

HUGH ROSS MACKINTOSH: THEOLOGIAN OF THE CROSS¹

THE VERY REVD
PROFESSOR THOMAS F. TORRANCE

I first came to know Professor Mackintosh personally when in October 1934 I moved from the Faculty of Arts in the University of Edinburgh to the Faculty of Divinity, housed as it then was partly in Old College and partly in New College. I had already become familiar with some of Mackintosh's works during my studies in classics and philosophy, and was eager to sit at his feet in preparation for the holy ministry. In New College I was more than ever drawn to his deeply evangelical and missionary outlook in theology, and to his presentation of Christ and the gospel of salvation through the cross in ways that struck home so simply and directly to the conscience of sinners. Here was a theology that matched and promised to deepen that in which I had been brought up by my missionary parents. I was far from being disappointed. To study with H. R. Mackintosh was a spiritual and theological benediction, for he was above all a man of God, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. His exposition of biblical and evangelical truth in the classical tradition of the great patristic theologians and of the Reformers was as lucid as it was profound, but it was always acutely relevant, for the central thrust of the Christian message was brought to bear trenchantly and illuminatingly upon the great movements of thought that agitated the modern world. We were made to see everything in the light of the revelation of God's infinite love and grace in Jesus Christ and of the world mission of the gospel. How frequently he used to refer to 'a vast and commanding sense of the Grace of the Eternal'!

I shall never forget the teaching of Professor Mackintosh in the academic session of 1935-36 during the course on Christian Dogmatics which he gave New College students in their second year. It was a basal course which covered all the main doctrines of the faith. The central bulk of it had to do with Christology and soteriology, but the nerve of it all was the forgiveness of sins provided directly by God in Jesus Christ at infinite cost to himself. It is at this point, Mackintosh felt, that everything becomes crucial, for that is where the real nature of the Triune God becomes disclosed to us as through the reconciling sacrifice of the Son and in one Spirit we are given access to the Father and come

1. This article is also due to appear in a commemorative volume *H. R. Mackintosh: 1870-1936*, edited by the Revd Robert R. Redman, Jr.

to apprehend him in accordance with what he is in himself, even though what he is in his Triune Being infinitely transcends our comprehension.

During the previous academic session, 1934-35, Mackintosh's lectures had made an unusually disturbing and profound impact, and we became aware in the College that a theological revolution was in process, clearly evident in the excitement and transformation of our seniors. This must undoubtedly be linked with the impact upon New College of the first half-volume of Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics, The Doctrine of the Word of God*, which had just been translated by G. T. Thomson and published in Edinburgh by T. & T. Clark. This had the effect of reinforcing the strong biblical and incarnational emphasis of H. R. Mackintosh in which he had anticipated Barth's reaction to the liberal teaching of Ritschl and Schleiermacher. No one could accuse Mackintosh of not giving careful attention to Ritschl and Schleiermacher, for along with A. B. Macaulay and J. S. Stewart he had been responsible for making their greatest works available in English, so that the welcome he gave to Barth's *Dogmatics* was something that could not be ignored. It was he above all who encouraged us to study the theology of Barth, for criticise it as we might, it was nonetheless 'the Christian thinking of a great Christian mind . . . of incalculable import for the Church of our time'.

It soon became clear that through this alliance of the Christian dogmatics of H. R. Mackintosh with the Church dogmatics of Karl Barth something of great importance had begun to take place among us - the essential status of evangelical dogmatics as the pure science of theology was being rehabilitated at a level that the Church in Scotland had not witnessed since the end of the First World War. As Mackintosh used to teach us, dogmatics is not the systematic study of the sanctioned dogmas of the Church, but the elucidation of the full content of revelation, of the Word of God as contained in Scripture, and as such is concerned with the intrinsic and permanent truth which Church doctrine in every age is meant to express. It is 'systematic' only in the sense that every part of Christian truth is vitally connected with every other part. No doctrine can be admitted which does not bring to expression some aspect of the redemption that is in Christ. Thus for Mackintosh as for Barth it is in Christ alone that the truth of dogmatics finds its organic unity. There is no knowledge of Christ apart from his truth and no knowledge of his truth apart from Christ, for he himself is the co-efficient of his doctrine. Thus seriously to study Christian dogmatics was from beginning to end an empirical encounter and a personal engagement with the tangible reality of Jesus Christ. Properly pursued in this way dogmatic theology becomes 'the conscience of the Church'.

It was Mackintosh's habit to give out to his students at the beginning of each class one or two sheets in which he presented in succinct

paragraphs the contents of the lecture he was about to give. These were doubtless revised from time to time, but in the lectures of 1935-36 he was often very unhappy with what he gave us. He would ask us to strike out certain paragraphs and put a question mark to others - I think particularly here of his lectures on the nature, origin and diffusion of sin. Some days he would come into the lecture room clearly troubled as though still wrestling in his mind and soul with the truth which he sought to express, but on other days he would come mastered by profound serenity of spirit which was almost awesome as we were ushered through his teaching into the presence of God. The lectures he gave us were often a form of what St Paul called *logike latreia*, 'rational worship'. And they were always evangelical and redemptive in their import. Many a would-be theological student was converted in his classes, although some, as I well remember, used to get very angry for they found themselves questioned down to the bottom of their being. Mackintosh was immensely modest and never arrogant, but he left no room for compromise in the way his lectures drew us out under the searching light of the holy love of God incarnate in Christ. Mackintosh himself was so consumed with the moral passion of the Father revealed in the death of Jesus on the cross, that in his lecture-room we often felt we were in a sanctuary where the holiness and nearness of God were indistinguishable.

When Professor Mackintosh died in June that year (1936), I was devastated. I had been wandering about the Middle East so that news of his death took some time to reach me. He and his teaching meant so much to me that suddenly New College seemed quite empty. As I asked myself what I had learned from him my thoughts kept returning to the unconditional grace of God freely poured out upon us in Jesus Christ his incarnate Son, at infinite cost to himself. *The Doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ* and *The Christian Experience of Forgiveness*, his two major works, undoubtedly enshrine the main substance of his incarnational theology which he consistently presented from a soteriological perspective. The primary emphasis was on the supreme truth that it is none other than God himself who has come among us in Jesus Christ, and who in the crucifixion of his incarnate Son has taken the whole burden of our sin and guilt directly upon himself - all in such a way that the passionate holy love of God the Father enacts both the judgement of sin and the forgiveness of the sinner.

As a young man Mackintosh had studied in Marburg where he became greatly indebted and attached to Wilhelm Herrmann, and where he laid the foundation for his unparalleled knowledge of German Lutheran and Reformed theology, not least of Ritschl and Schleiermacher and their illustrious disciples. He was drawn to the Christ-centred emphasis on experience which he found in Schleiermacher, for it rang bells in his

HUGH ROSS MACKINTOSH: THEOLOGIAN OF THE CROSS

own Highland evangelical religion; and he was drawn to the moral emphasis of Ritschl, for it rang bells in his own moral passion derived from his Scottish Calvinism. Right from the start, however, Mackintosh felt compelled to operate primarily with ontological, rather than with psychological or ethical categories, in his understanding of Jesus Christ, for the very essence of divine revelation and the very substance of the gospel of salvation were at stake. Thus we find his insisting again and again that if the revelation of God in the New Testament is true, Jesus Christ must be in himself what he reveals; and if the New Testament message of salvation is true, what Jesus Christ does for us must be what God himself does. Christians are bound to place Christ either within the sphere of the Divine or without. Either he is one with the Father or he somehow is different and unlike. Apart from a real identity or unity between the revealer and revealed, revelation suffers from a fatal discrepancy, and apart from a real incarnation Christianity suffers from a blank which nothing else can fill. Hence with reference to Matthew 11:27 or Luke 10:22 or John 5:27, like Athanasius and the Nicene theologians, Mackintosh laid constant emphasis upon the unique, incomparable and unshared connection in knowing and being and act between the Son and the Father. As he used to express it in his lectures: 'When I look into the face of Jesus Christ and see the face of God, I know that I have not seen that face elsewhere and could not see it elsewhere, for he and the Father are one.' It was thus that his appropriation of the Nicene *homoousion* constituted the corner-stone of H. R. Mackintosh's Christology and soteriology. Judged from that standpoint he found the concepts of divine revelation in the theologies of Schleiermacher and Ritschl to be very weak and inadequate, and their conceptions of the gospel to be evangelically and soteriologically seriously deficient.

Mackintosh never shrank from the ontological implications of this high Christology. Thus in an early work of 1912, *The Person of Jesus Christ*, he argued that if Jesus is God incarnate, then we must think of him consistently and strictly in accordance with 'the constitution of his being'. We are bound to think of him, therefore, as constituting 'the hinge and pivot of the universe, the Person on whom everything turned in the relation of God to man'. In fact the last foundations of being were in him. That is how Mackintosh interpreted the Messianic role ascribed to Jesus. 'All creation in heaven and on earth, all the divine ways of history, all time and eternity - they meet and converge in this one transcendent Figure.'

Moreover, if Jesus Christ is on the divine side of reality, then we really have no option but to think about him with all our might and with the best intellectual instruments at our command. 'Reason - which is more than logic - insists on coming into our faith.' Thus Mackintosh

would have nothing to do with the Ritschlian conception of faith as an attitude of mind entirely independent of reason. On the contrary, we are obliged before God to use our reason in thinking out to the end the absolute and final issues constituted by Jesus. 'If we regard him as Saviour, we must see him at the centre of all things. We must behold him as the pivotal and cardinal reality, round which all life and history have moved.' That is a place, Mackintosh went on to argue, out of which his Person simply cannot be kept.

We dare not permanently live in two mental worlds, dividing the mind hopelessly against itself. We cannot indulge one day the believing view of things, for which Christ is all and in all, and the next a view of philosophy or science for which he is little or nothing or in any case ranks as quite subordinate and negligible. After all we have but one mind, which is at work both in our religion and our science; and if Christ is veritably supreme *for faith*, he is of necessity supreme altogether and everywhere. It becomes increasingly impossible to revert to a scientific or philosophical attitude in which the insight into his central greatness which we attain in moments of religious vision is resolutely and relentlessly suppressed. At every point we must be true to experience, and the deepest experience we have is our experience as believing men. Hence, if the thought of Christ we have reached is valid, it must be carried consistently up to the top and summit of being, as something which is true with a truth that will stand the closest scrutiny and verification of sympathetic minds.

It was precisely on these Christological grounds, and because of the unity of redemption and creation and of faith and reason which they implied, that Mackintosh strenuously rejected the rigid dualism that had been injected into Western thought through the rationalism and determinism of Enlightenment science and philosophy. Thus he constantly objected to the tendency in modern thought, found even in Christian forms, to cut the universe in two halves, one physical and the other spiritual; and thereafter to argue that a mechanically constituted system of laws rules in the first half, but not in the second. Here the notion of a closed mechanistic universe had been allowed to interpose itself between man and God with a deistic and secularising effect. It shut off the world of matter from God, and caged human beings within the prison of inexorable 'laws of nature', thus suffocating thoughts of prayer and miracle and the free interaction of God and mankind.

For Mackintosh such a closed deterministic conception of the universe conflicted sharply with the nature of God the Father revealed in the incarnation of his Son, and our understanding of the omnipotence,

providential ubiquity, accessibility, and freedom of God to protect and save his children. Thus, along with his colleague Professor Daniel Lamont, who in earlier life had been an assistant to Lord Kelvin, Mackintosh welcomed the concept of a time-dependent universe, advocated scientifically by Einstein and philosophically by Bergson, which through its inherent properties was open to the future and not closed. Yet it was not on scientific or philosophical grounds that Mackintosh himself took his stand, so much as on the irrefragable conviction that a mechanistic explanation of the universe conflicted sharply with the essential nature of God the Creator and Redeemer revealed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. But it did mean for Mackintosh that an obligation is laid upon the believer to think out to the very end the bearing of the Father's immeasurable love upon the whole universe of visible and invisible reality, in which it would be quite inadmissible to hold theological, scientific and philosophical conceptualities completely apart from each other.

Now if faith places Christ on the divine side of reality, as perfectly of one being with God, how are we to understand the incarnation and the cross? It was in connection with that question that kenotic theory had been brought into prominence in attempts to harmonise the deity of Christ with his life and work within the limitations of human existence and suffering in space and time. Mackintosh, however, while giving the kenotic conception sympathetic consideration, would have nothing to do with any metaphysical speculation about an emptying of divine attributes in the incarnation, for God could not be thought of as emptying anything out of his own essential being as God. *Kenosis* was rather to be understood as the self-emptying of God himself into our frail contingent existence but our estranged condition under the condemnation of his eternal truth and righteousness. That is to say, *kenosis* has to be understood as the utterly astonishing and incomprehensible act of God's self-humiliation and self-abnegating love in which he freely made himself one with us in our actual existence in order to share the shame of our sin and guilt and through atoning sacrifice to effect our salvation. For Mackintosh, then, the concept of *kenosis*, religiously and soteriologically understood, was not to be taken as an explanation of 'how' the incarnation took place, but as the almighty act of God in surrendering himself to humiliation and death in order to forgive our sins - it was a revelation of the inexhaustible power of God's love. It was in fact another way of expressing the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ who for our sakes became poor that we through his poverty might become rich. Jesus Christ is God with us, Immanuel, who coming out of the very being and bosom of God, and coming at such infinite cost, constitutes in himself the message that 'God loves us better than he loves himself'!

Mackintosh could never refer to the cross of Christ without an instinctive feeling of awe and wonder at the forgiveness of sins effected in it by the incredible act of God's atoning self-sacrifice. He had no hesitation in speaking of the death of Christ as the central fact in the whole history of God's relations with the world, for in it God interposed *himself* in the utterly impossible predicament of his alienated children in order to break the power of sin and guilt and redeem mankind from its tyranny. The forgiveness of sins was for Mackintosh the greatest of all miracles, the wonder of wonders. It was the supreme instance of God's omnipotent Love. What he found so breath-taking in the forgiveness of sins was the conjunction of the infinite holiness and the infinite love of God manifested in it. Divine forgiveness carries in its heart the complete exposure, rejection and condemnation of sin through the self-maintaining reaction of God's very nature as God, and yet it is the utterly inexplicable act in which God in his unfathomable love has taken that fearful judgement of our sin upon himself and paid the price of our redemption. In the forgiveness of sins enacted in the crucifixion of Jesus the holiness and nearness of God, the judgement and love of God, are inextricably woven together. 'The passion of God is there.' Hence it is made clear that 'none can pardon sin, ultimately, save he who expiates it, and through whose experience of pain the costly gift is mediated. Thus the Cross which detects the sin reveals also the unspeakable love of God.'

It was characteristic of Mackintosh's personal appreciation of the staggering truth of divine forgiveness, not just as a gracious declaration of pardon, but as a mighty act of God, that he should have entitled his book about it *The Christian Experience of Forgiveness*. The Gospels tell us that even before his death and resurrection it was the supreme prerogative of Jesus to impart forgiveness, to put it right into the heart of men and women in such a way that it became 'an experimental truth' in their lives. Thus Mackintosh could say of Christ: 'He saved men by his filial life even before he saved them by the self-sacrifice of his death.' How much more with the fulfilment of his redemptive mission! The incarnate presence and activity of God himself in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, is not just the greatest fact of all history but remains throughout all history as the supreme empirical event confronting and challenging human beings through the gospel. Jesus Christ risen from the dead, with the virtue of his atoning death in him for ever, and therefore embodying the forgiveness of sins, continually steps out of the pages of history, a tremendous and exacting reality, creatively evoking from human beings an evangelical experience of forgiveness that answers to the very experience of God himself in mediating it through the sacrifice of Calvary. It was thus that Mackintosh could speak so vividly of the 'experienced', 'felt' or 'tangible' reality of Christ as Lord and Saviour, and could not but interpret everything in the New Testa-

ment gospel in accordance with the commanding impact of that reality upon his mind and heart.

The Christian experience of forgiveness, however, is not simply the experience of an external relation to the cross to be interpreted in moral terms. In line with his rejection of Ritschlian moral categories for ontological categories in his understanding of the Person of Christ, Mackintosh held, with Calvin, that we partake of all his saving benefits only as we are united to him. Thus, in contrast to his colleague James Denney in Glasgow who interpreted St Paul's doctrine of union with Christ only in moral or judicial terms, Mackintosh operated with a conception of a spiritual and personal union with Christ that goes far beyond anything that human beings can experience with one another, for it involves a relation of mutual indwelling and spiritual coalescence between Christ and his people. Mackintosh was undoubtedly influenced here by his old teacher, Wilhelm Herrmann, whose book *Communion with God* he urged all his students to study closely. Herrmann taught that the Christian lives through sharing in 'the inner life of Jesus' in which he finds his own life becoming spiritually subdued in conformity to the historic life of Jesus. However, Mackintosh differed radically from Herrmann in the latter's exclusion of the resurrection from 'the historic Jesus', which meant that Herrmann's notion of union with Christ could be interpreted finally as little more than a sharing in the spiritual convictions of Jesus. For Mackintosh, on the other hand, the resurrection must be included in the entire empirical fact of Christ, so that to share in the inner life of Jesus means to be united to him in the wholeness of his incarnate reality as the crucified and risen Son of God. This must include, in some real measure, an intimate assimilation into that inner life through sharing in the power of Christ's resurrection, and with constant reference to his self-consciousness as reflected in the Gospels and the impression it made upon the first Christians.

Mackintosh's soteriological restatement of the *unio mystica* as an empirical truth derived not a little support from the teaching of John McLeod Campbell, with whom also he shared an approach to the understanding of Christ and the atonement in terms of the *inner* relations between the incarnate Son and the Father, and therefore of the direct action of God upon sinful humanity. Although he was somewhat critical of McLeod Campbell's notion of 'vicarious penitence', Mackintosh agreed with him in refusing to separate the incarnation from the atonement, and thus in declining to offer a doctrine of atonement in terms of a merely *external* moral or judicial transaction between God and sinners, as though Christ's righteousness and our guilt were both externally transferable. Far from rejecting the forensic element in the atoning and propitiatory work of Christ, however, he interpreted it as falling within the inner being of Jesus in terms of his active as well as his pas-

sive obedience under the judgement of divine holiness and love. The rendering of atonement is to be understood, then, in terms of the inward experience of the incarnate Son in a profound union with sinners in the actualities of their alienated existence and fearful perdition - 'My God, my God why hast thou forsaken me?' - whereby he took completely upon himself shame and responsibility for their sin and guilt in acceptance of the righteous judgement of the Father, but all in unbroken union with the Father and in perfect identity in will and mind with his condemnation of sin. Thus in his atoning life and death Jesus Christ realised directly in his own profound experience as the obedient Son the unspeakable pain and infinitely costly experience of the Father in the mediation and actualisation of forgiveness. The ultimate stress in Mackintosh's doctrine of atonement was definitely upon the immediate act of God in the vicarious passion of Christ, and thus upon the inseparable and inherent relation between the judgement and love of God. Of absolutely essential and crucial significance, therefore, was the link between the atonement and the divinity of Christ, apart from which the cross of Christ could not be understood as the final revelation of divine love or as the ultimate disclosure given to mankind of the inner nature of God the Father Almighty, who not only made all things visible and invisible but whose providence unceasingly overrules and directs the whole course of events in the universe.

In his doctrine of atonement Mackintosh was also clearly influenced by the ontological understanding of it offered by the great Greek Fathers, evident in their soteriological principle that 'the unassumed is the unhealed', to which he frequently referred. That is to say, the incarnation itself, and indeed the whole incarnate life of the Son of God, as Calvin also taught, must be regarded as a redemptive and saving event reaching its great climax in the crucifixion and resurrection, in which God in Jesus Christ penetrated into the dark depths of our fallen and enslaved humanity in order to break the hold of sin and guilt entrenched within us by atoning expiation, and to redeem us by the power of his endless life in his resurrection from the grave. The fruit of that atoning emancipation is the forgiveness of sins, but precisely because of the oneness of the incarnation and the atonement, and of the person and the work of Christ, divine forgiveness is for ever embodied in the Person of the crucified and risen Jesus and becomes empirically ours in a profound union with him effected in us through faith by the indwelling Spirit of God.

At an earlier point reference was made to the awesome fact, constantly pointed out by Mackintosh, that in the very heart of the divine act of forgiveness there is a profound conjunction of the utter holiness and the infinite love of God. The unconditional self-giving of God in love to the sinner in the sacrificial death of Jesus carried intrinsically

HUGH ROSS MACKINTOSH: THEOLOGIAN OF THE CROSS

with it the absolute rejection by that love of the inconceivable wickedness for which Jesus came to make atoning expiation on the cross. It is there in the cross that the gravity of sin is revealed. Thus it may be said on the one hand that God's inexorable opposition to sin is exhibited as much in forgiveness as in judgement, and on the other hand that God's holiness has a redemptive as well as a condemnatory aspect, and indeed that his judgement is finally a manifestation and instrument of his grace. 'Grace means that in his loving self-bestowal his severity is absorbed, yet does not disappear. It is a stringent love, and by being less stringent God would become not more loving but less Divine.' It was in this light that Mackintosh taught us to think of the wrath of God as the obverse of the moral passion of his love when he stooped down to suffer in behalf of men and bring them forgiveness at unspeakable cost to himself; and it was always on this ground that he exposed the moral superficiality and soteriological deficiency of any attempt to eliminate the notion of wrath from the doctrine of God. 'In sober truth, it is only the man who knows what grace is that can tell what wrath and judgement are.' He used to tell us that he never forgot that day in Marburg when he heard Herrmann say that Ritschl's attempt to expel the conception of God's wrath against sin from theology was itself a great sin against the Christian mind. I imagine also that it was for this reason that the very first essay he asked us to write for him was one on the wrath of God.

Let me now refer back again to those lectures which Professor Mackintosh gave us in the Spring of 1936, in which his thought was so clearly engaged in a process of transition. What was actually going on in his mind? I think I began to understand at least a little of what was involved when in the following year I read and reread his last book *Types of Modern Theology*, which was, so to speak, his last will and testament to us. In it we were given in an expanded form his Croall lectures which he had first delivered in 1933, but which he had been revising each year as he read them again to his senior class. They were prepared for publication by his close friend Professor A. B. Macaulay, who tells us that all but the last thirteen pages had been given their final revision by Mackintosh before his death on June 8, 1936. Macaulay, who had recently retired from Trinity College in Glasgow, had been lecturing in New College in place of Professor Daniel Lamont during the latter's absence on Moderatorial duties in the Kirk. When Mackintosh died, Macaulay, who was not so sympathetic to Barth as Mackintosh, took over his classes until Professor G. T. Thomson joined us from Aberdeen.

Types of Modern Theology is a profound and brilliant work revealing a remarkable mastery of the history of modern thought. In it Mackintosh offered a penetrating analysis of the dominant theologies of

the nineteenth and twentieth centuries associated with Schleiermacher, Hegel, Ritschl, Troeltsch, Kierkegaard and Barth. Again and again he found the gospel itself to have been precariously in balance as people of admittedly great intellectual stature sought to interpret it within prevailing cultural patterns of thought alien to it and the biblical thought-forms in which it has been mediated to us. Along with his shrewd epistemological questions, he put to them the searching questions with which he was wont to test every theology: How far is it rooted in God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ? Can it be preached to sinful people in need of forgiveness? How effective will it be in the mission field? 'The message that does not evangelise, the Christianity that does not convert, abroad or at home, cannot be true.'

Mackintosh did not evade the great philosophical or critical issues with which these continental theologies had wrestled in seeking to commend Christianity to modern culture, for he handled them with a generous sympathy and respect, but he was as relentless as he was rigorous in assessing the justice they did to the absoluteness of the divine initiative in revelation and the uniqueness of God's identification with mankind in the incarnation. The judgements he passed upon their evangelical and soteriological inadequacy were judgements, he felt, which could not but be passed by a mind that has submitted trustfully to divine revelation in Jesus Christ. Soren Kierkegaard and especially Karl Barth, to whom Mackintosh devoted a third of the book, clearly measured up best to his theological scrutiny. His trenchant handling of their thought was not without sharp criticism - this was particularly the case with Kierkegaard, though not always, I think, with sufficient understanding of his real intention - but his warm appreciation of the fundamental change in theological outlook to which they contributed so powerfully showed the direction in which Mackintosh's own thought was moving.

It was, I believe, in the course of revising *Types of Modern Theology* and particularly in coming to terms with Karl Barth's theology of the Word of God, that Mackintosh was forced to think through his own theological convictions in a more radical way than ever before. Thus he allowed his own judgements on nineteenth-century theology, especially on Schleiermacher and Ritschl, to reflect back upon himself, and at the same time he asked how far his own theological position stood up to the challenge of Karl Barth in his criticism, exaggerated though it sometimes appeared to be, of the whole development of Protestant thought since the Reformation in allowing the preaching and teaching of the gospel to be compromised by humanism and secularism. Mackintosh's own commitment to a thoroughly biblical, evangelical and Christocentric stance in preaching and teaching alike made him appreciative of but also sensitive to Barth's penetrating exposure of the hidden and subtle

ways in which even a Christocentric approach can be betrayed from below.

Three aspects of Mackintosh's own thought, as I think he came to realise, were open, at least in some measure, to Barth's critique. Let me hasten to add, however, that they were all aspects in which Mackintosh had clearly anticipated Barth: in his stress upon the divine initiative, his biblical understanding of sin, and his conception of the uniqueness of divine revelation.

According to Mackintosh it is a conspicuous feature of the Christian faith that in his grace God always takes the initiative with us and maintains that initiative in all his relations with us. However, he had been in the habit of linking this to an innate hunger or craving or need of man for God which he held to be 'a true point of contact for the gospel of Jesus Christ - a point of contact not created by man but kept in being by God'. Although he claimed that Christian faith does nothing so silly as to turn these human cravings into an explanation of religion itself, he could nevertheless argue that to some extent we may tell what must in general be the character of the Reality that will adequately evoke and satisfy those cravings or needs. It was precisely to such a line of thought (the deadly *analogia entis!*) that Barth traced the subtle naturalism that had steadily corrupted and compromised the gospel in Germany - a point which Mackintosh must have taken to heart, if only through his own analysis of the religious notions of Hegel and Troeltsch, making him develop even further his own emphasis on the originality and absoluteness of Christianity and the danger of allowing our understanding of revelation and grace to be trapped in 'nature'.

Nowhere had Professor Mackintosh been more critical of himself than in respect of his lecture summaries on sin, to which I alluded earlier. As I look back upon these, what strikes me is that they were written with too much attention to the philosophical and moral and even evolutionary accounts of evil that come to prevail in Protestant theology since Kant. As such they did not match up to Mackintosh's profound understanding of the infinite moral passion of God in the atonement or to his account of the utter exposure and judgement of sin in the cross of Christ and its enactment of forgiveness. But that was, as far as I recall, the way in which Mackintosh lectured on the nature of sin in spite of what he had written beforehand. I can still hear him say, 'At Holy Communion I feel ashamed for my whole being, for my *good* as well as for my evil.' Kierkegaard's sharp distinction in *Fear and Trembling* and in *Training in Christianity* between an ethical and a religious (that is a distinctively Christian) view of sin had clearly struck home to Mackintosh and chimed in completely with his dominant soteriological perspective. Moreover, from Barth he learned to think again of the profound antagonism of sin that is deeply ingrained in the human

reason and which constantly assumed deceptive 'moral' and 'religious' forms. It was doubtless the radical nature of Barth's doctrine of justification that influenced Mackintosh here and threw him back more squarely onto his own understanding of the judgement of the unconditional grace of God upon the whole being of man.

In his analyses of modern thought Mackintosh charged it again and again with a weak sense of revelation, which he traced back to a dualist outlook deriving from Enlightenment rationalism in which God was shut off from all direct action in the empirical world. He used to point to a very different view of God held by D. S. Cairns of Aberdeen, who thought of the kingdom of God as providentially and triumphantly intervening even in the realm of nature which mechanistic science claimed as its own exclusive reserve. An 'unerring' criterion Mackintosh used to apply in this connection was the view a theologian had of 'petitionary prayer', but he also sought to determine how he reacted to the 'incomparable majesty of the Bible'. Thus he would ask whether a theologian's method was to proceed by introspection or self-understanding rather than by listening to the voice of God speaking in his Word. It is understandable, therefore, that Mackintosh was instinctively drawn to the supreme truth upon which all Barth's theology turned, that God himself is the content of his revelation, and therefore that the incarnational revelation of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit must be regarded as grounded in eternal ontological relations in the Godhead. *Ab initio* God is revealed as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This meant that what God is toward us in his Word he is inherently and eternally in himself, and thus that in the Word of God it is none other than God himself that he communicates to us. Not only is it the case that the eternal Word is the *prius* of revelation; in actual fact the Word of God is Jesus Christ, and it is he, the incarnate Word, who is mediated to us through the witness of the Holy Scriptures. The effect upon Mackintosh of this Trinitarian doctrine of the Word of God was to impart new ontological and objective depth and greater concreteness to his conception of divine revelation through the Bible, which is already evident not only in his concluding chapter on Karl Barth but throughout all his discussion in *Types of Modern Theology*.

There is one further point which I must mention in my recollection of H. R. Mackintosh, the profound interrelation he cultivated between preaching and teaching the gospel. This was particularly evident in his quite unforgettable 'sermon class' in which, through unsparing yet sympathetic criticism of the sermons we prepared, he instructed us how to let them arise out of a thorough exegesis of the Scripture and to work out for ourselves how we might best speak the Word of the gospel directly to the human heart. I think here particularly of the simple and direct messages he composed so effectively for distribution as evangeli-

HUGH ROSS MACKINTOSH: THEOLOGIAN OF THE CROSS

cal tracts in the *Monthly Visitor*. They were Mackintosh's counterpart to Barth's latter sermons to prisoners, but were evangelically directed to the 'alarmed conscience' of sinners in a rather more telling and personal way. He once published, through Drummond's Tract Depot in Stirling, a beautiful pamphlet entitled *The Heart of the Gospel and the Preacher*, which is all about the place that must be given to the atonement both as the central truth and as the permanent undertone of all preaching. 'Without preaching the Atonement we can never satisfy the conscience or heart of man.' 'Assured reconciliation was beyond hope until Jesus, bearing in Himself the very grace and life of God, numbered Himself with the transgressors and took our burdens as His own.' There in his own words we have expressed for us the essence of the faith of Hugh Ross Mackintosh, and the central nerve of all his theology.