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**SCOTTISH  
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## 'FUNDAMENTALISM' UNDER FIRE

Signs are not lacking that the continuing resurgence of Evangelicalism is provoking a growing backlash. Even so mild a Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland as Professor Robert Davidson has judged it desirable on more than one occasion to sound his alarm, and the letter columns of *Life and Work* have not infrequently carried salvos and complaints, often from quite senior churchmen. It would not surprise us if Billy Graham's evangelistic ministry in Britain in 1991 aroused other critics to give voice or put pen to paper. After all, it was a mission by Billy Graham in 1955 sponsored by the Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union that evoked not only correspondence in *The Times* but also a notorious utterance by the late A.M. Ramsey, then a predecessor of David Jenkins as Bishop of Durham, labelling 'fundamentalism' as a 'menace' and a 'heresy'.

On that occasion the targets were explicitly identified, and the ensuing controversy generated not a little light as well as heat. It elicited John Stott's pamphlet *Fundamentalism and Evangelism* (1956) and James Packer's punchy little monograph *Fundamentalism and the Word of God* (1958). A later generation that wishes to be aware of the issues at stake could do far worse than to read, or re-read, this sharp book. Apart from anything else it will remind – or inform – today's Evangelicals of battles not ignobly conducted over much the same ground as we are still challenged to contest – battles, moreover, without which the advances of Evangelicalism during the last three or four decades could scarcely have been consolidated.

But when Moderator Davidson's indictment of 'fundamentalists' avers that he is 'not thinking of the conservative evangelicals, those people within the mainstream who hold to the old doctrines but have a loyalty to the Church of Scotland and feel part of it', while one may breathe a sigh of relief ('he is not getting at me after all' – for a Moderator's words are weighty), one is left wondering whom he does have in his sights. Questions rear their heads about the point of attacks which leave their targets so indeterminate and yet, one presumes, must have specific targets in view (for a Moderator's words are no doubt well weighed).

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Such vagueness is not hard to find elsewhere. *People of the Book?*, subtitled 'The Authority of the Bible in Christianity' (London, SPCK, 1988; 96pp., £4.95; 0 281 04387 6), is based on the 1988 Bampton Lectures given by John Barton, who teaches Old Testament at Oxford and is a former member of the Church of England Doctrine Commission. It is a moderately latitudinarian discussion, distinguished by 'the kind of *ad hominem* argument that may be called spoiling the Egyptians: taking the best arguments one's opponents have to offer, and turning them to one's own use. I have tried to grant all that may be granted to the fundamentalists' case, but then to show that their most precious jewels shine more brightly in a setting provided by critical theology than in the one they were designed for.' But a thesis allegedly involving 'a good deal of engagement with fundamentalism' never names or quotes a single 'fundamentalist' source! The index reveals an entire innocence of such standard critical procedures. It must be responsible for some of the book's weaknesses, including a curious confusion between Barthianism and inerrancy (e.g., 'The proposition that Christ, and not the Bible, is the true Word of God is not at the living heart of the religion of most of those deeply influenced by Neo-orthodox theology').

What response is called for to these and similar exercises in the 'necessary cause' of 'anti-fundamentalism', as Barton puts it? It would be tempting to retaliate in kind. After all, the old establishment's church theology in Britain displays such appalling loss of nerve and disarray that survival must be at risk. Its anchorless Gadarene slide into an inclusivist morass that will sustain few firm boundary posts (except on socio-political issues, which increasingly constitute the new orthodoxy) must make discerning spirits tremble. Can these bones live? And one day a liberated sociologist of religion will assess the extent of the latitudinarian church's dependence – in personnel and finance, for example, not to mention less tangible resources such as prayer and spiritual courage – upon the despised 'fundamentalists'. ('Write an essay on "the church parasitic".')

Yet a humbler wisdom counsels a more circumspect response. 'Fundamentalism' deserves invariable quotation marks (and a lower-case initial) and perhaps occasionally 'so-called', at least until its critics come cleaner. Evangelical conservatives should take extra care to avoid being fairly tarred with the 'fundamentalist' brush (unfair tarring is beyond our control) – no hint that we do not welcome the soundest scholarship as the truest support of evangelical faith (so let us eschew those throw-away disclaimers 'Never mind what the scholars/pundits/academics say', and let us treasure and nourish the instruments of evangelical theological culture in our midst in Scotland, such as the Scottish Evangelical Theology Society, the Glasgow Bible College (a warm welcome to the hallowed BTI under

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its new name!), Rutherford House, and this *SBET* and other journals), no suggestion that nothing theologically good has happened since the Reformation – or at least since the Westminster Assembly (so let us take the full measure of *Ecclesia reformata semper reformanda* – which must be reserved for a future editorial), and no failure to observe, in theological controversy, that golden rule which corresponds to the pastoral distinction between loving the sinner and hating the sin. After all, do not heretics bleed when they are pricked, no less than ‘fundamentalists’?

# EVANGELICALISM IN MODERN SCOTLAND

D. W. BEBBINGTON, UNIVERSITY OF STIRLING

Evangelicals can usefully be defined in terms of four characteristics. First, they are conversionist, believing that lives need to be changed by the gospel. Secondly, they are activist, holding that Christians must spread the gospel. Thirdly, they are biblicist, seeing the Bible as the authoritative source of the gospel. Fourthly, they are crucicentric in their beliefs, recognising in the atonement the focus of the gospel. Three of these four defining qualities marked Protestants in Scotland, as elsewhere, from the Reformation onwards. They were conversionist, biblicist and crucicentric. Seventeenth-century Protestants, however, were not activist in the manner of later Evangelicals. Typically they wrestled with doubts and fears about their own salvation rather than confidently announcing the way of salvation to those outside their sphere. Hence, for instance, there was a remarkable paucity of Protestant missionary work during the seventeenth century. But from the eighteenth century onwards an Evangelical movement sprang into existence in Scotland and elsewhere in the English-speaking world. Its activism marked it out from the Protestant tradition that had preceded it. Evangelicalism was a creation of the eighteenth century.

The customary view of the Church of Scotland in the eighteenth century divides it into two parties. The Moderates are usually described as liberal in theology, scholarly in disposition and strongly attached to patronage. The Popular Party is held to have been conservative in theology, unfavourable to contemporary learning and opposed to patronage. Increasingly, however, it has become apparent that the model does not correspond with reality. Some ministers who were theologically conservative nevertheless favoured patronage. Others seem to have been aligned with no party. Even more anomalously, the leaders of the two supposed parties, William Robertson and John Erskine, shared the same pulpit at Old Greyfriars, Edinburgh, from 1767. It seems clear that there were not two monolithic parties waging perpetual struggle over patronage. Recent work on America suggests that there were three main tendencies in eighteenth-century Presbyterianism. The same pattern can be discerned in Scotland.

### **Tendencies in Presbyterianism**

The first tendency consisted of traditional Protestants. They were the inheritors of seventeenth-century ways – what contemporaries in America called the ‘Old Side’. They were firmly orthodox and punctilious over church order. They heartily endorsed the Westminster Confession. They rejected new modes of thinking associated with the Enlightenment. Their most extreme wing, the Reformed Presbyterians who were the successors of the Covenanters, contended that the National Covenant of 1638 remained obligatory. Another zealous group formed the first Secession from the Church of Scotland in 1733. Led by Ebenezer Erskine of Stirling, they deplored the declension in belief and morality they saw around them. The breaking point came over patronage. Ungodly patrons, they insisted, should not be allowed to impose unfitted ministers on spiritually minded elders and heritors. The scrupulosity of the Secession on points of church order is illustrated by its division in 1747 into Burghers and Anti-Burghers, the issue being whether or not lay members could legitimately promise to uphold the established church. Similar convictions about the importance of right belief and practice were maintained by many in the Church of Scotland. Puritan works continued to circulate, reinforcing traditional forms of piety. Readers were encouraged to test the genuineness of their faith. Assurance of salvation was expected to emerge only after protracted periods of anguish. Many therefore held back from communion. The pessimism and introspection of this spirituality were long to be hallmarks of Highland religion.

The second tendency was composed of the Moderates. In their case the usual characterisation of their stance as liberal and enlightened is not far from the mark. Technically the ministers of the group professed allegiance to the Westminster Confession, but their beliefs were strongly influenced by the new thinking of the eighteenth century. Many were scholarly men. They numbered in their ranks some of the greatest figures of the Scottish Enlightenment such as William Robertson, Principal of the University of Edinburgh and an early historian of America. Many were swayed by the Stoic style of ethics taught at Glasgow by Francis Hutcheson. Their sermons tended to concentrate on points of moral teaching rather than on the drama of salvation. They naturally associated with the educated upper classes, who in turn exercised patronage in their favour. Moderates were consequently the champions of the rights of lay patrons. Never a majority in the ministry, the Moderates owed their ascendancy in the church to their support in the General Assembly by an army of Edinburgh lawyers who sat as representatives of distant presbyteries. The grouping was identified with the elite.

## The Evangelicals

Evangelicals formed the third tendency. Like the traditionalists, they were strongly attached to central doctrines of the faith; but like the Moderates, they were affected by rising Enlightenment influences. Evangelicals differed from the traditionalists in holding loosely to aspects of customary practice. Thus in 1749 John Erskine advocated reform of the conventional communion season: all but one sermon beforehand was to be dropped. The differences extended to theology. 'His general doctrine', wrote Erskine's biographer, 'is Calvinistical. But it is not the vulgar Calvinism which exhausts itself on intricate and mysterious dogmas; which more frequently addresses the imaginations than the understandings of the people, and which it is easy to separate, both from the business and the duties of human life.'<sup>1</sup> Evangelical theology, that is to say, was simple, rational and practical. It showed the hallmarks of the Enlightenment. In the Secession the newer views made headway until, in the 1790s, both the Burghers and the Anti-Burghers split into 'Auld Lights' and 'New Lights'. The traditionalist Auld Lights stuck to the letter of the Westminster Confession; the Evangelical New Lights wished to modify it. The very name of the Evangelical party in the Secession reveals their debt to the new light of the Enlightenment.

Several of the Evangelical leaders in the Church of Scotland corresponded with Jonathan Edwards, the great American Congregational theologian who blended Reformed orthodoxy with Enlightenment thought. Like Edwards, the Scottish leaders learned from the philosopher John Locke to place confidence in knowledge derived from sense experience. They held that a convert's new sense of God creates an assurance of salvation. Believers, they taught, should normally be confident that they were among the elect. Christians should turn from the preoccupation of the traditionalists' spirituality with self-doubt to a vibrant desire to spread the gospel. A missionary concern, especially for the Highlands of Scotland, developed among Evangelicals. Their strength lay in the central belt, especially Glasgow, in the thriving centres of commerce and early industry. In many places congregations wanted gospel preaching but patrons would not select Evangelical ministers. The consequence was a succession of patronage controversies in the later eighteenth century. The Relief Church, created under the influence of Thomas Gillespie in 1761, consisted of Evangelicals forced reluctantly out of the established church by their desire for sound teaching. The

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<sup>1</sup> Sir Henry Moncreiff Wellwood, *Account of the Life and Writings of John Erskine, D.D., Late One of the Ministers of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh, 1818), p. 380.

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separation, unlike that of 1733, was entirely pragmatic. It represented the temper of the rising tide of Evangelicalism in Scotland.

The later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries witnessed gradual Evangelical mobilisation. The New Light Seceders and the Relief Church, which were to merge in 1847 as the United Presbyterians, grew enormously, particularly in urban areas. By 1835 over a quarter of Glasgow churchgoers belonged to these branches of Presbyterian dissent. From the 1790s itinerant evangelism became a major force. Although the Methodists made little impact except in Shetland, travelling preachers commissioned by the Haldane brothers and by others such as Christopher Anderson of Charlotte Chapel laid the foundations for many of the Congregational and Baptist churches of the Highlands. By the 1820s there were a few Evangelical congregations even amongst the Episcopalians with their High Church traditions. Meanwhile an increasing proportion of Church of Scotland parishes fell into Evangelical hands. Even where non-Evangelicals occupied the pulpits, lay people often assumed responsibility for the gospel cause. Thus at Lochs on the Isle of Lewis in 1823 a lay-led prayer meeting assembled outside the walls of the parish church. Loud prayers were deliberately encouraged to drown the sermon. Evangelical influence made progress even in the General Assembly. In 1834 the Evangelicals carried the Veto Act to insist that patrons' nominees must have the assent of their prospective congregations. The old Evangelical bugbear of patronage was to be swept aside. It was a sign that the party now possessed a majority in the highest court of the church.

### **The Evangelical Free Church**

The Veto Act led on to the Disruption of 1843. The secular courts upheld the right of patrons to ignore congregational objections to their presentees. Parliament confirmed the decisions of the Scottish courts and then failed to deal with the grievance of the Evangelical majority in the church. It seemed a gross interference by the state in the affairs of the church. In 1843 Thomas Chalmers led some 450 of the 1,200 ministers out of the Church of Scotland. A large number of Evangelicals remained in the ministry of the established church, but the chief result of the Disruption was the creation of a new wholly Evangelical Presbyterian denomination, the Free Church of Scotland. In every parish it set about erecting a church and school to rival the Church of Scotland. By 1851 it was supported by a third of Scottish churchgoers, the same proportion that attended the established church.

Evangelical religion dominated Scottish society in the later nineteenth century. The only official religious census ever taken

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showed in 1851 that 26% of the Scottish population attended morning service, 17% attended in the afternoon and 5% in the evening. Although middle-class churchgoing was higher, a significant proportion of the working people were among the worshippers. In Aberdeen an astonishing 92% of the population claimed a link with a particular congregation. This high penetration of society by the churches represents the result of sustained evangelism. Ecclesiastical issues dominated politics. Anti-Catholicism generated a surge of feeling against the endowment of the Maynooth seminary for Irish priests in 1845. Denominational rivalry was central to debate over education in the 1850s. Disestablishment was the liveliest issue in Scottish politics for twenty years from the later 1870s. Literature was touched by Evangelical influence. The Kailyard School of the 1890s, which is long overdue for warmer appreciation, was preoccupied with spiritual issues. Few aspects of life could remain immune to Evangelicalism.

Concern for social questions was seen as a branch of Christian obedience. The legacy of Thomas Chalmers was immense. His technique of district visiting was widely practised by a variety of agencies that brought help to the poor. Thomas Guthrie, another Free Church minister, was a persistent advocate of ragged schools for destitute children. William Quarrier, a Glasgow bootmaker and Baptist deacon, established an orphanage at Bridge of Weir in 1871. Philanthropic societies, hospitals and medical missions proliferated with Evangelical backing. Several causes were taken up as sustained moral crusades, the agitations often passing over into the political sphere. Anti-slavery was widely supported, so that in 1832, for instance, Evangelical voters insisted that parliamentary candidates should pledge themselves to abolition. Sabbatarian pressure was generally stronger than in England. An English Nonconformist minister coming out of Sunday morning service onto Sauchiehall Street was cautioned by a policeman for whistling on the sabbath. There were campaigns against Sunday trains and the Sunday postal service. Temperance feeling, often allied with sabbatarianism, was also powerful. Sunday closing was secured for Scotland in 1854. By comparison it was achieved for Ireland in 1878, for Wales in 1881 and for England never. The variety of agencies promoting temperance received an increasing volume of support from the churches as the century went on. Evangelicals exerted a major social influence.

### **The Broadening of Evangelicalism**

Evangelicalism itself was changing in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In a number of ways it was broadening. Theologically there was a liberalising trend. The forces at work have been catalogued as historical relativism, the moral criticism of

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doctrine, the challenge of science, optimism about human nature, greater tolerance, a preference for apologetic over dogmatism and knowledge of other religions. Most could be summed up as the effects of Romantic cultural trends on theology. Evangelicals were influenced. Henry Drummond, the most effective evangelist among students in late nineteenth-century Scotland, incorporated evolutionary social theory in his sermons. Many ministers began to call themselves 'Liberal Evangelicals'. They included John Cairns of the United Presbyterians and, by the 1920s, A.L. Drummond the historian. The trend was reinforced by liturgical developments that also reflected Romantic taste. Beginning with Robert Lee of Old Greyfriars in 1857, new fashions of kneeling for prayers and reading from service books gradually spread. The so-called 'Scoto-Catholics' were often those most liberally inclined in theology. Yet many who introduced higher liturgical practice remained loyal to Evangelical convictions. The process was one of broadening, not repudiation.

Likewise there was an intensification of attention to social questions. Between 1891 and 1896 five out of six moderators of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland dwelt in their addresses on social issues. It has been common to see the emerging social gospel as a movement in conflict with Evangelicalism. Again, however, there was in reality no antithesis. The early impetus for the social gospel came from the moral crusading temper of Evangelicalism. Scott Matheson, a social radical among United Presbyterians, retained an evangelistic priority when he wrote about *The Church and Social Problems* in 1894. 'Social reform', he declared, 'ought never to draw the Church aside from her proper work of saving men.'<sup>2</sup> Yet the social gossellers did sometimes allow their initial Evangelicalism to be eroded. It came to be believed by a few of them that sin could be eliminated from society by human effort. Furthermore the energy of the churches in the Edwardian period was beginning to be diverted from distinctively religious activities, such as prayer meetings, to programmes of social welfare. The concern with social issues did contribute to sapping the vitality of the churches in the early twentieth century.

### Conservative Currents

If a more liberal theology, higher liturgical practice and increased attention to social questions broadened Evangelicalism, there was a simultaneous counter-current tending in a conservative direction. Revivalism had played a significant role in Scotland since the 1840s.

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2 A. Scott Matheson, *The Church and Social Problems* (London, 1893), p. v.

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The American evangelist Charles Finney taught that careful 'scientific' planning could produce revivals. A number of candidates for the Congregational ministry were persuaded and formed a new denomination, the Evangelical Union, to use his techniques. It was in the van of evangelistic novelty until its merger with the Congregational Union in 1897. A wave of revival, some of it more traditional and spontaneous, swept across the land in 1859-60. A number of lay initiatives such as the Perth Convention followed in its wake. The impact of the American evangelists Moody and Sankey in 1874-75 was, if anything, even greater, especially in Glasgow. Their legacy of undenominational evangelism was to find permanent form in the Bible Training Institute of that city. Uncontrived spiritual movements were to continue into the twentieth century with the Jock Troup Revival of the Moray Coast in 1921-22 and the Hebrides Revival of the early 1950s, but they were increasingly confined to remote traditional communities. Organised revivalism, on the other hand, was a major determinant of the ethos of much early twentieth-century conservative Evangelicalism.

There were other contributory factors. The Keswick movement, teaching that sanctification, like justification, is by faith alone, made a significant impact on Scotland, though chiefly after 1900. The Bridge of Allan National Convention was begun in 1892, the Scottish Northern Convention at Strathpeffer in 1931. Premillennialism, the expectation of the second coming before the millennium, was often allied with Keswick teaching. Its leading Scottish advocate in the mid-nineteenth century was Horatius Bonar, the hymn-writer. Much of its subsequent diffusion was due to the work of the Christian Brethren, who became a major Evangelical presence in the industrial west of Scotland. There also sprang up a series of new missionary organisations upholding the faith principle. The China Inland Mission, the Heart of Africa Mission, the Regions Beyond Missionary Union and many others dispensed with money-raising structures, believing that missionaries should go out in faith that their financial needs would be met. The Faith Mission, originally very similar to the Salvation Army in holding holiness to be a second decisive experience of grace, undertook extensive home missionary work. All these movements were pietistic, undenominational and predominantly lay. They contributed to the emergence of a conservative form of Evangelicalism in the twentieth century.

It is remarkable that in Scotland the liberal and conservative tendencies did not come to blows in the inter-War years. In America this was the period of the Modernist-Fundamentalist controversies, which had their echoes in England, Wales and Ireland. In Scotland there was no organised Fundamentalist group. The one Scottish Fundamentalist controversy, among the Baptists, did not take place

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until the 1940s. Conservative Evangelicals were generally irenic and co-operated with their more liberal fellows. Thus Fraser of Tain, one of the leading conservatives of the earlier twentieth century, was scrupulous to play his full part in presbytery affairs. The denominations did not make conservatives feel out of place. When the United Free Church reunited with the Church of Scotland in 1929, the event was marked by a Forward Movement designed to spread the faith and recall church members to Christian devotion. It was natural for Daniel Lamont, professor of practical theology at Edinburgh, a prominent Scottish supporter of the conservative Inter-Varsity Fellowship, to be chosen moderator of the General Assembly in 1936. The national church was an evangelistic church.

### **Present and Prospect**

That remained true after the Second World War. The war stimulated a return to basic values. In 1946 the Church of Scotland issued a report urging renewed mission, 'Into All the World'. Even the Episcopal Primus declared in 1947 that his church had not taken evangelism sufficiently seriously. 'Christian Commandos' descended on parishes. D.P. Thomson, for the Church of Scotland Home Board, encouraged team missions. The 1950s was the decade of 'Tell Scotland', co-ordinated by Tom Allan. In its middle year, 1955, more than a million people heard the young American Billy Graham preach at the Kelvin Hall, Glasgow. In the following year Glasgow church attendance was some 10,000 higher than in the year before. After another year attendance was still some 5,000 up. Parish-centred work continued. In Aberdeen, William Still, beginning his long ministry in 1945, created a model of effective church growth. There was a remarkable range of evangelistic endeavour in post-war Scotland.

Yet since 1959 church membership in Scotland has fallen drastically. In that year it constituted 59% of the population over 20 years of age; by 1984 the proportion was down to 37%. The rise of 'the permissive society' in the 1960s symbolised a decay of Christian values. The fall in church membership, on its Protestant side, however, should be seen primarily as part of a long-term process. It was the ebbing of the Evangelical tide that had flowed so strongly in the nineteenth century. Perhaps there are contemporary signs of a resurgence in Bible-teaching ministries, charismatic renewal and the fact that some three-quarters of the candidates for the Church of Scotland's ministry are conservative Evangelicals. Certainly the story of Scotland's Evangelical past has an important implication. Many sociologists have assumed that Western societies have steadily become more secular since the Reformation. Religion, they suppose, has gradually become less socially salient. The assumption is invalid. Church attendance and the Christian tone of society at large both

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**increased during the nineteenth century. The process of secularisation is not necessarily unidirectional. It can be reversed. Evangelicalism has transformed Scotland in the past and may do so again.**

## ARTICLE REVIEW

### CELTIC CHRISTIANITY: WHAT IS IT, AND WHEN WAS IT?

DONALD MEEK, UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

*Review of James P. Mackey (ed.), An Introduction to Celtic Christianity*

(T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1989; 440pp., £17.95; ISBN 0 567 09507 X)

Celtic matters are in fashion these days. At various levels of awareness, both physical and spiritual, a sense of Celticness or Celtic identity, real or imagined, is awakening. In the deepest Western (and neo-Eastern?) recesses of ethnic, cultural and religious consciousness (the 'in' word), a search for Celtic roots and origins is in progress, based apparently on the belief that 'to be Celtic is to be different' or 'to be Celtic is to be pure' or 'to be Celtic is to discover our true selves'. In a world which is producing all too many look-alike figures, divested of any distinctive features, the quest for Celticity is enjoying a new lease of life. Pilgrims on this new, but age-old, *peregrinatio* believe that, among the Celts, living on the periphery of human existence, the last sparks of true life-fire are to be found. When discovered and absorbed, these sparks, it is hoped, may yet impart a new glow to the jaded embers of modern, ersatz society.

This quest is particularly marked in the religious sphere. Celtic prayers and patterns of prayer are in vogue; pilgrimages to former Celtic monasteries and holy places (e.g. Iona) are attracting participants. In these expressions of religious devotion, in word or in stone, lies a new 'spirituality', or, some would say, the potential for the recovery of an old, unsullied spirituality, forged before the theologians and philosophers of the Middle Ages confused the minds of the faithful with unhelpful dogmas and complexities. This notional primordium is so potent that it embraces, for very different reasons, members of the Free Church of Scotland and the Roman Catholic Church. There are those in the Free Church of Scotland who would look to 'the old Celtic Church' as their *alma mater*, possessing the true gospel before medieval Romanist influence pervaded her purity; her monastic exponents are commended without reserve; in the words of a Free Church professor, they were 'fine Christian missionaries' (J.D. MacMillan, in M. Campbell, *Gleanings*

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of *Highland Harvest* (Tain, 1989), pp. 129–31). A similar perspective is found among Roman Catholics, who are inclined to see the 'Celtic Church' as a reservoir of gentle, clamourless, pre-Protestant orthodoxy. In the words of the editor of the present volume, such seekers find in 'Celtic Christianity' a rich well of inspiration, there to be utilised at that critical moment 'when years of feeding upon largely teutonic philosophy began at last to fail to refresh my spirit and was beginning to fail my Christian faith'.

For all such, there is a peculiar attractiveness in those purposeful saints of the early Celtic era, as they defy the authorities of their own day, establish their power bases and influence whole nations. Transferred across the centuries, they seem to become the role-models for those who seek fresh beginnings. Columba (appropriately re-mythologised) is, of course, central to the construction of the modern Iona Community. Yet not all Celtic saints had the social and political panache of Columba. World-weary pilgrims who prefer contemplation to rigorous travel and pushy politics will find their soul-friends in those quiet Celtic hermits who, launching their coracles on the shore of eternity, took to the *desertum* in the ocean in order to deepen their awareness of God. In looking to these men, their admirers appear to stand on the threshold of a New Age of the Celtic saints, offering many things to many people.

There is a very real danger that pilgrims on this rediscovered Celtic way will see in 'Celtic Christianity' a mirror-image of their own desires for a meaningful encounter with 'spirituality', with 'wholeness', with 'being'. But what in reality is this 'Celtic Christianity' which is so magnetic, and so all-embracing, in its pull? What are its historical and theological parameters? Does it have a central core which can be defined? And in what terms? If it existed, where and when? Does it still exist, and in what form? Has it changed across the centuries, but has it retained its core unaltered? All of these questions thrust themselves at the mind on the first approach to this solid collection of essays, entitled *An Introduction to Celtic Christianity*. Expectations are raised that one will find definitions and examples, and, ultimately, an understanding of that dynamism which has led to this continuing, and seemingly endless, rediscovery of Celtic treasures.

Perhaps the only section of this book which fulfils the 'introductory' note of the title is Professor Mackey's stimulating 'Introduction', subtitled 'Is There a Celtic Christianity?' Professor Mackey is in no doubt that there is, or that there may be; the difficulty lies in rescuing the Celts and their Christianity from the preconceptions of other historians and theologians, who have perceived them as barbarians or have belittled their achievements, and persist in beating the Celts with Graeco-Roman swords. The point is

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well made. But what are the objective tests that can be applied as we seek to identify this truly Celtic Christianity? How have those who are already giving the Celts a 'new deal' come to appreciate their real glories? Is there not a danger, present in all historical quests, that we find what we look for? At this point Professor Mackey leans hard on his personal experience, and seeks the definitions within himself: 'I use no other criterion than that of reverberation – whatever seems to reverberate within some depths of my own Celtic consciousness, as that too has been formed by my learning and use from my earliest childhood of the Irish language – that repository of a total and ancient culture...' Here the problem is that 'consciousness' and 'reverberations' are all too variable, and subjectivism, even romanticism, is inclined to take over. The 'Introduction' is thus impressionistic, conveying the editor's personal view, and attempting to fit the subsequent essays into this framework.

In opening up the subject in this way, Professor Mackey does make it very clear that his book has a wholly exploratory, or questing, aim. He does not provide in any sense an introductory volume which sketches the history of 'Celtic Christianity' from its beginnings through to its vanishing point – if indeed, from his perspective, it has vanished. Rather, he presents a series of snap-shots of Christianity, in different forms, and at very different periods, in lands which we now perceive to be (or to have been), to varying degrees, Celtic (Ireland, Wales and Scotland). He begins with St Patrick (a good place to start!), and ends (chronologically) in the twentieth century with Seán O Ríordáin and James Joyce (a mind-blowing 'conclusion'!). From these essays, by different authors, he seeks to establish very tentatively some guiding lights to direct us in our voyage round the Celtic spiritual landscape. Celtic Christianity, in his view, is characterised by: (1) 'the nearness of the spirit world' (as argued in Noel O'Donoghue's eloquent essay on 'St Patrick's Breastplate'); (2) the absolute reality, and interpenetration, of the spiritual world and the natural world (the latter being 'altogether good and salvific' for 'the Celtic mentality'); (3) the immanence of God, in a creation which has no 'original sin' (since this is seen as the invention of 'that dark North African, Augustine'), with the possibility of a 'characteristically Celtic theology of nature, sin and redemption'; and (4) the Celts' 'inherent ability to assimilate and to enrich whatever the peoples they encountered had to offer', in short their 'ability to adapt'.

Some of Professor Mackey's definitions of the Celtic core, thus perceived in the body of the book, may not be uniquely distinctive of 'Celtic spirituality', since the Christian movements which influenced the Celtic regions had a remarkable diversity of forms and origins. Indeed, some of these allegedly 'Celtic' characteristics may be found

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in other types of religious experience; the people of South America have produced an expression of Roman Catholicism which is replete with cultural adaptation. Other definitions too tend to sit uneasily with the evidence which the book itself contains. It does look as if later 'Celts' (if one may persist in using a relatively modern, and potentially misleading, portmanteau term), especially after 1500 in Wales and Scotland, did in fact relish the tutelage of the menacing, 'dark North African', and found great need of a Redeemer and Saviour from their sins. Indeed, if the Celtic *Lebensraum* was, in reality, devoid of such concepts, and if an awareness of God's judgement on sin, whether original or inherited or acquired, was not present before 1500, it makes it all the harder to explain why the Scottish Highlands and Wales absorbed such an intense type of Reformed spirituality, which was periodically invigorated by immensely deep awakenings or 'revivals'. The essay by Terence McCaughey on 'Protestantism and Scottish Highland Culture', and particularly Tudur Jones's piece on 'The Evangelical Revival in Wales: A Study in Spirituality', keep the balance right in respect of such thinking. The difficulty with these two fine essays is, however, that they seem strangely out of time relative to what has normally been regarded as the active period of 'Celtic Christianity', from about A.D. 400 to 1100.

In assessing 'Celtic Christianity', and in determining any original, uniquely distinctive core, the most critical factor to bear in mind is indeed that which has been identified last by Professor Mackey, namely the manner in which the Celts have absorbed, and adapted for themselves, new religious and philosophical concepts across the centuries, and it is perhaps this, along with other factors, that makes the search for 'Celtic Christianity' such a dangerous and elusive experience. Far from being isolated Shangri Las in the west, the Celtic areas of the British Isles have experienced invasion after invasion, both physical and spiritual, which have altered their complexions beyond the recognition of succeeding generations. Right from the start, there must be a critical awareness of the immense social, cultural, religious and political pressures (plural) that have shaped and re-shaped the Celtic countries (plural) across the centuries (equally plural); such awareness must set time-limits, recognise different religious bodies within the Celtic folds, and look scrupulously at available sources, recognising their validity only for the periods to which they belong. Extrapolation beyond these limits can result in confusion. We are dealing with different expressions of Christianity within the Celtic lands at different periods in history, and quite probably we will perceive not one form of Celtic Christianity, but several, in different Celtic contexts. To catch any permanent features, found in all Celtic countries (Wales, Cornwall,

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Brittany, Ireland, Scotland, Man) we have to use a net with a very fine mesh. Even for the period before 1066, this diversity may exist, and we may have to ask whether the initial concept of a single, uniform 'Celtic Church', the cradle of any 'Celtic Christianity', is itself defensible (see Kathleen Hughes, 'The Celtic Church: Is This a Valid Concept?', *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies* 1 (Summer 1981), pp. 1-20).

It is the strength of this book that it raises all of these questions as it takes us sweeping, in a rich variety of styles, through time and space. What it shows is a continuous recreation of, and realignment to, new expressions of Christianity within the Celtic lands. With every recreation and realignment, the possibility of retaining a distinctively Celtic core must surely be diminished. There are, of course, survivals from one period to another, especially in ecclesiastical place-names and dedications to saints (as in the names of churches). There are also quite staggering similarities of thought which appear to bridge the centuries and may delude us into believing that the continuum is less fractured than it is. When reading R.P.C. Hanson's account of Saint Patrick, I found myself thinking of Dugald Buchanan, the eighteenth-century Gaelic hymnwriter whose spiritual diary is beguilingly reminiscent of Patrick's *Confession*. There are indeed times when early Celtic saint and late Highland Calvinist seem to share an identical theological base. At other times, however, the differences are stark, but they are nevertheless shot through with correspondences. What, for example, does the modern Highland Calvinist (featured, rather disapprovingly, in McCaughey's essay) have in common with the eighth-century Culdee reform movement, which appeared in Ireland under the leadership of Maelruain of Tallaght? Peter O'Dwyer's essay ('Celtic Monks and Culdee Reform') shows us that the Culdees had many features which would today be identified with orthodox Roman Catholicism, but (although this is not mentioned by O'Dwyer) it would seem that the movement produced one of the strictest tracts on sabbath observance known in western Europe, namely the *Cáin Domnaig* ('The Law of Sunday') – a tract which was edited by Professor Donald MacLean of the Free Church of Scotland in 1926. As a result, Highland Sabbatarians have often appealed to the 'Celtic Church' (singular, of course, and undivided into movements) in defence of their position.

If these particular correspondences across time teach us anything about the spiritual response of the Celtic peoples, it is that, at all times and in all places, some, at least, had a tendency to embrace a deeply serious form of religious experience. They were by no means as 'laid back' about God's (assumed) presence as Professor Mackey might have us believe. They were in deadly earnest about the search for him. Others, of course, went the other way, and made a liberal

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accommodation with secular culture, as Terence McCaughey's essay on 'Protestantism and Scottish Highland Culture' makes clear. But is even this a peculiarly 'Celtic' response? Is it even peculiarly 'Christian' when it comes to the bit? Does Islam not show some of the same tendencies, in the battle between 'fundamentalists' and 'moderates'?

In spite of the correspondences, however, it is the reshaping of religious experience, and the resulting differences, that this book underscores. It is amusing to note Hanson's impatience with the reshaping of Patrick and 'the growth of a large jungle of popular nonsense associated with his name'. I felt sorry that Hanson had not shown us more of that jungle, which may be a better reflection of the character of 'Celtic Christianity' (as a total entity) than the clinical reconstruction of the historical St Patrick. Glanmor Williams' essay on 'Medieval Wales and the Reformation' shows that Protestants were good at reconstructing, or hijacking, the past to suit their own ends, because they were very much aware of the *differences* between themselves and previous generations. We have to read the opposite interpretation into the special pleading. Rather amusingly, Williams himself swallows the bait, and concludes by asserting that these same Reformers preserved the 'autonomy of the early Celtic Church and the virtues of its leading figures'. He concludes by assuring us that the Roman Catholics could have done the same if social and political circumstances had favoured their ascendancy.

So much for 'virtues' and other non-specific concepts, but what about the doctrines of these early 'leading figures'? Were these preserved too? This book, on the whole, has little to say about doctrine (partly because potential contributors were a little tardy in this area), and it gives a prominent place only to Pelagius, in M. Forthomme Nicholson's chapter, 'Celtic Theology: Pelagius'. As the title of this chapter implies, the British theologian and 'heretic', Pelagius, is seen as the prime representative of *proper* 'Celtic Christianity', although he was disowned by representatives of the Celtic Church(es) long before 1066. On the other hand, Tudur Jones, quoting Professor R. M. Jones, tells us confidently that

'Augustinian theology (at least with the exception of its ideas about the nature of the Church) has provided the main highway for Welsh thought...from the time when Welsh literature was born across thirteen hundred years until the middle of the nineteenth century.' This suggestion takes us right back to the Age of the Saints in Celtic Christianity.

Surely the point here is that one cannot build up Pelagius at the expense of Augustine: differences in theological perspective were more than apparent even in the era of the real Celtic Church(es). Celts enjoyed Pelagius, and had a fondness for Augustine too. But

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even if Augustine's influence can be detected across the centuries, does this give any grounds for believing that the continuum is complete back to the Age of the Celtic Saints? Was not Augustinianism revived and reinvigorated at strategic junctures in the history of the Church (e.g. at the time of the Reformation)?

The search for Celtic roots and Celtic continua throughout the centuries appears to have caused some uneasy tensions for some writers. Tudur Jones, having written splendidly about the 'The Evangelical Revival in Wales', feels constrained to take some 'backward looks', helped along by the thoughts of medieval mystics. This blunts the edge of his sharp portrayal of the concerns of Howel Harris and William Williams, whose hymns, Jones tells us memorably, were not 'sentimental lyrics for those who hoped to go to heaven in a rocking-chair'. On the other hand, Martin MacNamara, in his piece on 'Celtic Scriptures', expresses serious doubts about the validity of applying the term 'Celtic', and settles more happily on the side of the Irish Church. MacNamara's warnings and questionings come right at the end of the book. A couple of others, notably Hilary Richardson in her chapter on 'Celtic Art', are rather less than cautious, and make sweeping generalisations. Richardson speculates: 'If the native tongue had been exploited by the Church [in Wales] from the earliest times, as in Armenia for instance, a solidarity might have been maintained; but it was not to be.' Armenia is a bit remote. Where does this leave the evidence of those homilies preached in Old and Early Middle Irish by clerics in Ireland, and available in part in such major works as Atkinson's *Passions and Homilies from Leabhar Breac*? As for Wales itself, could it be that our view is distorted by lack of sources, or merely by failure to understand the existing evidence?

On the whole, it can be said that the essays in this book are at their best and most convincing when the writers have a clear grasp of primary sources, especially those in the original Celtic languages (from which, after all, they have taken the concept of 'Celticness'). Thus Diarmuid O Laoghaire's essay on 'Prayers and Hymns in the Vernacular' carries conviction because he quotes extensively from the prayers and hymns, and, while I would not share the same theological presuppositions as the author, I found myself agreeing with both his argument and his method in his delightfully translucent presentation. Similarly O'Donoghue's piece on 'St Patrick's Breastplate' supplies a text (in translation), and consequently catches form and spirit in a memorable manner. Remoteness from original Celtic sources tends to give an exotic, Yeatsian flavour to Thomas Finan's 'Hiberno-Latin Christian Literature', where the 'Latin' takes precedence over the 'Hiberno-'. Joseph O'Leary, in 'The Spiritual Upshot of *Ulysses*', has no link with any source-document in Irish, and has created his own

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world of 'contemporary Celtic spirituality', made all the harder to penetrate by his Joycean use of language. Yet closeness to sources in Irish or Welsh can be a misleading indicator of genuine 'Celticness'. Only the most elastic of Celtic parameters could allow the admission of the twentieth-century Cork poet, Seán O Ríordáin, as an exemplar of Celtic spirituality, in spite of the modern Irish sources used in Robert Welch's essay.

This book, which is thus very wide in its scope, contains a couple of mini-books or chapters that are crying out to be expanded as books: for example, the late Cardinal O Fiaich's chapter on 'Irish Monks on the Continent' (summarising some of his earlier scholarship). Pre-eminently in need of expansion is Terence McCaughey's piece on 'Protestantism and Scottish Highland Culture'. Although Celtic preoccupations drop far out of sight in this chapter, it is none the worse for that. Yet, concentrated as it is, its sweep is too broad, and it tends not to distinguish clearly enough between the different types of Protestantism which were, and still are, present in the Highlands. Overall, however, it is a very useful survey of how religious themes penetrated social and literary awareness. The author's parting shot – that the espousal of an historical approach to Scripture would 'liberate people from an anachronistic and slavish relationship to their own past' – seems to overlook the (very Celtic?) fact that supernaturalism is what Highlanders look for in their religious experience – and perhaps in their secular experience too. I suspect that a sermon on Deutero-Isaiah would not be greeted with much enthusiasm in Crossbost, Kilmuir or Scarista.

In conclusion, it has to be said that this book is not the beginners' introduction to Celtic Christianity that its title suggests. It lacks the clear articulation of basic information which one might expect in an introductory volume. (Beginners may find that their initial questions are satisfied more readily by Kathleen Hughes and Ann Hamlin, *The Modern Traveller to the Early Irish Church*, London, 1977, and Siân Victory, *The Celtic Church in Wales*, London, 1977.) Instead, it is a collection of essays, some being of a fairly specialised nature, and all of them covering their own ground on their own terms without a central integrating theme. The important, central theme which Professor Mackey identifies – the Celts' capacity to adapt themselves to new forms of religious experience, while retaining or re-employing aspects of their earlier culture – is not directly tackled in the essays, although several (especially those of Williams, Jones and McCaughey) move in that direction. Because of its varied nature, the collection will be best understood by the person who is already initiated, and who knows how to read the signals which are being emitted by each chapter. Discernment will be

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required in assessing the validity of the various cases that are presented. For the reader who exercises such discernment, however, this is a very stimulating and enjoyable book which demonstrates the initial dangers and rewards of searching for a specifically Celtic identity in religious experience. If Professor Mackey's aim is to provoke debate, discussion and future exploration, he has certainly provided an excellent starting-point.

# AN APPRAISAL OF C. S. LEWIS AND HIS INFLUENCE ON MODERN EVANGELICALISM

JOHN WILSON, MOTHERWELL

It is remarkable that, in our century, the most vigorous and popular defenders of historic Christianity have come from the laity. We have had G. K. Chesterton; Dorothy L. Sayers; T. S. Eliot; C. S. Lewis, and Malcolm Muggeridge. Unfortunately, most of them are considered suspect by the Evangelical community; Chesterton and Muggeridge ended up in the Roman Catholic Church and Eliot and Sayers were Anglo-Catholic. Only C. S. Lewis has been accepted – with qualifications – by Evangelicals. Lewis did not align himself to any ‘party’ within the church.

There are many facets to the talents and works of Lewis but I want to concentrate largely on his Christian apologetics. So I intend to consider Lewis the man, his theology and apologetics before attempting an appraisal and discussion of his influence.

## The Man

The facts about his life are well known. He was born in 1898 in Belfast and did not have a particularly happy childhood. Although brought up in a nominally Christian home, he became an atheist while still at school. By 1916 he could write:

I believe in no religion. There is absolutely no proof for any of them, and from a philosophical standpoint Christianity is not even the best. All religions, that is all mythologies, to give them their proper name, are merely man’s own invention.<sup>1</sup>

Although Lewis served, and was wounded, in the First World War he said little about his experiences there. He went back to Oxford with the ambition to be a poet. He was a brilliant student, gained a triple First, and in 1925 gained a fellowship to Magdalen College and so began his academic career. But there, over the years, he was forced to re-examine his atheism. God was after him. Indeed, in his own words, he felt the ‘unrelenting approach of Him whom I so earnestly desired not to meet’. Then, as he writes in his autobiography:

In the Trinity Term of 1929 I gave in, and admitted that God was God, and knelt and prayed: perhaps that night, the most dejected

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1 *They Stand Together (Letters to Arthur Greeves)*, (London and Glasgow, 1979), p. 135.

and reluctant convert in all England. . . . The Prodigal Son at least walked home on his own feet. But who can duly adore that Love which will open the high gates to a Prodigal who is brought in kicking, struggling, resentful, and darting his eyes in every direction for a chance to escape.<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps astonishingly, these moving words record a conversion to theism, not Christianity. He was still no Christian.

Various influences were now on him. Chesterton's *Everlasting Man* showed Lewis how all history led up to the coming of Christ. Barfield and Tolkien certainly were influential. As a lover of the old myths, Lewis thought the Gospels to be inferior myths and could not see how they could affect his life. He thought the Gospels were the old 'Dying God' story. Tolkien argued that this was indeed the 'Dying God' story but it was a real dying-God story with a precise location in history and with definite historical consequences. Lewis then – two years after becoming a theist – became a Christian in a rather undramatic way. He simply records that, on top of a bus, 'I was driven to Whipsnade Zoo one morning. When we set out I did not believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and when we reached the Zoo I did.'<sup>3</sup>

From then on, although he lived his life in academic circles, he achieved fame as a Christian apologist. Indeed, perhaps he is more popular today, twenty-five years after his death, than he was in life. C. S. Lewis is something of a cult figure today. There are C. S. Lewis Societies in various parts of the world and there seems to be no end of books by – or about – Lewis being published. Tolkien said that Lewis was the only writer he knew who had published more books after his death than he had in life. His being a cult figure means there is a temptation to take one of two positions. First, there are those who see him as the source of all wisdom and the fount of all truth. Secondly, there is the reaction – reject him out of hand because he is a mere cult figure. I do not think the truth about C. S. Lewis is to be found in either of these positions.

Finally, regarding Lewis the man, there is one other thing we should consider.

### **An Academic**

Lewis was a scholar. He had a first-class mind and was an authority in his own field of literature. Throughout his life he had many academic honours bestowed on him and he became Professor of Medieval Renaissance Literature at Cambridge.

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2 *Surprised By Joy* (London and Glasgow, 1955), pp. 182–3.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 189.

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As a literary scholar he wrote much on his subject and probably his greatest work is his *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century*. Christians generally are not interested in his books on literature but this is a book worth dipping into. It deals with the literature being produced during the English – and Scottish – Reformation and the new age that dawned then. Unlike some literary critics, he understood the importance of religion in that age and had an appreciation of the theology of the Reformers.

I do not want to spend much time on Lewis the literary scholar but, to help us appreciate the man, there are three things which should be said.

1. Lewis enjoyed literature and this comes through in all his works of criticism. As someone who is self educated, and loves literature, I must confess some critics frighten me. They make the reading of a poem or a novel a very serious, solemn and almost awesome task. Lewis never forgot that there can be a great deal of pleasure to be found in reading. His enthusiasm did not make him less a critic.

2. Lewis, the literary critic, suffered because of his Christian faith. He was obviously disliked, if not despised, by his academic colleagues because of his unashamed belief in supernatural Christianity. The fact that he was denied a chair at Oxford shows this. What academic would vote for a man who wrote *The Screwtape Letters* and *The Narnia Chronicles*?

3. Then we should not forget that Lewis spent so much time on Christian apologetics that his study of literature must have suffered. He probably would have written much more on literature if he had not expended so much time and energy defending the faith. Even T. S. Eliot wryly wondered: 'Does the Almighty really require such strenuous efforts of Dr Lewis to push Him back on the throne?'<sup>4</sup>

Lewis was an academic, a literary scholar who loved the old myths but he never made literature into an idol. As he wrote, 'But the Christian knows from the outset that the salvation of a single soul is more important than the production or preservation of all the epics and tragedies in the world . . .'.<sup>5</sup>

Lewis the man, the cult figure, was a scholar and a Christian. This leads me to a basic question for our appraisal.

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4 T. S. Eliot, quoted in J. Brabazon, *Dorothy L. Sayers: A Biography* (London and Glasgow, 1981), p. 234.

5 *Christian Reflections* (Grand Rapids, 1967), p. 10.

## What Was His Theology?

Before considering his theology I think we should remember one fact. Lewis had no formal theological education and was not a systematic theologian. Some criticisms which have been made against him, from both liberal and Evangelical camps, often ignore this fact. He was not a theologian. He never claimed to be.

In the preface to *Mere Christianity* he defends his intention of concentrating on the main doctrines of the faith and writes, regarding differences among Christians: 'the questions which divide Christians from one another often involve points of high theology or even ecclesiastical history, which ought never to be treated except by real experts. Sadly I should have been out of my depths in such waters; more in need of help myself than helping others.'<sup>6</sup> Then in the Preface to his book *The Problem of Pain* he wrote: 'If any real theologian reads these pages he will early see that they are the work of a layman and an amateur.'<sup>7</sup>

Lewis saw there was a need to translate Christian doctrines into ordinary language so, when a liberal, a Dr Pittinger, attacked him, Lewis responded: 'If real theologians had tackled this laborious work of translation about a hundred years ago, when they began to lose touch with the people (for whom Christ died) there would have been no place for me.'<sup>8</sup>

Lewis was no theologian but I should add this; he enjoyed theology. As he wrote in a letter, 'When Waring, Tolkien, Williams and I meet for a pint in Bird Street, the fun is often so fast and furious and the company probably think we are talking bawdy when, in fact, we are very likely talking theology.'<sup>9</sup>

Lewis was no theologian but obviously, as a Christian, he had a theology. What was his theology? He saw himself as an ordinary member of the Church of England, neither 'High' nor 'Low' nor anything else. He says: 'About my beliefs there is no secret. . . . They are written in the Common-Prayer Book.'<sup>10</sup> But this does not tell us much: probably the most liberal of bishops happily accept the Common-Prayer Book, no doubt mentally re-interpreting it as they read. I want to look at what Lewis believed about the Scriptures, the person of Christ, salvation and mankind's eternal destiny.

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6 *Mere Christianity* (London and Glasgow, 1955), p. 6.

7 *The Problem of Pain* (London and Glasgow, 1957), p. viii.

8 *Timeless at Heart* (London and Glasgow, 1987), p. 117.

9 *They Stand Together*, p. 501.

10 *Mere Christianity*, p. 8.

## 1. The Scriptures

Regarding the Bible, Lewis was no fundamentalist or conservative Evangelical. He believed the Old Testament contained, as he put it 'fabulous elements'. He saw stories such as Noah and Jonah as 'fabulous' but considered the court history of King David as probably as reliable as the court history of Louis XIV. But, when we come to the New Testament, he has a much higher regard. As he puts it: 'The New Testament consists mostly of teaching, not of narrative at all: but where it is narrative, it is in my opinion, historical.'<sup>11</sup>

It is an interesting fact that he wrote little about the Old Testament. As far as I know the only work of his based on the Old Testament was his *Reflections on the Psalms*. This book shows he read the Old Testament and actually encouraged others to do so. He suggested that one of the rewards of such reading is that, 'You keep on discovering more and more what a tissue of quotations from it the New Testament is; how constantly our Lord repeated, reinforced, continued, refined and sublimated the Judaic ethics, how very seldom he introduced a novelty.'<sup>12</sup>

I think we can say that Lewis, like many Evangelical Christians, was basically a New Testament Christian. He probably would have agreed with Dorothy L. Sayers who said: 'If you stick to the Gospels and the Creeds you can't go far wrong.'<sup>13</sup>

## 2. The Person of Christ

There can be no doubt Lewis believed in the divinity of Jesus Christ. He often attacks the idea that Jesus was a mere teacher or example. Several times throughout his apologetic writings he uses the argument that, when you consider what Jesus did and said, he must have been a lunatic, a liar or Lord. He was in no doubt he was Lord.

Lewis marshals his arguments for the divinity of Christ in a letter to a friend who had doubts. He wrote:

I think the great difficulty is this: if he was not God, who or what was He? In Matthew 28:19 you already get the baptismal formula 'In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost'. Who is this 'Son'. Is the Holy Ghost a man? If not, does a man 'send him'? (See John 15:26) In Colossians 1:17 Christ is 'before all things and by Him all things consist'. What sort of man is this? I leave out the obvious place at the beginning of John's Gospel. Take something less obvious. When He weeps over Jerusalem (Matthew 23) why does He suddenly say (v. 34) 'I send unto you prophets

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11 *Timeless at Heart*, p. 42.

12 *Reflections on the Psalms* (London and Glasgow, 1961), p. 28.

13 *Dorothy L. Sayers: A Biography*, p. 202.

and wise men'? Who could say this except either God or a lunatic? Who is this man who goes about forgiving sins? Or what about Mark 2:18-19? What man can announce that simply because he is present acts of penitence, such as fasting, are 'off'. Who can give the school a half holiday except the headmaster?

The doctrine of Christ's divinity seems to me not something stuck on which you can unstuck but something that peeps out at every point so that you have to unravel the whole web to get rid of it. Of course you may reject some of these passages as unauthentic but I could do the same to yours if I cared to play the game.<sup>14</sup>

There can be no doubt that Lewis firmly believed in the divinity of our Lord.

### 3. The Way of Salvation

It has been suggested that Lewis says little about justification by faith. This is true but I would argue that Lewis was an apologist, not an evangelist. It seems to me that Lewis did hold to the position that it is only through Christ we can find salvation. More specifically, he argued that only through the cross is redemption possible. But he refused to go further. He said: 'The central Christian belief is that Christ's death has somehow put us right with God and given us a fresh start.'<sup>15</sup> He goes on to argue that Christians differ on the meaning of the cross but all accept it works. He uses the analogy of eating: we may know nothing of theories of nutrition and nourishment but know a meal will do us good. So, 'A man may eat his dinner without understanding exactly how food nourishes him. A man can accept what Christ has done without knowing how it works: indeed he certainly would not know how it works until he has accepted it.'<sup>16</sup>

I believe it can be firmly argued that Lewis, without working out the theological implications, definitely believed that salvation is only through Jesus Christ and his death.

### 4. Our Eternal Destiny

Lewis certainly believed in heaven. Indeed he argued that we do not think, or talk, about heaven enough. As he puts it:

If you read history you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next. . . .

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14 *They Stand Together*, p. 503.

15 *Mere Christianity*, p. 54.

16 *Ibid.*, p. 55.

It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this. Aim at heaven and you will get earth 'thrown in': aim at earth and you will get neither.<sup>17</sup>

Lewis was certainly 'heavenly minded' as his works show. But he was no universalist. Regarding the thought of hell he wrote:

There is no doctrine which I would more willingly remove from Christianity than this, if it lay in my power. But it has the full support of Scripture and, specially, our Lord's own words; it has always been held by Christendom; and it has the support of reason.<sup>18</sup>

That is a good quartet of reasons for believing something: Scripture, especially the words of our Lord, a common belief in Christendom, and the support of reason. Then Lewis presents, what seems to me, to be an unanswerable argument against universalism.

In the long run, the answer to those who object to the doctrine of hell is itself a question: 'What are you asking God to do?' To wipe away their past sins and, at all costs, to give them a fresh start, smoothing away every difficulty and offering every miraculous help? But he has done so, on Calvary. To forgive them? But they will not be forgiven. To leave them alone? Alas, I am afraid that is what he does.<sup>19</sup>

There can be no doubt that Lewis believed in heaven and hell and this means he had a high regard for individuals, seeing them as possible gods or goddesses or eventually creatures of nightmare horror. For him, as indeed for all Christians, there are no ordinary people. All are immortal – as he puts it 'immortal horrors or everlasting splendours'.

In all this, apart from his view of some of the Old Testament, we should have no problem in calling him 'Brother'. But it is not as simple as that – nothing ever is. Those with sensitive noses for doctrinal purity can detect whiffs of false doctrine in the life and works of C. S. Lewis. Certainly, at least in the latter part of his life, he had regular confessions, prayed for the dead, and believed in some sort of purgatory. This belief in purgatory was a strange aberration and added to his agony on the death of his wife, Joy. He wrote, in that strangely moving, and brutally honest, book, *A Grief Observed*: 'How do I know all her anguish is past? I never believed before – I thought it immensely improbable – that the faithfulest soul could leap straight into perfection and peace the moment death

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17 *Ibid.*, p. 116.

18 *The Problem of Pain*, p. 106.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 116.

has rattled in the throat. It would be wishful thinking to take up that belief now.'<sup>20</sup>

I think there are two things we can say about these areas where we believe Lewis had been led astray and was not following the plain teaching of Scripture. First, in his writings Lewis concentrated on the main doctrines of the faith and did not teach confession, praying for the dead or purgatory. He nowhere suggests that these are among the essentials of the faith. Secondly, Lewis tended to disarm his critics. In *Mere Christianity* he compared the church to a house with many rooms. He advised:

When you have reached your own room, be kind to those who have chosen different doors and to those still in the hall. If they are wrong they need your prayers all the more; if they are your enemies, then you are under orders to pray for them. That is one of the rules common to the whole house.<sup>21</sup>

Regarding the main doctrines of the faith – the Trinity, divinity of Christ, salvation through his death, and the eternal reality of heaven and hell – in all these areas Lewis is in agreement with the conservative position. Any differences are not in the substance of the faith.

## The Apologist

I want now to turn to Lewis the Christian apologist. The first thing we must note is that he was defending supernatural Christianity at a time when it was not socially or intellectually acceptable. In the climate of the Thirties the intellectuals were bowing to the new triune god of Marx, Lenin and Stalin. The whole scientific and philosophical spirit of the age was against traditional Christian beliefs. Even the theological climate was against the historicity of the Gospels. Bultmann and his disciples reigned supreme. It was an age which, as Chesterton found, 'In all the welter of inconsistent and incompatible heresies the one and only unpardonable heresy was orthodoxy.'<sup>22</sup>

Lewis was that sort of heretic and was writing at a time when the Evangelical community appeared to have no voice. Then, when you consider who first published his books – Bles, Bodley Head, Faber, Oxford and Cambridge University Press – his achievement is all the more remarkable. These are not the sort of publishers you go to for books on historical Christianity. There was a sense in which Lewis taught himself to be a popular apologist for the faith. After giving some lectures on the radio, later published as *Mere Christianity*,

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20 *A Grief Observed* (London, 1964), p. 35.

21 *Mere Christianity*, p. 12.

22 G. K. Chesterton *Autobiography*, (London, 1936), p. 178.

Lewis was invited to give some occasional talks to the men in the RAF. The first lecture on Christianity he gave was a failure. It depressed him but he took comfort that once God used an ass to convert a prophet.

He then applied himself to the task of communicating the Christian faith and, I believe, mastered the art. I want to divide his apologetics into two: Argumentative and Imaginative.

### **Argumentative Apologetics**

As a scholar used to discussing and arguing with students and academics Lewis had to adapt to a totally different audience. He recognized that the problem of communicating to the uneducated lay with the communicator. This was a challenge but, as he said, 'Any fool can use learned language. The vernacular is the real test.' In this connection he said an interesting and challenging thing: 'I have come to the conclusion that if you cannot translate your thoughts into uneducated language, then your thoughts are confused.'<sup>23</sup> But he did not talk down to people. He asserted: 'Uneducated people are not irrational people. I have found they will endure, and can follow, quite a lot of sustained argument if you go slowly. Often, indeed, the novelty of it (for they have seldom met it before) delights them.'<sup>24</sup>

It seems to me that this was why Lewis was such a success as a Christian apologist. He treated people as rational creatures able to follow a sensible argument. He did not use theological language. Indeed it is remarkable how seldom he actually quotes Scripture, but he still gets the Christian message across. I suspect that, in our twentieth century, that is a rare and valuable gift.

There are probably two great barriers against propagating the Word of God today: the refusal to accept the supernatural and the lack of any sense of sin. Lewis was a thorough-going supernaturalist. He made no apology for believing in the miraculous. Indeed he appealed to ministers and divinity students:

Do not attempt to water Christianity down. There must be no pretence that you can have it with the supernatural left out. So far as I can see Christianity is precisely the one religion from which the miraculous cannot be separated. You must frankly argue for supernaturalism from the very outset.<sup>25</sup>

Elsewhere he argued that if you try to preach a Christianity which denies miracles you will make your hearers either Roman Catholic or atheists. So, in his writings, he never apologises for the supernatural in the Christian faith.

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23 *Ibid.*, p. 24.

24 *Ibid.*, p. 25.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 25.

Then Lewis had a sense of sin. Indeed his view on how to deal with this problem seems to me wise and relevant. He argued that there is no use talking to people about great sins – most of them have no experience of such things. He said,

In my experience if one begins from the sins that have been one's chief problem during the last week, one is often very very surprised at the way this shaft goes home. . . . we must get away from public affairs and crime and bring them down to brass tacks – to the whole network of spite, greed, envy, unfairness and the conceit in the lives of 'ordinary decent' people like themselves (and ourselves).<sup>26</sup>

This advice is real wisdom. It is comforting to hear of the sins of the rich and the powerful; such things encourage the prayer of being thankful that we are not as other men! But when challenged about pride, greed, envy, spite that I find in my own heart, that is a different story.

I believe this emphasis on what are sometimes called 'petty sins' is important. This was one of the criticisms made against *The Screwtape Letters*. At a time when Europe was aflame with war and Nazism was practising evil on a continental scale, Lewis was writing about greed, gluttony, selfishness and spiritual pride. But in this Lewis was wiser than his critics. As Screwtape advises the young devil:

It does not matter how small the sins are provided that their cumulative effect is to edge the man away from the Light and out into the Nothing. Murder is no better than cards if cards can do the trick. Indeed the safest road to Hell is the gradual one, the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts.<sup>27</sup>

This is something all Christians should know and all preachers practise. The sin which is the true reality is not found in newspaper headlines but is in our own hearts.

Any apologist, particularly in the twentieth century, has to fight on two fronts. There are enemies within as well as without the camp. So Lewis, with his supernatural religion, his belief in the divinity of Christ, the reality of sin and heaven and hell, was in conflict with the liberals and modernists of his day.

Probably his best attack on liberalism is found in his essay 'Fernseeds and Elephants', also published in *Christian Reflections* as 'Modern Theology and Biblical Criticism'. He attacks the Demythologists on their own ground as an academic literary critic who scorns their technique of literary criticism. I only want to say

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26 *Ibid.*, p. 21.

27 *The Screwtape Letters* (London and Glasgow, 1965), p. 65.

one thing about that essay. I wish some Christian organisation could publish it as a pamphlet and present it to every divinity student with the hope that it might be compulsory annual reading for them all.

Other attacks on liberalism are to be found in that brilliant fantasy *The Great Divorce*. Here we have a bus run from hell to the foothills of heaven. It is full of clever images and biting satire. Here we have the liberal minister who is willing to enter heaven provided he has scope for his talents and can continue his free inquiry. He is told: 'I can promise you none of these things. No sphere of usefulness: you are not needed there at all. No scope for your talents: only forgiveness for having perverted them. No atmosphere of inquiry, for I bring you to the land not of questions but of answers, and you shall see the face of God.'<sup>28</sup> This is rejected because, for the liberal, there 'can be no such thing as a final answer'. He goes back to hell as he has a little study group going and he has a paper to present. Jesus Christ died as a young man and he wants to explore how his theology would have developed if he had lived longer!

There are scenes in the book to challenge us all. One such is where the Teacher tells the narrator: 'There have been men before now who get so interested in proving the existence of God that they came to care nothing for God himself. . . as if the good Lord had nothing to do but exist. There have been some so occupied in spreading Christianity that they never gave a thought to Christ.'<sup>29</sup>

This book, well worth reading, leads us into Lewis' *imaginative apologetics*.

### Imaginative Apologetics

Lewis wrote a science fiction trilogy: *Out of the Silent Planet*, *Voyage to Venus*, and *That Hideous Strength*. They are much more than science fiction fantasies. Indeed the *Encyclopaedia of Science Fiction* calls them 'metaphysical fantasies'. The basic idea behind all three novels is that there is an Angel in charge of each planet and the one for earth is 'Bent'. Our planet is silent, in quarantine from the other planets. A Dr Ransom, probably based on Tolkein, is the hero of the three novels. In *Out of the Silent Planet*, Dr Ransom is taken to Mars where he finds an unfallen world and learns of the Angels who control the planets. He finds animals who are rational, and have speech and know no evil. Indeed they have no word for evil and 'bent' is the nearest word. In *Voyage to Venus* we have the story of a Paradise which was not lost. Ransom is taken to Venus to battle with evil and prevent the Fall.

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28 *The Great Divorce* (London and Glasgow, 1986), p. 80.

29 *Ibid.*, pp. 65-66.

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*That Hideous Strength*, the third book, is as Dorothy L. Sayers said, 'full of good things, perhaps too full'. This is a good summing up of the book. It is too full of ideas, images and symbols. It is basically about science, or, more properly, Scientism taking over the world. The hope is, as one of the principal characters says, 'If science is really given a free hand it can now take over the human race and recondition it; make man a really efficient animal.'<sup>30</sup> Their hopes and schemes are brought to nothing by Ransom and Merlin who rises from his tomb. It ends with Merlin re-creating the aftermath of Babel; the scientists cannot communicate to one another.

So, in these three novels, Lewis examines a planet of innocence; an averted Fall, and the battle between good and evil on our planet. They are still popular, still in print. There are two things we can say about this trilogy. First, Lewis got a lot of theology into these books. He, in his own word, 'smuggled' a lot of Christian theology into the reader's mind. Secondly, Lewis' view of man in the universe has become widely acceptable. In his survey of science fiction, Brian Aldiss writes on how science fiction became less Romantic and says: 'The C. S. Lewis view is winning through, that we are liable to spread destruction wherever we go.'<sup>31</sup>

I must now say something about another imaginative series of books by Lewis. Tolkien, in one of his essays, discusses how the furniture of the drawing room, when it was no longer needed, graduated to the nursery. This, he suggests, is also true of books: *Aesop's Fables*, *Pilgrim's Progress*, *Gulliver's Travels*, went from the library to the nursery. In the light of this, perhaps the most surprising, if not the greatest, of Lewis' achievements was to write books for the nursery which ended in the library – even the libraries of theologians. I refer, of course to the Narnia Chronicles.

Narnia is a dream world for children of all ages. It is a land of magic and mystery. A land of enchantment where horses fly, animals talk, and we have fauns, dwarfs, sprites and dragons. The fertile mind of Lewis plundered mythology for creatures to inhabit Narnia. In some ways I suspect he carried this too far. But I do not want to go into this.

Reigning over Narnia we have Aslan, the lion who is the Son of the Emperor-over-the-Sea. Aslan is a brilliant invention; strong but tender, fierce but loving, an obvious symbol of Christ. The fact that is obvious is, I suspect, the reason for the popularity of the books. Certainly they can be read as imaginative fairy tales but they are full of images and symbols which are easily interpreted. This can give aesthetic delight – we can see the hidden meaning.

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30 *That Hideous Strength* (London, 1972), p. 25.

31 Brian Aldiss, *Billion Year Spree* (London, 1973), p. 256.

We have, in the Narnia Chronicles, creation; Aslan sang the world into being. We have Fall; sin is brought into Narnia and, in an unforgettable phrase, 'It is always winter and never Christmas'. We have Aslan dying for the sin of another and rising from the dead. And so it goes on until the very end when it is through a stable the children find eternal life. But, interestingly enough, at the end all are not saved. Susan does not enter the stable. She is no longer a friend of Narnia and, as Jill says, 'She is interested in nothing nowadays except nylons and lipsticks and invitations.'<sup>32</sup>

One final comment on the Narnia Chronicles. It is a series for children and at the end the children in the story, and their parents, are killed in a train crash. Children's writers do not usually end stories that way but Lewis did. He knew that the Christian dies and then lives happily ever after. As Aslan tells the children, 'Your father and mother are – as you used to call it in Shadowlands – dead. The term is over; the holidays have begun. The dream is ended: this is morning.'<sup>33</sup>

I want to leave the Narnia Chronicles there though we could have an interesting discussion of whether there are Platonic elements in the final book. Certainly the concept of 'The Shadowlands' would suggest that as would the idea that the best of our world is a pale reflection of what we will find in heaven. One is left wondering why Lewis says nothing about the new earth (and presumably a new Narnia) promised in Scripture, but they are stories for children. Maybe, one day, someone will do a PhD on the Narnia Chronicles – if someone has not already done so.

## Appraisal

Having looked at Lewis the man, his theology and apologetics, I want now to sum up in an appraisal before considering his influence.

But I must begin with a confession. When asked to prepare this paper, I was lukewarm about Lewis. In past years I have concentrated on his literary criticism which has influenced my thinking; I thought I had outgrown his apologetics. But recently, in re-reading his Christian books and essays, I found I had forgotten how good he was: he had many exciting and new things to say to me. I rediscovered how he could approach old questions from new angles. Almost in spite of myself, I was impressed. Like the fools in Goldsmith's poem, it was as if 'I came to scoff and remained to pray'. Of course, as I have indicated, there are some areas where I would not agree with his position. In some of his Christian insights I wish he had gone further. But, in the main, I must confess a renewed admiration for

32 *The Last Battle* (London, 1985), p. 129.

33 *Ibid.*, p. 173.

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Lewis the apologist. It seems to me that this is the key: he was an apologist. He was not a theologian, nor an evangelist, he was a defender of the faith. In this I can understand his concentration on the New Testament. Our faith is based, not on the historicity of Adam, Abraham or Jonah but on Jesus Christ who is Lord and God.

My appraisal must start with the fact that Lewis was a good communicator. All his works are readable. He could communicate to people who had absolutely no theological, or biblical, knowledge. I would be hard pressed to think of any Christian writers who can do that today.

There are two elements which made him a good communicator.

1. *He used common language.* Lewis wrote, in simple language, on profound subjects. In apologetics it is remarkable how seldom he actually quotes Scripture. Yet, he can be true to the Scriptures without sprinkling his writings with texts. For example, there are many glorious texts about the incarnation – Christ leaving the realms of glory for this dark world. In speaking of this truth Lewis says: ‘the second person in God, the Son, became human himself: was born into the world as actual man’, and then he adds: ‘if you want to get the hang of that, think how you would like to be a slug or a crab.’<sup>34</sup> We may think that is crude, almost irreverent, but I suggest it communicates. Lewis could write on theology without using theological language. He used common language.

2. The second element which made him a good communicator was that *his arguments always appealed to commonsense.* He was a brilliant debater but, at heart, he was always appealing to commonsense. For example, in attacking Bultmann and his disciples who reduced most of the Gospels to myths and legends, Lewis says: ‘If he tells me something in a Gospel is a legend or romance, I want to know how many legends and romances he has read, how well his palate is trained in detecting them by the flavour: not how many years he has spent on that Gospel.’<sup>35</sup> That seems to me more than a brilliant argument. It is plain commonsense. The question is not, Is the man a good biblical scholar? but, Is he a good literary scholar? Has he made a study of myths and legends so that he recognises them immediately wherever they appear? That seems to me to be plain commonsense.

Lewis was a good communicator because he used common language and appealed to commonsense. I want to make two other observations in this appraisal.

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34 *Mere Christianity*, p. 151.

35 *Christian Reflections*, p. 154.

### His Awareness of the Modern World

Malcolm Muggeridge says somewhere, 'Mother Teresa never reads the newspapers, never watches television, and never listens to the radio, so she has a pretty good idea of what's going on in the world'. Lewis has the reputation of never reading the newspapers but he certainly knew what was going on in the world. He was a realist who knew his own heart and therefore knew the hearts of others. While the media concentrates on the transient and ephemeral, Christians should set their minds on eternal realities, the way human beings, culture and societies are moving away or towards God. Lewis said something about this in his inaugural address at Cambridge when he became Professor of Medieval and Renaissance Literature. He spoke of the 'unchristening' of the West. He points out: 'A post-Christian man is not a Pagan: you might as well think that a married woman recovers her virginity by divorce. The post-Christian is cut off from the Christian past and therefore doubly from the Pagan past.'<sup>36</sup>

This is why modern humanity has no sense of sin, truth and little awareness of God. As Lewis argued, the pagan and the Christian have more in common with one another than either have with the post-Christian. So he was prophetic in 'showing the worlding the world'. He was also prophetic in another sense when he has Screwtape boast: 'In the last generation we have promoted the construction of a "historic Jesus" on liberal and humanitarian lines; we are now putting forward a new "historic Jesus" on Marxian, catastrophic, and revolutionary lines.'<sup>37</sup> That was written in 1942 – long before liberation theology and the bigamous marriage of Christianity and Marxism. Lewis was very much aware of the modern world.

### His Awareness of the Next World

In most of his writings, Lewis is aware of an eternal dimension. He saw people – and this world – in a relationship to eternity. So he recognised that we could begin to experience heaven or hell. He wrote: 'I think earth, if chosen instead of heaven, will turn out to have been all along, only a region of hell: and earth, if put second to heaven, to have been from the beginning a part of heaven itself.'<sup>38</sup> This means he saw all life as in direct relationship with God and the life, or death, to come. As he put it. 'There is no neutral ground in the universe: every square inch, every split second, is claimed by God and counterclaimed by Satan.'<sup>39</sup>

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36 *Selected Literary Essays* (Cambridge, 1980), p. 10.

37 *The Screwtape Letters*, p. 117.

38 *The Great Divorce*, p. 8.

39 *Christian Reflections*, p. 33.

C. S. Lewis was heavenly minded and therefore had much to teach this world. He was a good communicator who knew he had citizenship of two worlds. I want to add one final comment in this brief appraisal. Some critics have seen a conflict between reason and imagination in his works. It has been suggested that he started off with reason but later turned more and more to imagination. I am not sure there is a dichotomy here.

Reason and imagination are gifts from the same hand. Then, while it is true that it took imagination to picture Narnia and the science fiction worlds, it took reason to write them.

It seems to me that both reason and imagination are necessary for apologetics; Lewis had both. I suspect the sad truth is that, for many Christians, one of these faculties is missing.

### **Influence**

What has been the influence of C. S. Lewis? He died over twenty-five years ago. The sales of his books are now between one and two million each year. It has been estimated that at least half of the sales of the Narnia Chronicles are to students and adults. All this must be some influence on Christian thinking.

I believe he is influential, but more on individuals than movements. Charles Colson, Nixon's 'hatchet-man' during the Watergate scandal, tells that it was through reading *Mere Christianity* that he first had a sense of sin which led to his conversion. Even more surprising is the story of Kenneth Tynan. He was one of the leaders of the sexual revolution in the Sixties, and the first man proudly to use a four-letter obscenity on television. He was the driving force behind the all-nude, all-sex show *Oh! Calcutta*. Lewis was his tutor at Oxford and, although Tynan never became a Christian, Lewis, and Lewis' God, haunted Tynan all his life. On 4th April 1970 Tynan wrote in his journal, 'I read *That Hideous Strength* and once more the old tug reasserts itself – a tug of genuine war against my recent self. How thrilling he makes goodness seem – how tangible and radiant!'<sup>40</sup> Then, his biographer tells us, 'the shades of C. S. Lewis and sin dissolved and he decided to write an erotic screenplay'.

Four years later Tynan read *The Problem of Pain* and wrote: 'As ever, I respond to his powerful suggestion that feelings of guilt and shame are not conditioned by the world in which we live but are real apprehensions of the standards obtaining in an eternal world.'<sup>41</sup> Sadly, as far as we know, Tynan died unrepentant. In his final illness

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40 K. Tynan, *Kenneth Tynan: Biography* (London, 1987), p. 308.

41 *Ibid.*, p. 347.

he confessed to his wife that he was tired but afraid to sleep because of his fear of death.

Lewis, the tutor and Christian apologist, must have influenced many such as Tynan. His influence on individuals must have been very strong. Over the past year I have asked many Christians if they found Lewis influential. Rather to my surprise they all answered in much the same way and it could be summed up in one word 'confidence'. In their youth, in college or work, they had discovered Lewis and he had given them confidence in the gospel. He helped them see it was a reasonable faith. He offered an alternative to unthinking 'fundamentalism' or theological liberalism.

### **His Influence On Modern Evangelicalism**

This is difficult to quantify. I am not familiar with the Anglican scene. But I suspect that here also his influence has been on individuals rather than movements. I say this knowing, of course, that movements are dependent on individuals. There is one area where I think he is not so influential. Lewis saw this planet as 'enemy occupied territory' which we, under God, must reclaim. In this area – the social and cultural dimensions of the gospel – I believe that Francis Schaeffer has been much more influential than Lewis. I think this was because Schaeffer had a theology – Calvinism – which gave a base to develop a valid critique and approach to working out the gospel in our culture and society.

But this is no criticism of Lewis; I do not think this was his calling. I see him as a Christian apologist. He was called, and I believe sought, to create a climate where the gospel could be more easily preached. Indeed he suggested:

I am not sure that the ideal missionary team ought not to consist of one who argues and one who, in the fullest sense of the word, preaches. Put up your arguer first to undermine their intellectual prejudices; then let the Evangelist proper launch his appeal. I have seen this done with great success.<sup>42</sup>

Lewis was the arguer – few, if any, better. Is it possible that, in the providence of God, Lewis was the one sent to undermine intellectual prejudices and open the way for the preachers? Is it fanciful to suggest that the growth of evangelism in the past thirty years owes more to C. S. Lewis than is generally recognised? Perhaps he was the voice crying in the wasteland preparing the way. I know of no way of proving that idea but suspect it is worth considering. One day, when all questions will be answered, we will know.

I must end by saying one more thing about the influence of Lewis. I regret he has not been more influential among conservative

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42 *Timeless at Heart*, p. 25.

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Evangelicals in at least two areas. I would like to see his influence affecting our apologetic language. Where are the books and papers we can give to unbelievers to make them take Christianity seriously? We tend – and I too stand guilty here – to write books for one another. Then I would like to see his influence on works of fiction and fantasy. It is a simple but potent means of propagating the faith and, in Lewis's own words, 'smuggling theology into the readers minds'.

As I have said, I began with suspicions of Lewis but end with admiration. Lewis wrote the funeral oration for Dorothy L. Sayers and ended it by saying, 'Let us thank the Author who invented her'. Having read, and re-read the works of C. S. Lewis, I thank the Author who invented him.

# THE DOCTRINE OF THE INCARNATION IN SCOTTISH THEOLOGY: EDWARD IRVING

DONALD MACLEOD, EDINBURGH  
*The Finlayson Lecture for 1990*

I had the privilege of being taught for two years by Professor R. A. Finlayson. He was a fine teacher, with a sharp, analytical mind and an ability to express himself clearly and memorably. But if he was an outstanding theologian he was also a great preacher. He never lost his love for people or his love for the truth; or his ability to bring the two together. His preaching ranged widely, but it is fair to say that one theme predominated: the person and work of Christ. That is why I have chosen to speak tonight on 'The Doctrine of the Incarnation in Scottish Theology'. Rather than cover the whole field, however – an impossible task in the time available – I want to focus on Edward Irving and his influence on subsequent developments.

## **Irving and Christ's Fallen Humanity**

Irving had distinctive views on many topics, notably prophecy, spiritual gifts and church order. But most distinctive were his views on the incarnation. He argued that Christ took a fallen humanity. Otherwise, he said, the Lord would not have been one with us and he could not have been tempted. Neither could he have healed, reconciled and redeemed us. His power to save lay in the fact that in our fallen nature he lived a sinless life and endured to the uttermost the penalty due to our sin.

Irving published these views in 1828 in *The Doctrine of the Incarnation Opened in Six Sermons (The Collected Writings of Edward Irving, London, 1865, V, pp. 3–446)*. Further treatises followed: *The Orthodox and Catholic Doctrine of our Lord's Human Nature* (London, 1830); *The Opinions Circulating Concerning our Lord's Human Nature* (London, 1830); and *Christ's Holiness in Flesh* (Edinburgh, 1831).

As a result of his widely publicised advocacy of these views Irving was prosecuted for heresy and deposed in 1833. The specific charge against him was that he denied the sinlessness of Christ and argued that he was tainted with original sin.

Many have questioned this judgement. It merits three comments. First, even those who were most disturbed by Irving's teaching respected his piety and acknowledged his devotion to Christ. Robert Murray McCheyne, for example, noted in his diary for November 9,

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1834: 'Heard of Edward Irving's death. I look back upon him with awe, as on the saints and martyrs of old. A holy man in spite of all his delusions and errors. He is now with his God and saviour, whom he wronged so much, yet, I am persuaded, loved so sincerely.' A huge crowd attended his funeral and no one thought it incongruous that the preacher took as his text 2 Samuel 3:38, 'Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel?'

Secondly, Irving vehemently affirmed his personal belief in the sinlessness of Jesus. 'The soul of Christ', he wrote, 'did ever resist and reject the suggestions of evil' (*Collected Writings*, V, p. 126). 'I believe it to be necessary unto salvation', he continued, 'that a man should believe that Christ's soul was so held in possession by the Holy Ghost and so supported by the divine nature, as that it never assented unto an evil suggestion, and never originated an evil suggestion... and that thus, though at all points assailable through His flesh, He was in all respects holy; seeing wickedness consisteth not in being tempted, but in yielding to the temptation'. Irving believed implicitly in 'the birth-holiness of our Lord Jesus Christ' (129) and stated unambiguously that '[Jesus] differed from all men in this respect, that He never sinned' (137). The charges brought against him were inferences from what he had said: inferences that he himself had not drawn and could not have drawn.

Thirdly, there can be no doubt that Irving used extremely provocative language. 'The flesh of Christ', he declared, 'like my flesh, was in its proper nature mortal and corruptible' (*Collected Writings*, V, p. 115); 'His flesh was of that mortal and corruptible kind which is liable to all forms of evil suggestion and temptation, through its participation in a fallen nature and a fallen world' (126); 'unless He had been liable and obnoxious to do the evil, there would have been no merit in refraining from it, and keeping the commandment' (127); 'I hold, that wherever flesh is mentioned in Scripture, mortality and corruption are the attributes of it; and that when it is said Christ came in the flesh, it is distinctly averred that He came in a mortal and corruptible substance' (136).

In Irving's view, Christ's body was 'all-liable to sin, as the body of every fallen man' (139). That it did not commit actual sin was due not to any intrinsic quality of his own person but to the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Without this, the corruption would have erupted. This is what really set Christ apart: 'no one was ever thus anointed with the Holy Ghost' (128). Only thus was his body 'prevented from ever yielding to any of those temptations to which it was brought conscious, and did reject them every one - yea, did mourn and grieve, and pray to God continually, that it might be delivered from the mortality, corruption, temptation, which it felt in its fleshly tabernacle' (128). The responsibility of the Holy Spirit was to make

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this flesh incorruptible: 'I have the Holy Ghost manifested in subduing, restraining, conquering the evil propensities of the fallen manhood, and making it an apt organ for expressing the will of the Father' (170).

The overall impression conveyed by Irving was that he minimised the difference between the Lord and Christian believers. In his treatise *On The Human Nature of Christ* he admitted attributing sinful properties, dispositions and inclinations to Christ's human nature and went on to suggest that what Christ received at his conception was 'a regenerate life...in kind the same which we receive in regeneration, but in measure greater, because of His perfect faith' (*Collected Writings*, V, p.564). He continued: 'This is the substance of our argument: that His human nature was holy in the only way in which holiness under the fall exists or can exist, is spoken of or can be spoken of in Scripture, namely, through inworking or energising of the Holy Ghost... enforcing His human nature, inclining it, uniting it to God'.

It is hardly surprising that such sentiments gave offence, especially when we recall that Irving's published statements were carefully considered and, for him, cautious. His pulpit and private utterances were even more extreme. One hearer was horrified to hear him refer to Christ's human nature as 'that sinful substance' (C.G. Strachan, *The Pentecostal Theology of Edward Irving*, London, 1973, p. 27). In a subsequent conversation Irving was challenged as to whether he believed that Christ, like Paul, had 'the law of sin' in his members, bringing him into captivity. 'Not into captivity', Irving replied, 'but Christ experienced everything the same as Paul did, except the "captivity"' (Strachan, p. 28).

### Critical Response

The early response to Irving was almost entirely critical. Marcus Dods (*The Incarnation of the Word*, London, 1831; <sup>2</sup>1845) ignored Irving's protestations of belief in the sinlessness of Jesus and accused him of Manichaeism, Nestorianism and logical confusion. Forty years later A.B. Bruce (*The Humiliation of Christ*, Edinburgh, 1876, pp. 269ff.) still accepted the church's judgement unquestioningly. Bruce pointed out the antecedents of Irving's teaching in the Spanish Adoptionists of the eighth century and the preaching of Gottfried Menken of Bremen in the nineteenth (although there is no evidence that Irving had any direct contact with either of these sources), and went on to charge him with rhetorical inexactitude and with confusing sinless infirmities with vices. He also subjected Irving's view of temptation to a rigorous critique, pointing out that even a sinless person can be tempted, since temptation can come not only from lust but from its opposite – for example, from a holy shrinking

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from desertion by God. 'Temptations arising out of sinless infirmities may be far fiercer than those which arise out of sinful appetites', wrote Bruce (291 n.).

This critical attitude towards Irving's position continued well into the twentieth century. H.R. Mackintosh (*The Person of Jesus Christ*, Edinburgh, 1912; <sup>2</sup>1913, pp. 276ff.) referred to it as 'this eccentric though touching view' (277). Irving had secured the Lord's sympathy with us, particularly his oneness with us in moral conflict, but only at the cost of ascribing to him a corrupt nature: so corrupt, in fact, that nothing but the Holy Spirit could keep it in check. Donald Baillie, writing in 1948 (*God Was in Christ*, London, pp. 16ff.) was still not very sympathetic, pointing out that the idea that Christ's humanity was fallen had always been deemed heretical, in both the Catholic and the Protestant traditions. It is interesting, too, that Baillie's knowledge of Irving appears to have been second-hand (*via* A.B. Bruce): obviously Irving was not then, as he is now, required reading in the Scottish universities. This probably explains why Baillie handles Irving with a less than sure touch. He points out, quite rightly, that Irving was surprised by the accusation of heresy but explains this by suggesting that to him 'fallen' carried no connotations of original sin. It meant only that Christ was subject to pain and death. This is by no means the whole truth, as we have seen. To Irving, the idea of fallenness was closely linked with the idea of temptation. He insisted that Christ was tempted through his own flesh: there was a proclivity to sin which was kept in check only by the power of the Holy Spirit.

### Adoption by Barth and Successors

Before Baillie, however, something else had happened. Karl Barth (*Kirchliche Dogmatik*, I:ii, Zollikon-Zurich, 1938, p. 180; *ET Church Dogmatics*, 1:2, Edinburgh, 1956, p. 154) had enthusiastically espoused the idea that Christ took fallen humanity; and in doing so he had acknowledged the work of Irving (although Barth's knowledge, like Baillie's, was second-hand, this time through H.R. Mackintosh). Barth exegetes the idea of a fallen humanity energetically. It means a corrupt nature (*natura vitiosa*); one which is obnoxious (liable?) to sin; and one which exists in a vile and abject condition: 'there must be no weakening or obscuring of the saving truth that the nature which God assumed in Christ is identical with our nature as we see it in the light of the Fall. If it were otherwise, how could Christ be really like us? What concern would we have with Him? We stand before God characterised by the Fall. God's Son not only assumed our nature but He entered the concrete form of our nature, under which we stand before God as men damned and lost' (153). Like Irving, Barth denied that this meant actual sin on the Lord's part: 'He was not a sinful

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man. But inwardly and outwardly His situation was that of a sinful man. He did nothing that Adam did. But He lived life in the form it must take on the basis and assumption of Adam's act' (152).

Barth's Scottish disciples became zealous advocates of this Irvingite Christology. T.F. Torrance, for example, wrote: 'the Incarnation is to be understood as the coming of God to take upon himself our fallen human nature, our actual existence laden with sin and guilt, our humanity diseased in mind and soul in its estrangement or alienation from the Creator...it is the alienated *mind* of man that God had laid hold of in Jesus Christ in order to redeem it and effect reconciliation deep within the rational centre of human being' (*The Mediation of Christ*, Grand Rapids, 1983, pp. 48ff.). 'In Jesus', he continued, 'God himself descended to the very bottom of our human existence where we are alienated and antagonistic, into the very hell of our godlessness and despair, laying fast hold of us and taking our cursed condition upon himself, in order to embrace us for ever in his reconciling love' (53).

J.B. Torrance was even more enthusiastic. Commenting on Athanasius' *De Incarnatione* he wrote: 'Christ does not heal by standing over against us, diagnosing our sickness, prescribing medicine for us to take, and then going away, to leave us to get better by obeying his instructions - as an ordinary doctor might. No, He becomes the patient! He assumes that very humanity which is in need of redemption.... That was why these fathers did not hesitate to say, as Edward Irving the great Scottish theologian in the early nineteenth century and Karl Barth in our own day have said, that Christ assumed "fallen humanity" that our humanity might be turned back to God in him by his sinless life in the Spirit, and, through him, in us' ('The Vicarious Humanity of Christ', in *The Incarnation*, ed. Thomas F. Torrance, Edinburgh, 1981, p. 141).

One can sympathise with many of the concerns that lie behind such formulations. The stress on the Lord's humanness is welcome, as is the stress on his temptability. So, too, is the emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the incarnate Lord. Orthodoxy has always accepted that the humanity of Jesus was not autonomous, but dependent. Too often, however, it has expressed this in terms of the divine nature supporting the human. Scripture never speaks in this way. It speaks of the dependence in inter-personal terms. The Son is supported by the Father through the Spirit: 'I will put my Spirit on him' (Is. 42:1); 'through the eternal Spirit he offered himself without spot to God' (Heb. 9:14). Every power he possessed, every grace that adorned his character and every achievement that lies to his credit, flowed from the solicitous attention of the Father and the constant ministry of the Spirit: 'I can of mine own self do nothing' (John 5:30). But none of this requires us to describe Christ's

humanity as fallen. Neither do any of the more detailed arguments used by Irving, Barth and Torrance.

### Untenable Defences

It is argued, for example, that the idea that Christ took fallen humanity follows from the principle that 'the unassumed is the unhealed'. But this is an illegitimate use of a form of words which has a very definite context in the history of Christology. It belongs to the Apollinarian controversy. Gregory of Nazianzus, for example, used it in his *Letter to Cledonius against Apollinaris* and the context makes clear what he meant by it; 'if he has a soul, and yet is without a mind, how is he man, for man is not a mindless animal?' (*Christology of the Later Fathers*, ed. Edward R. Hardy, London, 1954, p. 219). The function of 'the unassumed is the unhealed' was to stress that Christ took a human *pneuma*, including intellect, will and affections. None of Irving's opponents denied this; and, conversely, none of the Fathers held that Christ took fallenness.

It is argued, secondly, that Christ took his humanity from the substance of his mother. This, of course is true and Irving's opponents fully acknowledged it, striving to do justice to the mystery of the umbilical cord. In fact no one has ever expressed it better than Marcus Dods: 'she imparted to her Son all that other mothers impart to their children' (*On the Incarnation of the Word*, p. 31). But this phrase, too, had its own historical context. It was a protest against Docetism with its suggestion that Christ's humanness was only a seeming, that he had no real physical connection with his mother and that in fact the Son of God had passed through the Virgin like water through an aqueduct. In this context the insistence that Christ was 'born of the Virgin Mary, of her substance' (*Westminster Confession*, VIII:II) was never remotely intended to suggest that Christ's humanity was fallen. It signified only that it was real. Christ's manhood was created by the Holy Spirit but not *ex nihilo*. Through his mother – through the umbilical cord – he was keyed into the genetic stream of humankind; related even to the dust of the ground and to the whole world of matter. But he never existed except as 'a holy thing', the subject of a 'con-created holiness'. The divine act that made his humanity made it holy.

Thirdly, Irving argued that unless Christ was fallen he was not like us. But surely all the identity we need is secured by the fact that he 'was made flesh and dwelt among us' (John 1:14)? He took a true body. He took a reasonable soul. He lived in our physical, social and spiritual environment. He shared our pains, our sorrows and our fears: even the loss of God. What more can we ask? In fact, even on Irving's own terms some discontinuity between us and Christ is inevitable. Christ was sinless. Christ had a unique measure of the

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Spirit's endowment – 'no one was ever thus anointed with the Holy Ghost'. He had unique power. He had a unique self-consciousness. Any one of these, let alone all of them together, would be enough to break the continuity between Christ and us and to lead to the challenge, 'How can he understand? What does he know?' Besides, the Christ of Christian faith is the exalted Christ, immune to sorrow and pain. Yet it is precisely of this Christ – 'who has passed through the heavens' – that Hebrews declares that he is touched with the feeling of our weaknesses (Heb. 4:15). How? Because he has taken our nature and shared our experiences; and because he has never forgotten his years in the Valley of the Shadow of Death. 'He remembers we are dust, he knows our frame.' The pain and exhaustion, the fear and bewilderment, are etched indelibly on his memory: 'I know exactly how that woman feels!'

### **Fallenness and Temptation**

But, above all, Irving argued that if Christ had not had a fallen humanity he could not have been tempted. Obviously he was tempted and it is enormously important to our own faith to be assured that he understands us at this point. The temptations were absolutely real. He felt the appeal of the sinful proposals put to him and had to struggle with all his might to repel them. In that struggle he depended on the Holy Spirit; and the Spirit's ministry was not physical but moral, so that he triumphed over temptation not by some effortless, Samson-like omnipotence but by faith, hope and love. In all this – in the reality of his temptations and in the means of his victory – the Lord was like ourselves. But in one crucial respect he was not like us: he was not tempted by anything within himself. He was not drawn away by his own lusts and enticed (James 1:14). There was no law of sin in his members (Rom. 7:23). There was in him no predisposition to sin, no love of sin and no affinity with sin. The Prince of this world had no foothold in him (John 14:30).

The temptations, therefore, came entirely from outside: from the Devil himself. But if Christ was unfallen, what did the Devil work on? Part of the answer, surely, is that although the Lord had no vices he did have sinless infirmities. He could be tempted (and clearly was) through hunger, through the fear of pain and through love for a friend. It is not a mark of fallenness to feel any of these and yet the instinct to avoid them can create strong pressure to deviate from the course prescribed for us. Besides, Jesus had holy affections which, in the course of his work, he had to thwart. Foremost among these was the longing for communion with God; and he knew full well that the cross would involve the loss of that. Is it any great wonder that in Gethsemane the prospect overwhelmed him? or that every fibre of his

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being wanted to avoid it? He was not being called on to mortify a lust. But he was being called on to frustrate the holiest aspiration of which humanity is capable. Here what he wanted (and needed) and what his Father directed were in conflict. Hence the 'strong crying and tears' (Heb. 5:7).

It is fatally easy to misconstrue the effect of the Lord's sinless integrity at this point, as if it meant a shorter, painless struggle in the hour of temptation. On the contrary, precisely because he did not yield, the struggle was protracted; and because he was not (like us) easy prey, the Devil had to use all his resources. Precisely because of his unfallenness – his invincibility – Jesus alone experienced the full force of hell's ferocity.

There are two other serious difficulties in Irving's theory. First, it has no answer to the charge of Nestorianism. What was fallen? Was it the person? This would lead to the conclusion that the Son of God was fallen: a conclusion Irving, quite rightly, was not willing to draw: 'What was holy, was His person' (*Collected Writings*, V, p.565). What then was fallen? The human nature! This meant, however, that Irving had to separate that nature sharply from his divine person: 'whenever I attribute sinful properties and dispositions and inclinations to our Lord's human nature, I am speaking of it considered as apart from Him, in itself...we can assert the sinfulness of the whole, the complete, the perfect human nature, which He took, without in the least implicating Him with sin' (563, 565). This is surely hopeless. How can the nature be fallen without implicating the person? Only if the humanness is an agent in its own right, completely detached from the eternal Son!

This point was pressed home by Marcus Dods: 'Nature cannot exist excepting in a person. It floats not an invisible and infectious thing, like the *malaria* of a Campanian bog or Batavian fen, ready to seize upon all who may come within the sphere of its activity. If a fallen *nature* exist at all, it can exist only as the nature of a fallen *person*. If, then, there was a fallen *nature*, or a *nature* in a fallen state existing in Christ, the conclusion is inevitable that there was a fallen person in him; and, consequently, that either the humanity was a *person*, or the second person of the Holy Trinity was *fallen*. In every point of view, therefore, in which the question as to a *fallen nature* can be placed, it appears to me clear as the light of day, that he who persists in saying that our Lord took a fallen human nature, or human nature in a fallen state, has to choose whether he will preach the impiety of a fallen God, or the heresy of a distinct human personality, in the one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus' (*op. cit.*, pp. 279f.).

### **Fallenness and Humiliation**

Secondly, there is the difficulty of the historical connotation of 'fallen'. The Westminster Shorter Catechism, for example, tells us that, 'Our first parents...fell from the estate wherein they were created by sinning against God' (Answer 13). To have fallen, therefore, is to have sinned against God; and to be fallen is to be in a state of sinfulness – to lack original righteousness and to be corrupt in our entire nature (Shorter Catechism, 18). How can this apply to Jesus? It is impossible at this level to maintain any distinction between 'fallen' and 'sinful'. Fallen Adam is sinful Adam. Fallen nature is sinful nature, dominated by the flesh (in the Pauline sense) and characterised by total depravity. It is impossible to see how any of this can be true of him 'who knew no sin' (2 Cor. 5:21).

But if we cannot use the word 'fallen', how, then, are we to describe Jesus? By saying that he was man in a state of humiliation. This contrasts with other human states. He was not in a state of primitive bliss, like the First Adam. Nor was he in the state of glorious exaltation which he now knows as risen Saviour. He was man in a low condition.

This means, first of all, that he was liable to all the miseries of this life. He dwelt among us, making our physical, moral, social and economic environment his own; and experiencing with us hunger and thirst, weariness and pain, poverty and cruelty, bereavement, oppression and treachery.

Secondly, he experienced all the emotions appropriate to such a situation. Not that we should stress too much the darker side of the Lord's emotional life. He who condemned anxiety would not have been guilty of it himself; and he who commended contentment would scarcely have failed to practise it. Whatever the storms around him, all the evidence suggests that Jesus was a man of deep serenity and inner peace. We may not be told that he laughed, but we are told that he found delight and pleasure in doing the will of God (Heb. 10:7, quoting Ps. 40:8). But the dark emotions were there, too. Sometimes what he saw amazed him, at other times grieved him and sometimes made him blaze with anger. In Gethsemane he went to the emotional cliff-edge. There an almost mortal depression settled on his spirit. But it was not only depression. It was the supreme human experience of 'creature-feeling', as Jesus trembled in the presence of the Holy, overwhelmed by what God wanted him to do. He could not accept God's will easily and effortlessly. He had to struggle to submit and to persuade himself that Abba wanted *him* to drink *this* cup. Hence the strong crying, hence the tears, and hence, above all, the fear: the fear of humiliation and rejection; the fear of physical pain; the fear of death; the fear of the loss of God; the fear for his own humanness –

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could he take it into the unknown, into the uncharted waters of Dereliction?

Where was sorrow ever deeper? Where was bewilderment ever more overwhelming? Where was fear ever more chilling? But none of this was fallenness. It was humanness in a low condition.

Thirdly, Jesus experienced mortality. He died. He was not spared the fear of death and he was not spared the taste of it; he tasted death for every person (Heb. 2:9). Nor was there anything arbitrary – anything Docetic – about his death. Certainly it was his own free decision to submit to the nails and the spear. But it was not by any voluntary decision on his part that they had the same effect on him as they would on any human being. In the words of A.B. Bruce: 'It was not a miracle that the crucified and pierced One died; the miracle would have been had he lived in spite of nails and spear. Thus understood, mortality may properly be reckoned as belonging to the truth of Christ's humanity' (*The Humiliation of Christ*, p. 279).

Finally, Christ in his low condition experienced the loss of communion with God. Of course, this was not his habitual state during his life on earth. For almost the whole duration of his ministry the Father stood by him, upholding and encouraging him. Like Abraham and Isaac on the journey to Mount Moriah, 'they went up both of them together'. But at the climax, God is not there: 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' In the hour of his greatest need, he is alone. Heaven does not answer. And no one was less prepared or less suited for such an ordeal than the Son of God. He had never been without his Father, never out of his sight, never out of earshot. But now, as hell closes in, he cannot say 'Abba!' There is no sense of sonship, no sense of the Father's love, no grasp of the certainty of victory. In the words of an intriguing variant reading of Hebrews 2:9, he is *choris theou*, without God. He is outside. Indeed, he is *the* Outsider: the Lawlessness which he was, banished to the Darkness it deserved.

Why? Because he was fallen? No! He knew no sin. Why then? Because he was 'made sin for us'. *For!* Solidarity, representation, substitution. He suffers with us. He suffered on our behalf. But above all he suffered in our place. He was banished instead of us: banned, desolated, devoted to destruction so that we should never know the curse. Sin never stained or defiled him. But he bore it. By loving his people and binding them to himself he contracted their guilt. Bearing it he went into the Holy Place, face to face with the living God, taking his whole identity from sin ('made sin') and enduring all that it – that we – deserved. That, surely, is the glory:

'That on the Cross, my burden gladly bearing,  
He bled and died, to take away my sin.'

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That, I dare say, is not a greater vision than the one seen by Irving. But it is greater than what he taught. It is the journey of the Unfallen into the Far Country to redeem the fallen.

# CALVINISTS IN CONTROVERSY: JOHN KENNEDY, HORATIUS BONAR AND THE MOODY MISSION OF 1873-74

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## Introduction

D.L. Moody came to Edinburgh in 1873 to conduct a mission at the invitation of Scottish Evangelical leaders such as James Hood Wilson and Horatius Bonar. Though the American's style was unconventional, they warmed to him as a person and appreciated the power of his Evangelical preaching which quickly made a major impact on the capital. It soon became clear that the mission thus begun was the most significant evangelistic initiative of the generation and many leading ministers threw all their energies into it. They were thrilled to have discovered a man who could communicate the gospel effectively to the urban masses and lead large numbers to Christian commitment. In view of these most welcome results they were prepared to countenance the innovations which Moody brought to Scottish Evangelical life: the racy, unsystematic, anecdotal style of his preaching, the organ-playing and hymn-singing of Sankey, the introduction of the 'appeal' and the inquiry room. From the Highlands, however, came a voice of dissent. John Kennedy, Free Church minister of Dingwall and the acknowledged leader of the Highland section of the Free Church, published a pamphlet entitled *Hyper-Evangelism: 'Another Gospel' Though a Mighty Power*, in which he condemned the Moody campaign as a departure from Calvinist orthodoxy. Horatius Bonar rushed to its defence and published *The Old Gospel Not 'Another Gospel' but the Power of God unto Salvation*. Kennedy was not convinced and soon there appeared from his pen *A Reply to Dr. Bonar's Defence of Hyper-Evangelism*.

Both Bonar and Kennedy were honoured names within Scottish Evangelicalism. Moreover, they had been closely associated for many years, having taken part together in the Disruption of 1843. When the Free Church had recently been divided over the question of union with the United Presbyterian Church, both had been prominent figures in the conservative or 'Constitutionalist' party. Yet now, apparently suddenly, they were at odds and the tone of their discussion was decidedly acrimonious. To Bonar the Moody mission was a visitation from God which was bringing salvation to thousands and he was personally much impressed by the vigorous Christian life of the converts. Kennedy, on the other hand, was unsparing in his

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denunciation of the campaign. A typical Moody convert he described as 'a molluscous, flabby creature, without pith or symmetry, breathing freely only in the heated air of meetings, craving to be pampered with vapid sentiment, and so puffed up by foolish flattery, as to be in a state of chronic flatulency, requiring relief in frequent bursts of hymn-singing, in spouting addresses as void of Scripture truth as of common sense, and in belching flippant questions in the face of all he meets'.<sup>1</sup> Strong words! The very vehemence of Kennedy's language demonstrates how diametrically opposed were the two senior churchmen in their assessment of the campaign. To Bonar the Moody mission was a 'revival' comparable with the notable times of blessing recorded in the past. To Kennedy all the excitement was delusory, no lasting benefit could be expected and the innovations brought by the campaign were subversive of the true Calvinist tradition.

This disagreement proved to be a marker in the parting of the ways between the Highland Calvinism and the Lowland Evangelicalism which had been united in the Free Church. It therefore occupies a place of historical and theological importance and calls for review. Moreover, the discussion is particularly significant as the first sharp disagreement among Scottish Evangelicals over the modern 'campaign' evangelism which was first introduced to Scotland by Moody. Although their pamphlets are somewhat slight, Kennedy and Bonar touch on issues which have recurrently arisen in subsequent discussions and there are several points of contact with contemporary debate. A review of their differences regarding I. the merits of special evangelistic campaigns, II. the theological issues arising from Moody's preaching, and III. their attitudes to the Calvinist tradition, may offer some valuable historical background to contemporary discussions.

### I. Campaign Evangelism

The first substantial difference between Kennedy and Bonar was whether a special evangelistic campaign could expect to be blessed by God. Bonar, together with many other Evangelical ministers, had thrown himself into the work of organising the Moody and Sankey campaign and was convinced that God was working in a remarkable way to bring many people to faith: 'Necessity is laid on us to say that, as Christian ministers, we are persuaded that the Spirit of God

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1 J. Kennedy, *Hyper-Evangelism 'Another Gospel' Though a Mighty Power: A Review of the Recent Religious Movement in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1874), pp. 21-22.

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(and not Satan as [Kennedy] suggests) has been working among us.'<sup>2</sup> The special meetings which were arranged in connection with the campaign he saw as no different in principle from those he had witnessed as a young man when crowds gathered night after night to hear the preaching of William Burns or Murray McCheyne. Kennedy saw the campaign in a very different light. Some of those involved, he granted, were actuated by genuine spiritual feeling. However, 'others, strangers to *stated* spiritual enjoyment in the means of grace, were longing for some change – some excitement to lift them out of their dullness – and for some bustle in which they might take their share of service. Others, still, who knew no happiness in the house of God, and had no desire for his presence, would fain that something new were introduced into the mode of service which they felt so jading. The excitement of a revival would be to them a relief. "Special services" they strongly craved.'<sup>3</sup>

Kennedy scarcely concealed his dislike for any departure from the customary pattern of worship. It would have been infinitely preferable, in his view, 'had the awakened expectations been left to be operated on by the stated ministrations of the sanctuary'.<sup>4</sup> He greatly feared that all the novelty and 'bustle' of the campaign was likely to produce only carnal excitement and that the use of 'ordinary means' would promise much more substantial and lasting results. Doubtless there may have been something of the inbuilt conservatism of an older man in this attitude but there was a serious theological concern underlying it. The issue, as Kennedy saw it, was one of whether conversion was brought about by divine sovereignty or human management: 'Men, anxious to secure a certain result, and determined to produce it, do not like to think of a controlling will, to whose sovereign behests they must submit, and of the necessity of almighty power being at work, whose action must be regulated by another will than theirs. Certain processes must lead to certain results. This selfish earnestness, this proud resolve to make a manageable business of conversion-work, is intolerant of any recognition of the sovereignty of God.'<sup>5</sup>

Of particular concern to Kennedy in this regard were the 'sudden' or instantaneous conversions which were a feature of the Moody and Sankey campaign. He was aghast that people were accepted as converts

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2 H. Bonar, *The Old Gospel: Not 'Another Gospel' but the Power of God Unto Salvation. A Reply to Dr. Kennedy's Pamphlet 'Hyper-Evangelism'* (Edinburgh, 1874), p. 50.

3 Kennedy, *Hyper-Evangelism*, p. 23.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 24.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 13.

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simply upon an affirmation of faith at the close of an evangelistic meeting. Real repentance, argued Kennedy, was a process which required some considerable time to be accomplished: 'The work of conversion includes what we might expect to find detailed in a process. There can be no faith in Christ without some sense of sin, some knowledge of Christ, such as never was possessed before, and willingness, resulting from renewal, to receive Him as Saviour from sin. If a hearty, intelligent turning to God in Christ be the result of conversion, it is utterly unwarrantable to expect that, as a rule, conversion shall be sudden. Indeed, the suddenness is rather a ground of suspicion than a reason for concluding that the work is God's.'<sup>6</sup> The pattern of 'sudden' conversions which marked the Moody mission appeared to Kennedy as further evidence that it was a matter of human management rather than the sovereignty of God. Conversion was God's work which in due time would be manifested by its results and it was presumptive for anyone to pronounce that conversion had occurred simply on the basis of a verbal profession of faith. This was 'to commit the credit of true religion to cases which have not been proved'.<sup>7</sup>

Bonar replied to this with the biblical argument that all conversions recorded in the New Testament were sudden, the theological argument that all conversions must be sudden if they are the work of the Holy Spirit, and the practical argument that complete certainty about conversion is not possible at any stage and that joy cannot be restrained when all the evidence suggests that a conversion has occurred.<sup>8</sup> To these considerations he added the irenic argument that conversion may occur in different ways and that tolerance and forbearance are required in order to recognise the diversity of God's work. In choosing the means by which he will work he is not restricted by our standards of orthodoxy: 'He wrought not only by the Calvinist Whitefield, but the Arminian Wesley.'<sup>9</sup>

Bonar's broader, more eclectic approach may be explained, at least in part, by the context in which he was placed. Industrialization and urbanization had taken a devastating toll in alienating working people from the life of the church. The paramount need of the day, from the perspective of urban ministers like Bonar, was for missionary work which would lead to the recovery of the 'lapsed masses'. The old pattern of parish life was patently ineffective to win and hold the

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6 *Ibid.*, p. 11.

7 *Ibid.*, p.5.

8 Bonar, *The Old Gospel*, pp. 34, 50-51.

9 *Ibid.*, p.10.

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great urban populations and so even the most conservative ministers became open to new methods and willing to compromise on inessential matters.

In Dingwall it was different. The church largely retained its hold on the communal life of the people and there did not appear to be any need at all for a new missionary approach. Kennedy greeted the introduction of Sabbath schools with hesitation and hostility on the grounds that they would not be needed if all families were in their place in church every week!<sup>10</sup> His coining of the rather unfortunate term 'hyper-evangelism' suggests a fear that evangelistic zeal was being taken too far and was causing the urban ministers to lose a proper sense of proportion. In Dingwall the traditional pattern remained effective and it was not apparent why evangelism should be given the kind of over-riding priority which might cause valued elements in the Calvinist tradition to be neglected or even jeopardised. If unbelief and alienation threatened the church then the answer was to uphold all the more firmly the inherited tradition which had proved itself in the past. For Bonar and his colleagues in the urban south, however, the time seemed ripe to form a broader alliance and to allow for new approaches in evangelism, providing only that the central elements of the Gospel were sounded forth. To organise special evangelistic campaigns was not, for Bonar, to deny the sovereignty of God but rather, in humble dependence upon that very sovereignty, to seek to meet the missionary demands of changed times. The contrasting contexts were certainly a contributory factor in producing a difference of perspective. The resulting discussion moved on from the basic question of the validity of such campaigns to some of the deeper theological questions which the Moody mission had provoked.

### II. Faith, Repentance and Assurance

The difference over the 'sudden' conversions which characterized the Moody mission led Kennedy and Bonar to explore two issues which have surfaced repeatedly in Scottish theological discussion: the priority of faith over repentance in the *ordo salutis* (order of salvation), and the nature of assurance. On the question of the relation of faith and repentance Kennedy was concerned by the absence of a 'law-work' among mission converts. For true conversion to occur, he argued, there must be a time when people are required to 'consider the claims of God as Lawgiver and Judge, in order that they

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10 See A.P.F. Sell, *Defending and Declaring the Faith: Some Scottish Examples 1860-1920* (Exeter, 1987), pp. 29-30.

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may feel themselves shut up to His mercy as Sovereign'.<sup>11</sup> Without thorough application of the law there could be no conviction of sin and without conviction of sin there could be no conception of gospel grace. This 'law-work' in Kennedy's view, was conspicuously absent from the preaching of the Moody mission: 'A call to repentance... never issues from their trumpet.'<sup>12</sup>

Bonar directly challenged the idea that there could be no true conversion without a law-work and pointed out that 'in the Acts of the Apostles we have many specimens of apostolical preaching to promiscuous multitudes, yet in not one of them is the law introduced. The apostles confined themselves to the glad tidings concerning Christ and His cross. Christ crucified was that which was preached for conviction and conversion.'<sup>13</sup> Repentance had many times been preached from the platform of the Moody mission but it was given its proper place as the fruit or the result of faith. To argue that repentance must precede faith appeared to Bonar to be a dangerous species of 'preparationism' since 'the repentance which does not come from believing must be simply that of the natural conscience'.<sup>14</sup> In support of his position Bonar appealed to John Calvin, John Davidson, James Melville, Thomas Boston and *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* and argued that it was Kennedy with his insistence on the necessity of a law-work preceding conversion who was out of step with the true Evangelical tradition.<sup>15</sup> He quoted at length from Calvin's *Institutes* to demonstrate the Reformer's conviction that 'repentance follows faith and is produced by it'. Bonar notes especially Calvin's vigour in opposing the contrary view: 'Those who think that repentance precedes faith, instead of flowing from or being produced by it, as the fruit by the tree *have never understood its nature*' (Bonar's italics).<sup>16</sup> Kennedy's insistence on the need for a (preferably lengthy) period of repentance prior to conversion revealed, in Bonar's view, a failure to grasp the evangelical character of repentance.

Bonar brought forward this argument without having any thought of challenging the theological tradition of Westminster Calvinism to which both he and Kennedy belonged. He was no theological innovator or iconoclast. In his dissertation on Bonar's writings B.R. Oliphant concluded that, 'His theological thought substantially

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11 Kennedy, *Hyper-Evangelism*, p. 10.

12 *Ibid.*

13 Bonar, *The Old Gospel*, p. 28.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 31.

15 *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31.

16 *Ibid.*, cf. Calvin, *Institutes* 3:3:1.

followed the ebb and flow of the general tradition of Scottish Calvinism, and in particular the "frozen orthodoxy" of the Scottish school of Evangelicalism of his own day'.<sup>17</sup> In his defence of the Moody mission Bonar had no intention of departing from that tradition. His judgement may be open to question but he had satisfied himself that the message proclaimed in the Moody mission 'is the teaching of the Westminster Confession and the Shorter Catechism'.<sup>18</sup> This forms a marked contrast to the work of more recent writers who have taken up the question of faith and repentance and have sought to demonstrate a fundamental cleavage between Calvin and the later Westminster tradition.<sup>19</sup> Perhaps further attention requires to be given to Scottish evangelical theologians like Bonar who took the 'Calvin' view of faith and repentance but without entertaining any sense that this brought them into conflict with the Westminster Confession and federal theology.

The doctrine of assurance is another area where such a discontinuity hypothesis has been advanced but again Bonar resisted Kennedy's objections without wishing to challenge in any way the Westminster tradition. Kennedy was concerned that in the Moody mission faith was being reduced to mere belief and that on the basis of their assent to certain propositions people were urged 'at once to conclude that they are saved because they have so believed'.<sup>20</sup> Not only did this reveal a superficial and inadequate understanding of faith (which involves *fiducia* as well as *assensus*) but it also offered a quite mistaken ground for assurance. The problem, wrote Kennedy, was that 'assurance is regarded as the direct result of faith, or as essential to its exercise. A consciousness of faith is itself deemed a sufficient ground of assurance. There is no place at all allowed to an attestation of faith by works.'<sup>21</sup> To Kennedy, assurance of faith was a much more subtle and elusive matter than the simple confidence in the truth of the gospel which the 'revival' held forth as the ground of an assured hope of eternal life. Objective assurance as to the truth of the Word and the trustworthiness of Christ he regarded as an altogether different thing from the subjective assurance that he himself had

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17 B.R. Oliphant, 'Horatius Bonar 1808-1889: Hymn Writer, Theologian, Preacher, Churchman: A Study of His Religious Thought and Activity' (Ph. D., University of Edinburgh, 1951), p. 125.

18 Bonar, *The Old Gospel*, p. 58.

19 See, e.g., M.C. Bell, *Calvin and Scottish Theology* (Edinburgh, 1985).

20 Kennedy, *Hyper-Evangelism*, p. 12.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 22.

genuinely trusted in Christ.<sup>22</sup> The latter could be achieved only by self-examination: 'It is the accrediting of faith by works which alone can form a basis for the steadfast assurance of having passed from death to life.'<sup>23</sup>

In response, Bonar pointed out that the faith of the Moody converts *had* been attested by works: 'family worship begun; gaiety given up; balls and parties refused; prodigal sons brought back; profane swearing lessened; the idle beginning to work; medical students offering themselves to the work of the Lord; many a dying testimony to these meetings; communicants greatly increased, both in quantity and quality.'<sup>24</sup> However, he was also anxious to defend the mission teaching that faith led directly and immediately to assurance: "'Peace with God", as the *immediate* result of a believed gospel, is what the apostles preached. "Peace with God" not as the result of a certain amount of experience or feeling, but as flowing directly from the light of the cross, is that which we are commanded to preach as the glad tidings of great joy to the sinner.'<sup>25</sup> On this point Bonar did not draw on the Evangelical tradition going back to Calvin which could have been used to support his point,<sup>26</sup> but he made it clear that he was prepared to defend theologically the immediate assurance offered in the mission preaching and to resist any tendency for protracted difficulty in obtaining assurance to be made a norm of Evangelical experience.

### III. Highlands, Lowlands and the Calvinist Tradition

Despite these differences on fairly central issues in Evangelical preaching both Kennedy and Bonar identified themselves unreservedly with Scottish Calvinist orthodoxy. The difference between them arose, it may be argued, because Kennedy was determined to uphold one particular form which that tradition had taken whereas Bonar took a sufficiently broad and generous approach as to allow him to describe Moody's teaching as 'thoroughly Calvinistic'.<sup>27</sup> The Highland Calvinism of Kennedy, on the other hand, had formed a much more strictly defined pattern of religious life. It was taken for granted, e.g., that conversion was a process which took some time to

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22 See, e.g., J. Kennedy, *The Days of the Fathers in Ross-shire* (Edinburgh, 1861), p. 124.

23 J. Kennedy, *A Reply to Dr. Bonar's Defence of Hyper-Evangelism* (Edinburgh, 1875), p. 34.

24 Bonar, *The Old Gospel*, p. 52n.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 23.

26 See, e.g., Calvin, *Institutes* 3:2:6, 15.

27 Bonar, *The Old Gospel*, p.59.

be completed. We can understand Kennedy's dismay at the 'sudden' conversions of the Moody mission when we appreciate that in Highland Evangelicalism a convert was not accepted until his faith had been authenticated by a godly life. John MacInnes records that 'in Skye, three years was regarded as a suitable probationary period. By then it would appear whether the convert was a hypocrite... or a true child of God.'<sup>28</sup> Similarly, with regard to assurance, the belief was well-established among Highland Christians that assurance was a quite separate matter from faith and could be obtained only with great difficulty. This had produced in the Highlands an almost melancholy religious doubt and self-questioning which was generally not found in the rest of the Church. As William Taylor observed, 'In other districts it is not uncommon to hear the language of appropriation and high assurance from the lips of carnal men: in these Highlands, such language was seldom heard even from true believers.'<sup>29</sup>

Kennedy wrote as the acknowledged representative of a mature and consolidated religious tradition which was characterised by such distinctive features and was not without a certain intolerance. Bonar recognised that the difference in their assessment of the Moody mission could be accounted for by the Highland-Lowland divide: '(Dr Kennedy's) Northern experiences seem to unfit him for appreciating the religion of "the Southron", as he designates us of the Lowlands.'<sup>30</sup> The Highland leader's hostility to the Moody mission came as no surprise to Bonar since 'he has not seen his way to believe in any of those former Southern awakenings by which most Scottish Christians have been gladdened'.<sup>31</sup> This stern disapproval must be placed in the context of staunch adherence to a distinct and peculiar religious tradition. In the Highlands it was expected, *e.g.*, that godly men and women would have the gift of 'second sight' and of prophecy. Kennedy in his writings had made much of such phenomena.<sup>32</sup> Might his hostility to the Moody mission be based on the absence of such distinctive features of Highland religion? Bonar suspected as much: 'His standard differs from ours. His point of view is not at all the same as ours. He claims certain things which we do

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28 J. MacInnes, *The Evangelical Movement in the Highlands of Scotland* (Aberdeen, 1951), p. 217.

29 W. Taylor (ed.), *Memorials of the Life and Ministry of Charles Calder Macintosh* (Edinburgh, 1870), p. 19.

30 Bonar, *The Old Gospel*, p. 13.

31 *Ibid.*

32 See *ibid.*, pp. 16-19.

not. He demurs to some things to which we do not.<sup>33</sup> The controversy, as Bonar saw it, brought to light not only Highland hostility to a particular campaign but a lack of sympathy with religious life in the Lowlands as a whole: 'it is...the theology of the Lowlands that Dr. Kennedy has summoned to his tribunal, and against which he utters such hard impeachments.'<sup>34</sup>

Bonar was accurate in his judgement that behind Kennedy's strictures lay the fact that the character and ethos of Highland Calvinism was quite distinct from even the strictest Calvinism of the Lowlands. Certainly they had enough in common with Lowland Calvinists to join them in the Free Church in 1843, but the history of that Church cannot properly be understood without an appreciation that the Highlanders brought with them a highly distinctive religious tradition which they were determined to maintain. As James Hunter observes, 'In the history of the popular religious movement in the Highlands the Disruption of the Church of Scotland was a largely fortuitous event.'<sup>35</sup> Highland Calvinism had its own history and its own tradition and its connection with the nineteenth-century Free Church was somewhat incidental. Kennedy's primary loyalty was not to the national denomination to which he belonged but rather to the 'religion of Ross-shire'. Indeed at one stage he floated the idea of a new church being formed - 'a Celtic Church of Caledonia'.<sup>36</sup> Separation from the Established Church, in a more or less organised form, had been endemic throughout the Highlands in the first half of the nineteenth century and, while most of the dissenting groups adhered to the Free Church in 1843, there is no doubt that the people retained their independent outlook.

What was becoming apparent in the controversy between Kennedy and Bonar over the Moody mission was that the two streams of Evangelicalism, Lowland and Highland, which had come together in the formation of the Free Church in 1843 were separating again. While the establishment of new Highland denominations in 1893 and 1900 occurred ostensibly for ecclesiastical and constitutional reasons, behind these lay the determination to maintain a distinctive *religious* tradition. Archibald MacNeilage, one of the leaders of the Highland minority which declined to enter the United Free Church in 1900, admitted frankly that 'one subordinate thing which made him stand

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33 *Ibid.*, p. 20.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 26.

35 J. Hunter, *The Making of the Crofting Community* (Edinburgh, 1976), p. 103.

36 J. Kennedy, *The Distinctive Principles and Present Position and Duty of the Free Church* (Edinburgh, 1875), p. 30.

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out with the men who were standing out from the Union was that every man and woman known to him personally to be a man of prayer was opposed to the Union'.<sup>37</sup> Presumably what he meant by this was that everyone whose piety took the form characteristic of Highland Calvinism was opposed to the Union. The ecclesiastical action was taken, in part at least, in order to maintain that particular religious tradition. Since that time Highland Evangelicalism has, to a large extent, gone its own way. The open disagreement between Bonar and Kennedy in 1874 may therefore be seen as a marker indicating the parting of the ways between Highland Calvinism and Lowland Evangelicalism and may serve as a useful point of reference in any doctrinal or ecclesiastical discussions between Highland and Lowland Evangelicals which are aimed at mutual understanding.

### **Conclusion: On the Use of the Telescope**

The value of special evangelistic campaigns, the relation of faith and repentance, the nature of assurance, the distinctiveness of Highland spirituality – these have been recurrent themes in Scottish theological discussions in the years since 1874 and on each of them the controversy between Kennedy and Bonar offers a valuable historical perspective. More generally, and perhaps more importantly, the controversy raised a question of what might be called a sense of proportion. Both Kennedy and Bonar lived and died Westminster Calvinists. What divided them was the determination of the one to maintain intact a particular well-defined religious tradition and the willingness of the other to adopt a more open, eclectic and tolerant approach. Historically the judgment of Bonar that Moody's teaching was thoroughly Calvinistic may well seem naive since the campaign now appears to have been a turning point in the transition from the old Calvinism to a less doctrinal Evangelicalism with quite different emphases.<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless there is a cogency in Bonar's sanguine view of the new emphases in Moody's preaching. His argument was that emphasis on one truth does not necessarily involve denial of others:

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37 *Ross-shire Journal*, 7th December 1900, Speech of Archibald MacNeillage at Strathpeffer.

38 Carnegie Simpson, *e.g.*, commented of Moody that 'His preaching of "a free Gospel" to all sinners did more to relieve Scotland generally – that is to say, apart from a limited number of select minds – of the old hyper-Calvinistic doctrine of election and of what theologians call "a limited atonement" and to bring home a sense of the love and grace of God towards all men, than did even the teaching of John MacLeod Campbell'. P.C. Simpson, *The Life of Principal Rainy* (London, 1909), I, p. 408.

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'When writing on one subject, an author confines himself to that; so that, if he had written nothing more, inferences might be drawn unfavourable to his soundness, especially by those in whose minds one idea so predominates as to destroy the proportions of all the rest.'<sup>39</sup> A proper sense of proportion was what Bonar was struggling for and what he found lacking in Kennedy's approach. There were features of the Moody mission which he too found objectionable, but he was prepared to lay these aside as insignificant when viewed in proportion to the central matter of the preaching of the biblical gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit. Kennedy declined to accept this sense of proportion, commenting of Bonar: 'He inverts the telescope when he looks at anything connected with the movement, which he cannot approve.'<sup>40</sup> The question is, however, who was looking through the right end of the telescope?

The problem with Kennedy's refusal to accept Bonar's sense of proportion was that every element in the familiar tradition appeared to him to be equally important. There was some justice in Bonar's complaint that Kennedy would not approve of any movement until he was satisfied that it carried all the hallmarks of the 'religion of Ross-shire'! He was persuaded that the whole pattern of religious life carried in every part scriptural and absolute authority. This led him to object, e.g., to the practice of 'silent' prayer which he had noted as a feature of the campaign meetings. The practice of engaging in private (silent) prayer on entering the public assembly was not familiar to Kennedy and he argued that it was unscriptural on the grounds that Christ commanded that when we pray we should enter our closet and shut the door.<sup>41</sup> In his reply Bonar had little difficulty in demonstrating the absurdity of the argument that Christ's command to pray in the closet precludes prayer in other situations and the perversity of condemning silent prayer in Christian meetings.<sup>42</sup> The point demonstrates the lengths to which objection may be carried where there is no proper sense of proportion. Kennedy was intent on resisting every innovation. In his view the whole of the familiar tradition could be defended biblically and there could be no question of any compromise on matters of lesser importance.

Bonar set out in a different direction. His pamphlet is essentially a plea to allow for diversity. On conversion he was willing to allow that God brings people to himself in different ways and he was determined to resist the imposition of any one prescribed pattern.

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39 Bonar, *The Old Gospel*, p. 25.

40 Kennedy, *Reply to Dr. Bonar*, p. 37.

41 Kennedy, *Hyper-Evangelism*, p. 30.

42 Bonar, *The Old Gospel*, pp. 61-62.

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Likewise, might there not be different paths by which believers come to assurance of their salvation? Some may accept the assurance which is immediately available in the word of the gospel. Others may pass through a long struggle before reaching a position of certainty as to their salvation. Highland Calvinist spirituality could certainly be honoured but it could not be granted an exclusive authority. On the other hand, he did not wish to claim that the Moody mission was beyond reproach. It may have been deficient in many respects but God is pleased to use even deficient instruments: 'He speaks through stammering tongues, and does his mightiest things by bruised reeds.'<sup>43</sup> Where the main substance of the Evangelical message was being preached with power and effectiveness Bonar was prepared to rejoice in that and give lesser attention to differences which he judged to be of lesser importance. He stood with Kennedy on the ground of Westminster Calvinism but he was determined to 'use the telescope' to gain a proper sense of proportion. The Moody mission was taking the biblical gospel to the urban population of Scotland. That was the central vision, and commitment to that great cause must not be undermined by reservations on matters which, proportionally, were of relatively little importance. Kennedy used the telescope differently. He could scarcely discern anything of authentic gospel preaching in the Moody mission while its objectionable features loomed large in his sight. Their failure to agree on what was the correct sense of proportion was what ultimately divided Bonar and Kennedy. These discussions on 'the use of the telescope' reveal a difference of approach which has remained influential in the subsequent history of Scottish Evangelicalism. Even when people stand together on the ground of Westminster Calvinism their perspectives may differ radically when they use the telescope in different ways.

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43 *Ibid.*, p. 22.

## REVIEWS

### **Family Matters: The Pastoral Care of Personal Relationships**

Sue Walrond-Skinner

New Library of Pastoral Care, SPCK, London, 1988; 179pp., £4.95;  
ISBN 0 281 04350 7

This book, as with its companions in this series, is for those who are involved in pastoral care at any level. Sue Walrond-Skinner contributes effectively a distillation of her extensive experience as a family counsellor. By 'family' is meant the whole group of persons who form a household over a period of time and who may be related by blood or law in addition to their emotional ties.

This book offers real insight into the reasons for meeting with the whole family group together, and describes the tools available for helping that group and its members to continue to mature. The author succeeds in instilling confidence into her readers by repeated observation that employment of skills as a counsellor in the midst of the family group matrix can unlock new resources and energy within that family. This can happen even in the unstructured but intentional visit by a pastorally alert person to that home. However, structure and form and knowledge of the dynamics of human relationships belong to the 'how' of family counselling. The 'content' belongs to the initiative of the whole family. Sue Walrond-Skinner leads through the whole process. She provides a theoretical framework for understanding by the offering of a description of a family 'life-cycle' (Carter and McGoldrick). She takes her readers as colleagues through the meeting with the family group, offering them a view of the subsequent process under the headings of the structural, strategic, psychoanalytic, and experiential approaches.

The 'strategic' approach will surprise those who emphasise Rogerian 'non-directiveness' in their counselling philosophy. The appropriateness of contracting with the family members that they should all try to remain as they are and avoid changing their behaviour is not easily questioned. Most parents have employed the method of instructing children to continue with repeated irritating behaviour, having learnt from experience that this imperative produces the actually desired and opposite result! Surprise though this may be for some, Sue Walrond-Skinner's introductory chapter suggests she has had a poor experience of some 'individual counselling': 'family therapy ... is associated with a restructuring of the system in which problems are embedded, rather than the removal of symptoms of individual pain.'

If this is a minor criticism, then so is the observation that the text appears at times to be written for the lecture room. Words like 'systemic', 'triangulation', and 'congruence' imply an attitude of the author to her audience. This series is such a valuable commodity that it is a pity indeed to allow such a significant contribution as 'family matters' to be tagged with the symbol of elitism. The occasional illustration of church life from the narrow confines of Anglicanism will jar in Scotland too. The attempt made to move towards a theology of the family is to be admired. One wonders whether the series editor would include a book on theology of pastoral care at some time.

This book's content is superb value for a very small outlay. The splendid references are as ever, a bonus.

*Peter Bowes, Morningside Baptist Church, Edinburgh.*

**Theology Beyond Christendom: Essays on the Centenary of the Birth of Karl Barth**

John Thompson (ed.)

Pickwick, Allison Park, Pennsylvania, 1986; 350pp., n.p.;  
ISBN 0 915138 63 8

This volume deserves wider publicity than it is getting and everyone interested in Barth should get hold of it. It is appropriate here to take the reviewer's lazy way out and record the contributors and their contributions.

There are seven essays in the first part on the theology of Karl Barth. Thomas Currie launches off with a brief contribution on how Barth's understanding of the being and act of God affects the theological task. (His essay includes the puzzling assertion that 'nowhere does Calvin provide us with an explicit doctrine of the Trinity', p. 7.) *Church Dogmatics* dominates the next essays. John Thompson himself expounds Barth's doctrine of the Trinity, querying only his understanding of the Spirit; Christina Baxter exercises a studied neutrality in presenting the 'nature and the place of Scripture in the *Church Dogmatics*'; Thomas Smal offers the most critical of the engagements in an essay on Barth's doctrine of the Holy Spirit, and Stuart McLean gives an account of a fairly slender but relatively unfamiliar portion of Barth's discussion of creation and anthropology. In the midst of these, W.A. Whitehouse discusses 'Election and Covenant' more with reference to Barth than as a concentrated exposition, while Martin Rumscheidt concludes this part with a sortie outside *Church Dogmatics* into 'The First Commandment as Axiom for Theology: a Model for the Unity of Dogmatics and Ethics'.

'Karl Barth in Dialogue', the second half of this volume, also gets seven essays. The late Harold Nebelsick provides the longest of the collection, treating Barth's understanding of science, while Thomas Torrance then proceeds to show the influence of the Greek Fathers on Barth, engaging yet again with the Moriarty of dualism as he detects the defects of the West. Professor Torrance's thought heavily influences the next contribution too, in which Ray Anderson aspires to use elements of Barth's theological anthropology to establish a 'new direction for natural theology'. Alasdair Heron then looks at 'Barth, Schleiermacher and the Task of Dogmatics', emphasizing parallels and agreements, before Colin Gunton returns to the assault on the West by celebrating the possibilities of a Barthian 'theology after christendom' as alternative to Augustinianism and the Enlightenment. Finally, J.K.S. Reid gives an account of 'Karl Barth and Ecumenical Affairs', leaving just Geoffrey Bromiley, who has more than a passing acquaintance with *Church Dogmatics*, to bring us back to some of its themes in an essay on the abiding significance of its author.

Rather than weighing up the relative merits of these essays, let me commend the collection and congratulate its editor. But what of Barth

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himself? His stature needs no emphasis and we who are his inferiors will always learn much from one who really was concerned with God, and not human construction. Yet I confess a niggling worry. It starts when we are told in the opening essay that Barth's starting-point 'has enabled us to think about God in a new way' (p. 2); deepens on reading Nebelsick's account of Barth's false starts in theology; climaxes on being told by Professor Gunton that the Enlightenment is 'the rebellious but true child of Augustinianism' (p. 289), Augustine being the Grand Dualist. It is surely *not* any Augustinian dualistic errors that led the Enlightenment (and what was that?) away from God; to ascribe to that kind of intellectual error the capacity to ruin belief is to misunderstand the logic of unbelief. Secular culture is not produced by the Augustinian kind of mistake; why did the 'Enlightenment' not correct Augustinian Christianity instead of abandoning all it stood for? Gunton's diagnosis overestimates the role of conceptual schemes in relation to faith, and Barth's experiments with theological conceptualities, serious and important as they may be, can be treated by the earlier contributors too with an undue sense of their religious and theological importance. The reviewer suspects Barth himself of a version of intellectualism, which this charge involves. And yet in a review the allegation must go by default for lack of precision in the charge and production of evidence for it. So readers will do well to read this collection and judge for themselves.

*Stephen Williams, United Theological College, Aberystwyth.*

### **The Giving Gift**

Tom Smail

Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1988; 214pp., £6.95; ISBN 0 340 41503 7.

Familiar influences are here – Smail's Barthian Reformed roots, his contact with Fountain Trust – but also this time, a growing appreciation of the Orthodox tradition leads to a development in his thinking and changes of emphasis, while his critical approach means that there are no wholesale, unthinking changes, and much continuity with *Reflected Glory* and *The Forgotten Father*.

This book largely fixes on the personhood of the Holy Spirit. The motif of giving and gift, 1) reminds us that we are in the sphere of grace, 2) gives a dynamic picture of movement, of relationships, and 3) emphasises that we are in the personal realm. The biblical and orthodox teaching of the Spirit as divine, as a different person from both Father and Son, is lucidly explained and defended against modern aberrations.

The importance of the work of the Spirit in the life of Christ is prominently featured, correcting an imbalance indicated, *e.g.* in our focussing on Jesus' birth story (found in only two Gospels) to the relative neglect of his baptism. There are very important keys here to giving us a better Christology as well as important points for understanding the person and work of the Spirit. The incarnational and spirit Christologies are not competitors, but complementary. This is not only a word to others, but a clear advance on Smail's position in *Reflected Glory*.

Our use of Scripture should also be affected by giving proper place to the Spirit's life and creativity, so that Scripture is the primary but not final witness to Christ. We are left to discern the Spirit's present creativity for a fuller witness, 'a far more delicate and subtle business than simply looking for biblical texts to support a position'. While this does stress the place of the Spirit as a divine centre of activity distinct from both Father and Son, it surely leaves us with more problems than it solves when it comes to discerning what that fuller witness is.

From considering who is the Spirit, the final three chapters move to his giving of life, fellowship and worship. While the first of these entails repetition of material found earlier in the book, the third climaxes in a superb treatment of prayer. For combining his robust theological skills and warm pastoral concerns, the focussing of debates on the real issues, and the demonstration of how we can grow and develop through new influences, this is a worthy book. I hope he will develop his seminal references on Christology into a fuller book, and that that book will give us as hilarious a misprint as the one on p. 115, n. 15. Take a look just for this!

*Gordon Palmer, Ruchazie Parish Church, Glasgow.*

### **Theology from the Womb of Asia**

Choan-Seng Song

S.C.M. Press, London, 1988; 241pp., £8.95; ISBN 0 334 02357 2.

Many years ago, at a conference in India, I heard the Japanese Christian, Dr Koyama, say that what the West had given Asia was 'fish in bread', but that Asia needed 'fish in rice'. In other words, it needed a presentation of Jesus that would be meaningful in Asia's rice-eating culture. This important, original, and deeply moving book attempts to do just that. This book is not the full answer, but it has important things to say that should not be ignored.

The writer, a professor at the Pacific School of Religions in California, is a Taiwanese, and the deeply significant translations of Asian poetry, parables, folk-stories and cries for justice (many made by the writer) come mainly from an East Asian background: there are many examples from Taiwan, China, Korea, Japan, and the Philippines, as well as some from Aboriginal Australia, Mauri New Zealand, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, and India – but none at all from Islam. It would be narrowing its range to describe the book as 'liberation theology', but it is full of cries of oppressed underdogs and suffering people – the 'potato' of Taiwan 'eaten' by foreign rulers, the Korean going to execution, the oppressed daughter-in-law, the unwanted child of the starving mother 'cruel, yet loving', the woman in the pangs of childbirth, the widow of a husband tortured and killed, the Tamil in Sri Lanka oppressed by the followers of the 'compassionate' Buddha, and many more. We used to sing

Lands of the East, awake!

Soon shall your sons be free.

In many Asian lands freedom has not yet come.

The writer pleads for a theology that penetrates and images the eternal overtones of life, passionate for the right and yet compassionate towards the weak, keeping its vision of God's tomorrow. It registers a protest against the cerebral, intellectual Western approach to theology, which it feels is divorced

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from real life. Many Bible stories are retold, and it is fascinating to see what they look like through an Eastern mind. For instance, the Hosannas of Palm Sunday:

It is now the time for the people to shout out loud and for the leaders to keep dead silence. The hour has arrived for the pent-up bitterness of the humiliated to rise from the bottom of their hearts in a magnificent chorus venting its sorrows and shouting its hopes... That is why Jesus refused to order his followers to be silent... He was not apolitical.

When the writer says of a Vedic Hymn

A hymn such as this – and there are many many more, not only hymns, but dramas, stories, arts, that speak out of the life and history of Asian people – does it have no theological meaning? Does it not share some fundamental questions we Christians seek to answer in our faith? Is the hope expressed by it completely alien to the hope cherished by us Christians?

We may be ready to agree, and the book is a goldmine of the kind of longings that only Christ can satisfy. Where I would take issue is when the writer goes further, questioning the uniqueness of Christianity, and suggesting that Asian religions not only asked questions but had adequate answers. He retells the story of the grateful Samaritan whose leprosy had been cleansed:

Jesus said to him, *Your faith!* It was not the faith cultivated by the religion of the Jews, but his faith as a Samaritan, that cured him.

What is omitted in the comment is that it was the faith of a man who had just *met Jesus*. In the same way, the Buddhist pantheist who 'sees the Buddha' in another is not a true parallel to the 'Inasmuch...' of Matthew 25.

Another valid criticism would be that the writer's doctrine of the cross is one-sided, stressing compassion, but ignoring judgment:

Wherever he went, a community of compassion came into being. It was a loving, saving, and suffering community. And Jesus brought that community all the way to the cross, where he loved the whole world and suffered with it. Salvation takes place within a community of compassion.

It is impossible in a review as short as this to do adequate justice to a memorable book. It should be required reading for missionaries going to Eastern Asia – there is so much helpful material in it – even if they find themselves unable, as I do, to agree with all its conclusions.

*William G. Young, North Kessock, Inverness-shire.*

### **A Call for Continuity: The Theological Contribution of James Orr**

Glen G. Scorgie

Mercer University Press, Macon, GA, 1988; xiv + 189pp., n. p.; ISBN 0 86554 308 9.

This is a fine study of a Scottish theologian who has exercised an enduring influence over conservative Evangelicals. Glen Scorgie, now associate professor of theology at Canadian Bible College in Saskatchewan, did his research at St Andrews. His subject, James Orr (1845–1913), was a United Presbyterian minister brought up in Glasgow, trained at the University there and in pastoral charge at Hawick for seventeen years before going on to

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theology chairs in his church's colleges in Edinburgh and Glasgow. He was to win an international reputation as a defender of the faith.

Scorgie does well to reconstruct Orr's intellectual formation. He owed a large debt to the tradition of Scottish 'common-sense' philosophy as modified in a Kantian direction by Sir William Hamilton, but also imbibed a small dose of Hegelianism. The result was a progressive thinker who in the early years of his ministry helped secure the issuing of a Declaratory Statement by the United Presbyterians modifying the demands of subscription to the Westminster Confession. The breakthrough to fame came in 1893 with the publication of his first book, *The Christian View of God and the World*. It was a call, then unusual, for the adoption of an integrated worldview in which all branches of knowledge would find their place. From that standpoint Orr subsequently resisted Ritschlianism, drastic biblical criticism, evolutionary theory and doubts about the virgin birth and physical resurrection. At the end of his career Orr was particularly concerned to popularise his position, not least through four contributions to the pamphlet series *The Fundamentals*. He was remarkably successful. The American apologist E.J. Carnell, while regretting Orr's refusal to endorse inerrancy, was heavily swayed in the 1940s by his rational case for Evangelical orthodoxy. And throughout his career Orr was notably free from rancour. Opponents vied with each other to praise his courtesy in debate. The man compels our esteem.

Scorgie's readable analysis is pitched at the right level. Each book is located in relation to contemporary trends, but the author never lingers too long to lose our attention. The most obvious deficiency is the lack of human interest. Orr's wife is given only one sentence. Even the circumstances of Orr's own life are not pursued, though that is primarily because of the paucity of biographical materials. The analysis of his thought and its context is in general highly persuasive. It is true that the persisting power of British Hegelianism is minimised by Scorgie, and consequently the extent to which Orr was directing his polemic against a Hegelian target is underrated. The overall case is nevertheless sustained. Orr was clearly a theologian who, having diagnosed the challenges of his day, read massively and wrote powerfully. He urged a continuity of belief in the supernatural on readers of his day – and of ours.

*D.W. Bebbington, University of Stirling.*

### **The Question of Healing Services**

John Richards

Darton, Longman and Todd, London, 1989; 182pp., £3.50; ISBN 0 232 51762 2

### **A Healing Fellowship: A Guide to Practical Counselling in the Local Church**

Mary Pytches

Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1988; 142pp., £2.25; ISBN 0 340 48701 1

### **Preaching to Sufferers: God and the Problem of Pain**

Kent D. Richmond

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Abingdon Press, Nashville, TN, 1988; 160pp., £9.95; ISBN 0 687 33873 5

### **A Christian Guide to Sexual Counselling**

Mary A. Mayo

Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 1987; 261pp., \$16.95; ISBN 0 310 35990 2

These four books are concerned with different aspects of Christian caring. John Richards is well-known for his writings on healing and deliverance (exorcism). He has wide experience of the Christian healing ministry and in this book he discusses most of the questions which arise about public services of healing. He considers the case for and against the holding of such services, and gives sensible and practical advice about organising them. The book provides a lot of information not available in so small a compass elsewhere and would be very valuable to anyone interested in the ministry of healing, whether or not they intended to arrange services of healing.

Mary Pytches wrote a book on the ministry of inner healing to which *A Healing Fellowship* is a sequel as well as a response to various questions arising from it. She describes inner healing as taking place in a person's life 'when the Holy Spirit brings to the surface an unresolved issue, which has been previously repressed or suppressed, in order to bring a resolution. These unresolved issues include such things as unconfessed sin, broken relationships, unhealed hurts, inner vows, wrong choices and attitudes.' The term 'inner healing' thus appears to be a trendy term for what has always been accepted as part of the work of the Holy Spirit. Mrs Pytches rightly insists that inner healing is best practised in the fellowship of the Christian community and in a mature and secure caring relationship. The techniques of counselling and even inner healing appear to owe a lot to secular psychology and psychotherapy, and this book uses (and explains) psychological terminology extensively. The author is not altogether successful in answering the question of whether inner healing as now conceived is truly biblical. There is no doubt that Christian counselling may include the use of secular psychological techniques based on a knowledge of the human mind as created by God. The book can be recommended to those looking for a practical and sensible guide to Christian psychotherapy.

The third book is by Kent Richmond, a Methodist hospital chaplain in Wisconsin. His book aims to help those called upon to preach in circumstances of suffering. It is a book of theodicy attempting to justify the ways of God to human beings. He first defines the nature of the problem and then considers six possible answers, all of which he finds to be inadequate. His own answer to the age-old problem of the relation of God's goodness and omnipotence to human suffering is that God suffers with us in our suffering, and this is worked out in terms of 'process theology'. He then considers the place of the pastor in the hospital setting in the light of his special resources of prayer and spiritual comfort. He concludes the book with an appendix of sample sermons and a selected bibliography.

The title of Mary Mayo's book is ambiguous. Is it *A Christian Guide to (Secular) Sexual Counselling* or *A Guide to Christian Sexual Counselling*? In fact it appears to be both, for it derives its material from both Christian and

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secular sources in the same way that Mrs Pytches does. The author is married to an obstetrician/gynaecologist and is a licensed marriage and family counsellor in South Carolina. She is very critical of the church's failure to provide positive teaching on sexuality. Consequently she maintains that one of the most important tasks for the church in the decades ahead is to teach 'with accuracy and compelling clarity the purpose and validity of human sexuality'. The book is designed to set out these aspects of sexuality and contains a great deal of biological and medical information. It is firmly based on Scripture and in her examination of Scripture teaching she suggests that the Song of Songs provides 'The Christian Sex Manual' and proceeds to expound it as such. The book is published in Zondervan's Ministry Resources Library and provides a good introduction to sex therapy for ministers who want to know what it is all about and whether it is for them. It would also be valuable for those who practise sex therapy, but need to integrate their practice with their Christian faith. Finally, it would be useful to Christian married couples with sexual problems who are wondering if sexual counselling might help them. It should be said, however, that the book reflects the North American scene rather than the British. The lack of an index is a serious defect in a book which presents so much detail about its subject, to say nothing of the numerous Scripture quotations. Nevertheless, the book is warmly recommended to those interested in its subject as a competent and lucid survey.

*John Wilkinson, Edinburgh.*

### **Science and Hermeneutics (Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation, Vol. 6)**

Vern S. Poythress

Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1988; 184pp., n.p.; ISBN 0 310 40971 3

### **Science and Providence**

John Polkinghorne

SPCK, London, 1989; 114pp., £5.95; ISBN 0 281 04398 1

Both Poythress and Polkinghorne have similar backgrounds – being mathematicians to doctoral level and beyond and currently lecturing in theological faculties.

*Science and Hermeneutics* is a fascinating attempt to apply some of the insights of Thomas Kuhn to biblical interpretation. Kuhn is one of the key figures in the philosophy of science for his thesis that science does not progress in a linear fashion, each new insight added to what was already known. He claims that science advances through radical conceptual changes – a sort of *Gestalt* shift from Newton to Einstein.

Drawing on this, Poythress suggests that the problem in biblical debate is that it is often carried out from different frameworks which make any meeting of minds difficult. He challenges us to accept that all our views are coloured in some way. 'What we know is colored by the framework in which we have our knowledge. Our basic commitments 'control us and our interpretation more than we control them'.

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Poythress takes as a case study Romans 7 – a difficult chapter to understand and with a long history of divergent interpretations. Utilising the insights of Kuhn he demonstrates that not all of this chapter easily fits any single interpretation. But this is in line with general scientific investigation where interpretations often have anomalies which are not considered sufficient grounds for rejecting that view.

This useful book reminds us that biblical and scientific investigation are often not dissimilar. Nevertheless differences are noted – *e.g.*, in biblical studies the field of investigation has authority over the researcher, whereas in science the investigator has control over the field of research to a greater degree.

Poythress writes in an easy and popular manner and explains any scientific technicalities introduced. The same cannot be said for the second work. Like his earlier work *Science and Creation*, Polkinghorne has a tendency to introduce complex scientific technicalities with a minimum of explanation. This may be fine for those versed in physics but many readers will be lost, and I suspect tempted to skip over such portions.

Polkinghorne argues for a view of God in which he continuously interacts with his creation. The deistic God-of-the-gaps and more modern ideas of the universe as the embodiment of God are countered. Indeed much of this short work is taken up with countering other viewpoints and one is sometimes left wishing for a fuller statement of the author's own views.

After a helpful introduction Polkinghorne has short chapters on providence, miracle, evil, prayer, time, incarnation and sacrament, and hope. The discussion on evil is significant for the fact that the Fall is ignored. The chapter on time reveals a view of God who does not so much know the future as is 'able to make highly informed conjectures about its possible shape'. Yet Polkinghorne fulfils his stated purpose which is 'to consider whether such a personal, interacting, God is a credible concept in this scientific age'.

*John C. Sharp, South Church of Scotland, East Kilbride.*

### **An Asian Theology of Liberation**

Aloysius Pieris, S.J.

T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 1988; 144pp., £7.95; ISBN 0 567 29158 8

This book consists of nine articles written at different times on Poverty, Liberation, and Theology of Liberation, in Asia. The author is a Jesuit priest from Sri Lanka. The language of the book is highly technical and philosophical, and for someone unfamiliar with Roman Catholic usages as well as modern missiological terms like 'inculturation' it is heavy reading. Be prepared for a sentence like the following:

Asian theology is not the fruit of ex cogitation but a process of explication, or more specifically, a christic apocalypse of the non-Christian struggle for liberation.

In the Gospels, the writer insists, God's competitor is not sex but mammon. Therefore the vow of poverty is the most important of the monastic vows.

The affluent are called to be poor so that there be no poor... The few who renounce their possessions are not 'founded and rooted in Christ Jesus' if

the many who have no possessions to renounce are not the beneficiaries of that renunciation.

Again and again monastic communities, whether Buddhist or Christian, have become rich at the expense of the poor!

Local churches *in Asia* are not *of Asia*. Where there is a large Christian presence, as in the Philippines, it is because the church there has lost its Asian roots. There are broadly speaking four Western models of inculturation: 1. The Latin model: incarnation in a non-Christian *culture*. 2. The Greek model: assimilation of a non-Christian *philosophy*. 3. The northern European model: accommodation to a non-Christian *religiousness*. 4. The monastic model: participation in a non-Christian *spirituality*.

Attempting to transplant the first three to the East is futile, because religion = culture = philosophy. Only the fourth offers a way forward. The solution Pieris sees is the formation of 'basic *human* communities' consisting of Buddhist and Christian monks working together with people who are unjustly poor and exploited. Some of this is being done in Sri Lanka. In Latin America Liberation Theology is a specifically Christian phenomenon. But 'Asia, as circumstances clearly indicate, will always remain a non-Christian continent', and therefore Christians must work together with the Buddhists, who have a monastic system, and are present in most Asian countries.

True inculturation is a rooting of the Asian church in the *liberative* dimension of voluntary poverty... with Christian and non-Christian membership, wherein mysticism and militancy meet and merge: *mysticism* based on voluntary poverty and *militancy* pitched against forced poverty.

The Asian church... must be humble enough to be baptized in the Jordan of Asian religion and bold enough to be baptized on the cross of Asian poverty... Our desperate search for the Asian face of Christ can find fulfilment only if we participate in Asia's own search for it.

As will be evident from the above quotations, there is much in the writer's presentation with which readers of this *Bulletin* will disagree. It is frankly syncretistic: it approves of the 'gnostic' approach of Buddhism as equally valid with the 'scriptural' approach of Christianity, Judaism and Islam. It has little time for the Asian missionary work of the early centuries, and writes off the contribution of the ancient Oriental churches. Christianity for the writer is a Latin, Western importation. Certainly it is true that many Asian churches are far too Western, but the solution does not lie in the surrender of Christ's claim to be the only way to the Father.

*William G. Young, North Kessock, Inverness-shire.*

## Israel in the Plan of God

Steve Motyer

Inter-Varsity Press, Leicester, 1989; 172pp., £4.95; ISBN 0 85110 671 4

In 1966, the IVF published *Men Made New*. This small paperback by John Stott was a clear and most helpful presentation of Paul's argument in Romans 5-8. Based on Keswick Convention Bible Readings it wrestled with Paul's meaning in a manner the average reasonably intelligent Christian, with little

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previous technical knowledge, would find to be within his range of understanding. What John Stott did for Romans 5–8, Steve Motyer has done for Romans 9–11, although at rather greater length and without the Keswick background. All we now need are volumes on chapters 1–4 and 12–16. Perhaps somebody reading this review will rise to the challenge!

Twelve of the fifteen chapters expound the three Pauline chapters while the first and the last confront the important issue of the Christian church's attitude to the Jews today. Are we to regard non-Christian Jews as unbelievers or fellow believers? Is the persecution which sadly characterised earlier centuries to be replaced by evangelism or dialogue? The author is right when he says that 'contemporary Christian thinking about Israel amounts to a confusing clamour of voices'.

In chapter 2 he prefaces an examination of the structure of the Epistle with an account of Jewish issues in the early church and in the ministry of Paul. In this way the scene is set for a close examination of Paul's major treatment given in Romans 9–11. He insists on the need for listening to Paul and allowing him to speak to us, and strongly criticises writers like Dodd and Leenhardt, who seem to allow their preconceptions to get in the way of such listening. Although this is so, it must be said that he is fair to the views of others. These three chapters are notorious for their difficulties. Steve Motyer evades none of these. He makes out a good contextual argument for so translating Romans 9:5 as to apply the term 'God' to Christ. He has some very helpful comments on 'hardening' and sees the importance of the allusion to Job 9:19 in Romans 9:19, an allusion overlooked by most commentaries. He vindicates Paul in the way he uses O.T. Scripture in Romans 10.

It is, of course, in chapter 11 that Paul deals with the relationship between God's dealings with Israel and the Gentiles in his own day and in the future. The author gives special attention to the words, 'and so all Israel will be saved' (11:26), examining contending views and concluding that by 'all Israel' Paul means 'all elect Israelites' just as 'the fulness of the Gentiles' means all elect Gentiles. So God's electing purpose is clearly seen at the end in his dealings with all mankind, both Jews and Gentiles.

Altogether this volume handles this important passage and its practical implications for Jewish-Christian relationships most helpfully.

*Geoffrey Grogan, Bible Training Institute, Glasgow.*

### **Theology and the Justification of Faith: Constructing Theories in Systematic Theology**

Wentzel van Huyssteen

Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1989; 205pp., n.p.; ISBN 0 8028 0366 0.

This English translation of a work which first appeared in Afrikaans in 1986 provides a stimulating and informative analysis of a cluster of central questions in modern theology. Central among these is the question of the *objectivity* of theological statements. In other words, how do theological statements about God relate to God? To what extent are they open to correction and modification, and in the light of what considerations should such modifications and corrections be made? A significant theme of van

Huyssteen's work is the role of Scripture, as the Word of God, in theological theorizing, especially in the light of the fact that Scripture is often invoked to justify widely diverging theological opinions.

Readers interested in this field of theology will find this a most helpful work. Van Huyssteen delves deeply into the writings of such luminaries as the Vienna Circle, Karl Barth, Karl Popper and Thomas S. Kuhn in his investigation of the manner in which theology is capable of making rational statements. His frequent appeal to analogies in the philosophy of the natural sciences highlights the similarities between Christian theology and the sciences, which has gained increasing recognition in recent years, on account of the work of individuals such as Thomas F. Torrance. (Torrance, unfortunately, is not mentioned in this work, which would unquestionably have gained in value through responding to his *Theological Science*.) He then moves on to deal with the question of how theories are constructed in systematic theology, focussing upon the work of Wolfhart Pannenberg and Gerhard Sauter. The inclusion of this latter writer is of especial importance, in that Sauter deserves to become more widely read in English-language circles. Finally, the work concludes with two chapters discussing the nature of the theological statements, in the light of the considerations noted earlier.

The work is at points difficult to read, and occasionally reflects its South African Reformed origins (e.g., the bibliography abounds in Afrikaans-language books and articles). Nevertheless, it will be welcomed by all concerned with defending the rational content of Christian faith. Van Huyssteen provides his readers with arguments which will give new encouragement to those wishing to defend a critical realism in theology. It also represents an important attempt to generate an understanding of biblical authority which avoids the weakness of the liberal position that Scripture cannot 'be absolute, divinely inspired, or final', while avoiding the fundamentalism which van Huyssteen ultimately regards as failing to engage with the rational content of Scripture. In summary: a stimulating work for those concerned with the authority of theological statements in the light of modern theories of knowledge.

*Alister McGrath, Wycliffe Hall, Oxford.*

## Book Notes

If the hundredth anniversary in 1989 of Horatius Bonar's death went largely unnoticed, St Catherine's Argyle Church in Edinburgh, formerly Chalmers Memorial Free Church of which Bonar was the first minister, marked it with the publication of *Horatius Bonar and His Hymns* by Graham L. Gibb (31pp., £1.50). It uses its short compass to very good effect, publishing a sermon and other items from Bonar's papers still held by the congregation, tabulating the occurrence of his hymns in modern hymnals, and noting the strange providence that such a natural hymn-writer (even when riding a camel across Sinai) should belong to a Church that still today sings only Psalms. Faith Cook's *Grace in Winter. Rutherford in Verse* (Banner of Truth, Edinburgh, 1989; 91pp., £4.95; 0 85151 555 X) is her transposition of sections of his letters into rhyming verse. It is sensitively done, and decked out with colour plates.

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into rhyming verse. It is sensitively done, and decked out with colour plates. Halcyon Backhouse has edited 67 letters from John Newton's *Cardiphonia, or the Utterance of the Heart in the Course of a Real Correspondence* (1781) in *Collected Letters* (Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1989; 287pp., £2.95; 0 340 51294 6). They include the unabridged first section – 26 letters to a nobleman, and a long introduction by David Russell of Dundee from 1824. The letters are dated, but the correspondents are not identified beyond 'the Rev. Mr P.' and the like. Letter-writing may be a dying skill, yet is still an indispensable medium of spiritual care and pastoral counsel. Newton is a fluent and easy writer and may still instruct us by his example, not least in the secure theological grounding of his engagement with personal experience – his own and others'. *Grow in Grace* by Sinclair Ferguson (Banner of Truth, 1989; 139pp., £2.50; 0 85151 557 6) likewise offers guidance on 'how we develop and mature as Christians' – more systematically, rather than person-to-person, but with a similar persuasion of the supreme importance of biblical and doctrinal teaching as the dynamic of spiritual growth.

John V. Taylor was formerly bishop of Winchester. His latest book, *Kingdom Come* (SCM Press, London, 1989; 114pp., £4.50; 0 334 00841 7) sets out to restate 'in the terms and in the experience of our world' what Jesus meant when he declared the good news of the coming of the kingdom of God. The book represents, for the serious lay reader, an interpretation of the ministry of Jesus that reflects moderate mainstream Gospel study and is sensitive to the social and political dimensions of the message of the kingdom.

Another centenary fell in 1989 – of the *Expository Times*, published since 1890 by T. & T. Clark and faithful still to its quite unique mix of pastoralia and homiletics with the reviewing of current biblical and theological studies. May the second century prove as successful as the first!

The questions raised by *Does God Speak Today* (Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1989; 102pp., £1.95; 0 340 51092 7), by David Pytches, a prominent Anglican charismatic figure (formerly bishop in Latin America), range beyond prophecy and vision to the sudden 'word from the Lord' and the 'remarkable coincidence' of more traditional Evangelical piety. Most of the book retails individual anecdotes, with a few concluding 'counterfeit revelations' for balance and a postscript (NB!) on the need for discernment. The reach is wide (Spurgeon, Evan Roberts, the desert Fathers, Brother Andrew, and many an unknown), the issues tantalising.