManners shows how in many ways their social origins among the prosperous élites of the Third Estate, allied to their vastly improved educational standards, could be turned to their advantage. It enhanced their role as natural leaders in local society, ready to advise and assist their parishioners on a range of secular as well as sacred concerns. In a series of careful analytical chapters he explores their influence on aspects of economic, social and sexual life. Generally, the Church struggled to deal with the consequences of its own ambitions to police society, with the absurd exclusion of actors from the sacraments making the clergy look petty and ridiculous.

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[20] McManners in Goodwin, *The European Nobility*, p. 33.

Volume two, *The Religion of the People and the Politics of Religion*, continued a predominant theme of the first: that the Church is in every age moulded by the society in which it exists. The volume opens with several chapters on aspects of popular belief and religious practice, with an emphasis on the sheer extent of experiences and behaviour at local level. The problems of popular belief and superstition, too often the subject of heavy-handed and excessive generalisation, are also handled with notable delicacy. The frontier between 'official' and 'popular' belief was actually a hazy one, within which pilgrimages, missions, relics, protective ceremonies and the like defy easy classification. The upshot is a most convincing picture of the religious universe of the general population, with its innumerable permutations of common-sense materialism, concern with salvation, and hopes of the miraculous. McManners did not disparage folk beliefs. He also acknowledged that a whole series of statistical indicators—illegitimacy, premarital conceptions, vocations, pious bequests—suggested that by the middle decades of the century the Tridentine Reform initiative was starting to falter. But he was careful not to draw too much from these references in a way that the scholarship since 1998 has rather endorsed. Once again following Plongeron, for McManners the extraordinary explosion of dechristianisation in 1792–4 seemed to owe almost everything to the peculiar superheated atmosphere of the Revolutionary years and not, as Vovelle argued, to having its recognisable genesis in the middle decades of the century

One of the key arguments of the whole book is that Louis XIV's disastrous combination of ignorance and authoritarianism in ecclesiastical affairs had left a fatal legacy from which the monarchs and ministers of the eighteenth century never managed to free themselves. All too frequently the crown found it possible to treat dissident clerics in a peculiarly authoritarian fashion. It is this phenomenon of power abused that forms the heart of the final section of the book, whose centrepiece is Jansenism. This was the point at which the book acquired its exceptional dynamic. McManners achieved the astonishing feat of making the bull *Unigenitus* and its calamitous fallout both highly entertaining and comprehensible, while giving it all the significance it deserves, and treating the contending parties with scrupulous fairness. What emerges is the story of a self-defeating persecution, in which doctrinal issues were constantly manipulated. McManners chose to highlight less the grim persecutions of Louis XIV than the dogged ferocity with which Cardinal Fleury purged the Church in the 1730s. With his task incomplete, he left a poisonous legacy to successors who lacked his compensating tactical acumen. Despite slightly improved incomes for the *curés*, there was an accumulation of grievances within the First Estate by the 1770s to ensure that when the Estates-General was summoned, and the parish clergy found themselves the beneficiaries under the voting arrangements authorised for the Order in January 1789, they took full advantage. Most of them, as McManners showed, would also play a vital role in turning the Estates-General into a National Assembly. At this point, the final crisis of the old order, the author stopped, seeing no need to revisit the Revolutionary terrain he had surveyed thirty years previously.

Overall, McManners was in no doubt that Catholicism continued to have a purchase on the overwhelming mass of the French people, irrespective of social background, yet he believed, too, that there was an enduring tension between the core message of a purified faith of the Catholic reform movement and the political and social functions of the French church. That gulf could be bridged in everyday life, yet the disjuncture simply would not go away and, for all the accommodating rhetoric, disclosed the dangerous discrepancies in the mutual embrace of Church and state. Sadness as well as sympathy mark this great work for as he wrote in volume one '… this was the mellow autumn season adorning the landscape with rich colours before the leaves began to fall and winter came'. For the post-1789 order might sweep away the injustices but 'injustices more logically based replaced them'.[21]

Church and Society was at once recognised as John McManners's summa on a Braudelian scale. And acclamation was near universal, perhaps best distilled in the words of William Doyle, writing in *French History*, that '*Angers* was perhaps the best book ever written by an Englishman on the French *ancien régime*. Until now that is.'[22] It was, understandably, McManners's last word on his subject, though he had more to say on others in the time that remained to him. For, by the close of the 1990s, his remarkable fitness was giving way to poorer health. The dry cough, which had always punctuated conversation and sometimes prayers, was getting worse and functioning less as an alternative to Jack's generous laughter and more as a physical ailment. Though often short of breath, he continued to work after giving up the Chaplaincy in 2001, going back to write about his wartime experiences in *Fusilier: Recollections and Reflections 1939–1945*. It was as near to an autobiography as he came, and he derived great pleasure from receiving appreciative letters from former comrades-in-arms in the Northumberland Fusiliers. Like his erstwhile colleague at All Souls, Sir Michael Howard, both of them front-line infantrymen in the Second World War, McManners possessed a range of insights into human behaviour denied to the majority of scholars. He had always had an interest in all things military. Both his sons Hugh and Peter were involved in the Falklands War of 1982. Along with pride and paternal anxiety went an awareness grounded in his experience of warfare of all that could make success in any campaign extremely unpredictable.

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[21] J. McManners, *Church and Society in Eighteenth Century France. Volume I: The Clerical Establishment and its Social Ramifications* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 3–4.

[22] W. Doyle, *French History*, 15 (2001), p. 219.

His last scholarly hurrah came with the publication of another short book, *All Souls and the Shipley Case 1808–1810* (Oxford, 2002), on the expulsion of Charles Shipley from his All Souls fellowship in the early nineteenth century despite being acquitted at the Oxford Assizes on a fabricated case of homosexual misconduct. The book followed McManners's discovery of undisturbed papers relating to the scandal in the Codrington Library while he was working on a lecture on Bishop Reginald Heber, Shipley's brother-in-law, and it gave him the material for what he himself called a gripping yarn. The case illustrated some of the moral dilemmas of friendship and institutional loyalty, and it mattered tremendously to McManners that its hero, Reginald Heber, should have trusted his friend, Charles Shipley, rather than obeying his college. With the book almost complete, and wanting to check on Shipley's subsequent career as a cleric, he rang the Dorset County Record Office, and the lady who answered said 'Shipley—I think that name rings a bell, so can I check and get back to you?' It turned out that the Record Office had recently been given the family papers, including a set of letters which gave Shipley's own side of things. It was a final example of his archival green fingers—but he pretended at least to be rather annoyed, grumbling that he had finished the book, but now there was more work to do and changes to make. The publication showed that he had lost none of his gifts for the brilliant cameo portrait. McManners had meanwhile received the *Ordre des Palmes Académiques* in 1991 and was appointed a CBE in 2000.

'. . . [H]ow few in number are the people, and how fragile the circumstances, on which our happiness depends', McManners considered.[23] And first of those people was his wife. His years after, this time genuine, retirement in 2001 were ones of unstable health in which he drew, as he had always done for nourishment, on his family life and on the constant support of Sarah. Without her presence, her encouragement, her home-making skills, and her academic assistance when he sought them (thus she produced the index for *Death and the Enlightenment* and drew the maps for *Fusilier*), it is very difficult to imagine that his level of professional achievement would have been possible. And 'McHappy' would have faded away long ago. She was fittingly the dedicatee of his greatest work. In the last year of his life, Sarah, an octogenarian herself, unfailingly supported him at home as his physical energies gradually faded and he contented himself with returning to favourite novelists, among them Austen, the Brontë sisters, Trollope, and Alexandre Dumas. Probably his last piece of writing was an 'improved' (but never published) conclusion to the *Count of Monte Cristo* inspired by the research Richard Cobb had done on the women of Paris. John McManners died peacefully at home on 4 November 2006. Sarah survives him along with their two sons, Hugh and Peter, and their two daughters, Ann and Helen.

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[23] McManners, *Fusilier*, p. 31.

As an historian, McManners was an unabashed empiricist, making cautious, charitable judgements, though entirely capable of using the conceptual insights of others to inform his own work. The last thing after the Second World War that history could be for him was a pattern of abstract influences. The human being (usually a man) was right at the centre of his gaze. He never lacked an awareness of how force can determine events, the difference that personality traits can make, or the sacrifices that exceptional individuals were capable of making for others. As his friend and erstwhile SEH colleague, Graham Midgley, expressed it, he had '... a delight in the latent humour of situations, and an ability to breathe life into a mass of detail, anecdote and documentation'.[24] In terms of evoking imaginatively an historical landscape layer on layer and then offering sympathetic understanding McManners's mature output invites comparison with the work of E. P. Thompson and Sir Keith Thomas. He cared passionately about the importance of good (by which he meant clear) writing as a means of conveying knowledge and himself possessed a wonderful luminosity as a writer. As an unself-conscious prose stylist, he wrote with grace and charm but plenty of sinew, too, and had no peer in his generation. Indeed it would be barely an exaggeration to insist that his two volumes on Church and Society, in terms of the writing, are as good as history gets. A. L. Rowse compared him plausibly to two pre-eminent figures half a generation above him, the medievalists Sir Maurice Powicke and Dom David Knowles. Like them, too, Rowse accurately considered

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[24] Private communication.

McManners possessed an ethical discrimination and 'that rarest of qualities—*justice of mind*'.[25]

Beyond academic life, the wiry Jack McManners was a keen sportsman. He was a footballer when younger, and a high-class lawn tennis player until well into his seventies. McManners was ruthlessly and unobtrusively competitive on court. It was his always his favourite sport, a commitment summed up nicely by a regular doubles partner, Robert Gasser, bursar at Brasenose College, as 'A day without tennis is a day wasted.' The game oiled many friendships in Sydney, Leicester, and above all in Oxford. He was perfectly capable of beating opponents half his age in doubles through skilful placing of the ball for, as in tennis, so in history, he liked to leave no angle unexplored.

McManners made friends on the tennis court, in the common room, in Ferryhill and Hobart, Leicester and Oxford, and all points in between. It was exceptionally hard not to like him and he, in return, knew that the friendship of others sustained him as an individual and helped him as an historian. Amity, being known to another, was for him part of knowledge itself. As he wrote editorially in his introductory chapter to the *Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity*, 'Nemo nisi per amicitiam cognoscitur.' And this was why Oxford collegiate life was so important to him, none more so perhaps than St Edmund Hall, recognised in the award of an Honorary Fellowship in 1982, which meant a very great deal to him. With friends and colleagues he was always unstintingly generous with his time, support and advice. Loyal, learned, droll, never malicious though habitually playful (he was never a killjoy, no Jansenist he), McManners was ever a careful listener. And if he was exceptionally persuasive, whether as a lecturer, writer, or preacher, polemicism of any kind was alien to his nature. A shrewd scholar and a modest, much loved man with no enemies, John McManners was a latter-day happy warrior. The Bidding Prayer at his Memorial Service in the University Church of St Mary's on 10 February 2007 did not exaggerate when it declared 'His family, friends, colleagues admired him for his wit, honesty, learning and judgement; for his constancy in his relations with those who knew him, and his reciprocation of their love.'

NIGEL ASTON
University of Leicester

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[25] Private communication.

Note. I wish to thank Robin Briggs, Nicholas Cronk, John Davis, William Doyle, Sarah McManners, Scott Mandelbrote, Lord Neill of Bladon, Ron Truman, and Brian Young for their constructive and helpful comments on earlier versions of this memoir. A full list of John McManners's publications covering the period 1953–95 can be found in the volume of essays dedicated to him—*Religious Change in Europe 1650–1914* (Oxford, 1997).