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SCOTTISH CULTURAL INFLUENCES ON EVANGELICALISM

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Defining Evangelicalism

My remit is to consider Scottish cultural influences on Evangelicalism. I begin with certain definitions. Evangelicalism I take to be the movement in the various denominations committed to the gospel. But we can go much further than that in specifying what we mean by Evangelicalism as a historical phenomenon. Evangelicalism has consistently displayed four characteristics. We can specify them in turn. First, evangelicals have been conversionist: they have held and practised the conviction that lives have to be transformed by the gospel, that people are not naturally Christians. Since people have to change decisively to become Christians, conversion has been the aim of their preaching and they have theologised about it. To take an example, John Witherspoon, one of the greatest of eighteenth-century evangelical ministers in the Church of Scotland, to whom we shall return, received a B.D. from the University of St Andrews for a book entitled *Regeneration*, published in 1764. 'Regeneration' covers the theology on the divine side of the process of conversion, of how people turn to Christ. It reflects the conversionism of the evangelical movement.

The second characteristic of Evangelicalism has been activism, a corollary of the practice of spreading the gospel. A good instance of this would be Thomas Chalmers, one of the best known evangelical churchmen in Scottish history, who at first was not an Evangelical. He was an adherent of the Moderate section of opinion in the Church of Scotland, which was much less committed to the spread of the gospel than Evangelicals. In his earlier Moderate phase, Chalmers came out with the memorable notion that being in the ministry was a very welcome profession because it allowed him five days of uninterrupted leisure for his favourite occupations. After his conversion to evangelical faith, this man visited the homes of 11,000 people in a single year of his Glasgow ministry. There is an enormous contrast between uninterrupted leisure and activism, a hallmark of Evangelicals.

Thirdly, there has been biblicism. Evangelicals have held that the Bible is the authoritative source of the gospel. Brownlow North, an eminent nineteenth-century Scottish evangelist, is described by his biographer as having an intense veneration and love for the Bible and that is typical of the Evangelical. Many Evangelicals in Scotland have refused to place anything above the Bible in their pile of books. The Bible must be on top. Sometimes, indeed, this esteem for Scripture verges on bibliolatry. Nevertheless, the hard core of this attitude is a respect for

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what the Bible teaches, together with a determination to obey its teachings.

Fourthly, there is the crucicentric (cross-centred) dimension of Evangelicalism. In theology, and in their devotional preoccupations, Evangelicals have made the atonement the focus of the gospel. Witherspoon, the man already referred to, wrote of free forgiveness through the blood of the atonement. Crucicentricity, we may say, has equally been a characteristic of Evangelicals.

All four of these qualities are essential to the evangelical movement. Where all are present, one may say Evangelicalism exists. Where any of them is absent, there Evangelicalism has ceased to exist.

The characteristics which I have just specified have been shown by an historic movement. It emerged in the 1730s across the English-speaking world, taking its rise from earlier Protestant traditions, but having a distinctive revivalistic flavour from its beginning. The usual starting-point taken for the evangelical movement is the revival under Jonathan Edwards at Northampton in Massachusetts in 1734-5. In Scotland, George Whitefield's preaching and the Cambuslang revival of 1742 formed a similar benchmark, although incidents of a revivalistic kind did precede that occasion. From that time, the 1740s, the movement steadily spread in Scotland. John Erskine, minister of Old Greyfriars Church in Edinburgh, was a leader within the Church of Scotland. Many younger revival-oriented ministers spread its spirit through the Established Church. Outside the Church of Scotland, Presbyterian seceders were partly evangelical by conviction, and the Relief Church that began in the 1760s was a wholly evangelical body, again Presbyterian but outside the Established Church. Furthermore, Independents and Baptists, some of them associated with James and Robert Haldane, spread the evangelical message through many parts of the land. In the nineteenth century Evangelicalism touched other denominations and gave rise to completely new denominations: the Brethren (the so-called Plymouth Brethren), in their diverse expressions, and the Salvation Army. We are therefore talking about a multi-faceted movement. It was a movement, however, which dominated Victorian Scotland to a quite extraordinary degree, not just setting the tone of its religion, but also determining the social values prevailing at large. Evangelical religion in Scotland has remained a significant force in the twentieth century. One thinks of epoch-making events like the great rallying of Evangelicals to the Billy Graham crusade in the Kelvin Hall, Glasgow, in 1955. We may therefore say that evangelical religion has played a major part in the history of Scotland over the last 250 years.

Defining Culture

So much then for Evangelicalism, one part of my title. Let us now look at the word 'culture' in the title of my paper. This too needs definition,

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not least because 'culture' is notoriously a slippery word, a word that has changed its meaning over time. A classic study is Raymond Williams' book, *Culture and Society*, which sees the altering significances of the word 'culture' as one of the best indices of developments in British society. In contemporary usage, I think three different meanings can usefully be distinguished.

Culture may be what is commonly called 'high culture'. It may be an expression of civilisation in literature, art or music. This is the normal usage of the word 'culture' in Britain. People are said to be cultured if they have developed a taste for the fine arts or go to Glyndebourne. In Aberdeen, those who are cultured will go to see the art of William Dyce in the municipal art gallery. Likewise, one should probably regard the novels of Sir Walter Scott as an expression of high art. That has not always been the estimate of them, but I think increasingly that it is the worldwide way of looking at the novelist. Scotland has made its contribution to high culture. This is the first way of interpreting 'culture'.

The second applies the term to 'popular culture'. By that is meant the expression of folk ways – customs, either old or new, that express how people in general want to be creative. This way of using the word 'culture' is much more common in the United States. There is indeed a periodical called the *Journal of Popular Culture* devoted to this subject which is published (perhaps appropriately) by Bowling Green State University in Ohio. The journal concentrates on such things as soap-opera characters and their experience of life. 'Take the High Road' might be one of its Scottish fields of study. Such programmes are features of popular culture.

There is a third meaning of 'culture', however, which constitutes a broader use of this term. In this sense the word refers, not to civilisation, high or low, but to all the attitudes and behaviour of people in a particular group. The word standardly has this significance in anthropology. This is again a usage more common across the Atlantic, but it has become increasingly common in the recent past in phrases such as 'enterprise culture'. In that expression 'culture' does not mean the art of William Dyce, nor does it mean 'Take the High Road'. Rather it means a web of attitudes, the ways in which people look at reality. That anthropological usage is adopted in the Lausanne Covenant, the document emanating from the 1974 international conference that acts as a landmark in recent evangelical history. In the Covenant's section on missionary engagement with culture, the word means this broad web of human thought and activity.

There, then, are three usages. Here, for the most part, I want to adopt the third usage, the anthropological. Because it is so broad, it is a handy portmanteau word that can contain within itself high culture and popular culture as well. So I want to talk about social attitudes and practices in

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their broadest sense, but with more than half an eye to high and popular culture in passing. But what about our issue for today, that is, the relationship of gospel and culture?

Relating Christ and Culture: Richard Niebuhr

Now it is often supposed that just as the gospel is a good thing, so culture is a bad thing. It is held to be worldly, to be humanistic, an expression of human activity over against the divine. Evangelicals commonly believe that culture is precisely that force which debases the gospel when the two come into contact. The best policy for the Christian believer, therefore, is to maintain the pristine purity of the gospel apart from culture and to reserve as sharp a segregation between the two as possible. However, that attitude to the relationship between gospel and culture is by no means the only one that is possible. There is no need to see gospel and culture as intrinsically antagonistic, for in fact there is a very wide range of possible Christian stances on the bearing of the two towards each other. We can most usefully approach the relationship through the analysis in Richard Niebuhr's book, *Christ and Culture*, published in 1951, which systematically covers the various options that the Christian has in relating gospel and culture.

First, Niebuhr isolates the position that he calls 'Christ against culture'. This is the attitude that I have just characterised. It can be seen as a sectarian stance, evident, for example, in the Mennonite tradition stemming from continental Anabaptists of the sixteenth century, in which culture is shunned, as far as possible, as worldly. The aim of this group of Christian believers has often been to create communities distinct from the surrounding culture, like the Amish of the United States. They deliberately sustain distinguishing customs, for example, using horses not motor vehicles. That policy is designed to mark off the Christian group from the surrounding non-Christian society, from contemporary cultural influences. Christ against culture, therefore, is one stance that Niebuhr describes.

The second stance is the so-called 'Christ of culture' approach. On this understanding, Christ is discerned in culture itself. This is the characteristic liberal Protestant attitude expressed for example by Albrecht Ritschl, the German theologian of the late nineteenth century, and his disciples, some of whom were to be found in Scotland in the early twentieth century. This liberal Protestant stance would hold that the advance of civilisation is to be equated with the progress of the cause of Christ. Christianity and civilisation are virtually one and the same thing. It was an identification of Christianity with Western culture. Most people in the later twentieth century have come to doubt that equation, but it has to be recognised that this stance has had among its adherents people of some distinction.

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The third stance is that described as 'Christ above culture'. This is the notion that culture leads to Christ, the creation to its Creator. Here culture is more distinct from Christian truth than on the second view, and yet that culture is understood as leading upwards, as being an avenue to the Father of all. This is a very common Roman Catholic view. It is expressed classically in the thought of Thomas Aquinas who argues for the continuity between nature, which includes the whole world of human cultural endeavour, and grace, the realm of God. Nature and grace are not in any sense antagonistic, according to Aquinas, for nature is the way into grace. An appreciation of the created world embracing the human sphere leads to the knowledge of God.

Fourthly, there is the view of 'Christ as the transformer of culture'. This is the idea that Christian people are to conquer culture, to crusade in order to dominate human creative fields. This view is usually attributed to Calvin, who undoubtedly held that secular activity is a divine vocation so that all spheres in life are to be brought under the authority of Christ. Christian culture on this view is a distinct possibility as human behaviour and attitudes increasingly become dominated by the Spirit of Christ. Christian principles, therefore, can be triumphantly embodied in culture.

The fifth position of Niebuhr is that of 'Christ and culture in paradox'. There is a permanent tension between cultural values and more distinctively Christian values. The classic exemplar here is Luther. According to Luther, Christians and their world are necessarily moulded both by faith and by the society that individuals inhabit. Christians have to engage in cultural activity, but they must do so with fear and trembling. Nothing is wholly from faith and yet Christianity can penetrate society. A paradoxical relationship therefore exists between Christ and culture.

From Niebuhr's five models, we can see that four other possible attitudes apart from the notion of rejecting culture as intrinsically hostile to the gospel are on offer to the believer. What I want to do is to explore Scottish culture and gospel for illumination of all five of these positions. What should be our stance in contemporary Scotland on the relationship of gospel and culture in the light of the past?

We begin the exploration with an examination of the wider context, the relationship between Western civilisation and the gospel. Scots are part of a developed Western country and so share a great deal with other peoples of Western Europe and North America. Scotland is marked by common features of Western civilisation, especially with English-speaking Western civilisation. Therefore we need to look at the way in which Western civilisation has impinged on the gospel in Scotland. We should pay particular attention to three cultural movements.

Impact of the Enlightenment

First, there was the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century. The Enlightenment consisted essentially in the exaltation of human reason, the notion that by rational enquiry human beings can attain to the truth. There must be investigation of the whole world, according to this point of view, in the manner of Isaac Newton. Much of the Enlightenment can be seen as adopting the techniques of natural science in order to experiment on different areas, including human beings, and so to make fresh discoveries. By means of this empirical method new facts could be firmly established. With greater knowledge, human beings could increasingly banish ignorance and folly. The idea of progress was characteristic of later eighteenth-century thought, not least in Scotland. The Enlightenment is commonly thought to have been anti-religious in essence, and it has to be said that many of its exponents, Voltaire perhaps most famously, did indeed regard religion as an obstacle to human progress. But increasingly in the recent past it has become recognised that the Enlightenment deeply influenced religion itself. This is true throughout Western Europe and North America. Theology exalted reason in this period. That is very evident, for example, in the Moderate party in the Church of Scotland. William Robertson, Principal of the University of Edinburgh, for example, was an extraordinarily able historian who preached very rational sermons.

But it was not just theologians of a liberalising stamp who were deeply influenced by the Enlightenment. It is undoubtedly the case that Evangelicals throughout the English-speaking world were strongly affected by this eighteenth-century movement of thought. In Scotland the instances are very clear. Let us take one or two. The seceders from the Church of Scotland split at the end of the eighteenth century and the two evangelical sects that emerged were called 'New Lights' because they believed in accepting new, eighteenth-century light. Their primary conclusion was that Presbyterians were not bound to the Westminster Confession in every detail. They therefore possessed new light as opposed to the old light embodied in the Westminster Confession.

Another instance is Thomas Chalmers, the nineteenth-century evangelical leader already mentioned. The most popular publication by Chalmers was not a work on theology. It was a book called *Astronomical Discourses* (1817), which contained descriptions of the beauties of the heavens revealed by the telescope. Chalmers believed in scientific technique as a means of discovering more about the Creator's wisdom because he accepted the enlightened notion of rational enquiry. He applied the principle to many other fields including political economy. But here in his astronomical sermons there is no conflict between science and religion, because both are equally wedded to empirical method, and that is of the essence of the Enlightenment legacy. We can therefore conclude that the evangelical movement in Scotland, as

SCOTTISH CULTURAL INFLUENCES ON EVANGELICALISM elsewhere in the Western world, was deeply moulded by the Enlightenment.

Appeal of Romanticism

Secondly there was Romanticism. From the 1790s there was a new mood in Western civilisation that can be given this name. It advanced steadily during the nineteenth century and can properly be seen as a reaction against the Enlightenment. A favourite metaphor of the Romantics for human behaviour was not the machine but the tree. There was an organic conception of human society developing over time. The Romantics stressed feeling and intuition over against reason and understanding. The great names would be Goethe in Germany, Wordsworth and Coleridge in England and Sir Walter Scott in Scotland. Indeed, Scott's sense of history in *Waverley* and so many of his other great novels, full of colour and pageantry, is typical of the Romantic's preoccupation with the past. This world-view necessarily impinged on Evangelicals.

The first Evangelical to be deeply swayed by Romanticism was a Scot, Edward Irving, a Church of Scotland minister in London who in the 1820s went for long walks with Coleridge on Hampstead Heath. Now nobody who went for long walks on Hampstead Heath with Coleridge escaped unscathed! As a result, Irving's view of the world was transformed. His preaching style became entirely different. Instead of ordinary sermons he began to deliver dramatic monologues, sometimes for between three and four hours. So long were they that a Psalm had to be sung in the middle to allow everyone to recover and get second breath. It was not just his technique that was affected. Irving, perhaps more famously, was the first in recent times to discern charismatic experiences in his congregation. In his day he was thought more important for reviving the notion of a premillennial second advent, which had an earlier history, but which had been virtually absent from the evangelical movement up to that point. This is the teaching that Jesus will return personally before the millennium. Irving was seeing fresh things in the Bible, in particular a dramatic intervention by Christ in order to restore all things, because he read the Scriptures with Romantic eyes.

Premillennialism was duly spread in Scotland by Horatius Bonar, now known chiefly as a hymn-writer. Bonar's hymns are notable for almost always having some allusion to the Second Coming. Romantic feelings gradually affected other aspects of Scottish church life as the nineteenth century advanced. It produced, for example, the demand for organs in the late nineteenth century to play dramatic music, replacing the precentor and unaccompanied singing. The first organ in a Scottish Presbyterian church came in 1861. It can be seen as an indication of rising standards of respectability, certainly, but it is also a symptom of the growth of Romantic taste. That was a phenomenon which impinged significantly on the evangelical movement.

Cultural Modernism

Thirdly there was the cultural phase of Modernism. Here I want to distinguish cultural Modernism sharply from theological Modernism, which is not the subject here. Theological Modernism is the notion that doctrine must be brought up-to-date by shedding apparently outdated notions. Cultural Modernism, by contrast, is a movement of opinion at the very start of the twentieth century in various cities of the Western world. The key to understanding it is to recognise that creative artists were beginning to express how they felt rather than how they ought to feel. So all the peculiar mixture of surging emotions that make up human life was suddenly exposed to the public. Surrealism in art with its haphazard dream imagery is a typical expression of Modernism. There is a debt here to the depth-psychology of Freud and Jung with their emphasis on the unconscious. But the greatest debt of cultural Modernism was to Nietzsche.

Friedrich Nietzsche, the late-nineteenth-century German classical scholar and philosopher, argued that there was no objective order in the world because there was no God. If there is no order in human discourse language can be used arbitrarily. That belief is one of the most obvious hallmarks of cultural Modernism. This mood gradually supplanted Romanticism, more amongst creative artists than a wider public at first, but by the 1960s it had spread to a much broader audience. The youth culture of the 1960s was formed, not just by the Mersey beat, but also by Modernism. Since then it has influenced Evangelicalism, most obviously in the free expression in worship commonly associated with charismatic renewal. To raise one's hand in public adoration is almost the sign of a card-carrying charismatic and it is typical of the expressiveness which marks Modernism. It is undoubtedly the case, therefore, that this third cultural phase is influencing Evangelicals in Scotland in our day.

What one can conclude from analysis of these three phases is that Scotland has participated fully in the broad trends of Western civilisation. Western cultural influences constituted important Scottish influences on the gospel. We can go on, however, to narrow the focus to Scotland alone. For surely Scotland is unique. If we need confirmation of that opinion, we have only to go to the French sociologist, Gustave d'Eichthal, writing home in 1828 from Scotland. He said this:

The character of the Scots is quite different from that of the English.

They are not at all starchy, formal and fastidious like their neighbours whose lack of free-and-easiness often makes them very tedious. Here you are allowed to have the knot of your tie awry.

What else, apart from ties being awry, is a hallmark of Scottish culture? What more distinctively Scottish influences have marked the gospel?

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Scottish Calvinism

First, there is Calvinism. It may seem odd to treat Calvinism as a cultural phenomenon. Although it is a theological tradition, Calvinism has often quite properly been treated as a cultural force in Scottish society. After 1690 the Established Church was permanently Presbyterian and with its allegiance to the standards of Calvinism it remained the primary strand of Scottish religion on into the twentieth century. Episcopalians, rarely Calvinists, were a mere 5% of the population in 1800 and a high proportion of them lived in Aberdeenshire. Methodists, who as Arminians were anti-Calvinist, never became very strong in Scotland. Indeed, so weak overall in Scotland were they that Methodism was organised into two synods north of the border. One was Scotland, the other Zetland; virtually half the Methodists, that is to say, lived in those Northern Isles. Therefore the two denominations that might have done most to moderate Calvinism were weak. Consequently, Calvinism has been extraordinarily pervasive. It is sometimes said that the first characteristic of Scottish Christianity has been Calvinism.

How then has Calvinism affected Scottish Evangelicalism? In worship, its influence is obvious. The principle of Calvin that nothing is acceptable for worship unless it has scriptural warrant led, for example, to resistance to human compositions being used in praise and therefore to the strong tradition of Psalm-singing. Calvinism has also influenced behaviour. Sabbath observance would be a good instance. In the 1850s an English Baptist minister came out of church one Sunday on Sauchiehall Street in Glasgow, whistling. A burly policeman tapped him on the shoulder and said, 'You munna do that on the Sabbath!' Sabbatarianism as a dimension of Calvinism has undoubtedly been a mark of Scottish evangelical religion. For such reasons Calvinism is often represented as a stern blight on Scotland, causing dourness, ruining its religion and therefore its culture. This is a very common theme in twentieth-century commentators on Scottish life.

It is usually supposed that the quality in Calvinism that has given rise to its blighting power is its fatalism. Its emphasis on predestination is often illustrated from James Hogg's *Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, a fiction which expresses the rambling notion that because the protagonist is certainly saved he can commit any crime with impunity. It is thought that Hogg represents the predestinarian strand in Scottish cultural life very accurately and therefore that Scottish Evangelicals have been a depressing lot resigned to their fate. This is a gross misrepresentation. For one thing, it ignores the reality that Calvinism has changed over time. Seventeenth-century versions of Calvinism were indeed often fatalistic. Predestination was commonly emphasised in the seventeenth-century more than by Calvin himself. But the evangelical movement arising in the eighteenth century did not accept seventeenth-century versions. Rather, the evangelical movement followed Jonathan

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Edwards, the American theologian, in rejecting the view that humans are physically unable to repent and believe in the gospel, accepting only that human beings suffer from a moral inability and so are culpably opposed to God. Following Edwards, Scottish Evangelicalism was not fatalist. It held that human will does operate. Humans are actually responsible for their attitude to the gospel, having a duty to believe. Consequently, the gospel in Scotland over the last 250 years should not be associated with a dark and repressive creed. Calvinism in an evangelical form enhanced the sense of personal responsibility rather than denying it.

Anti-Catholicism in Scotland

According to many media presentations, the second most important feature of Scottish religion after Calvinism is sectarianism. By that is usually meant the rivalry between Protestants and Catholics that leads to violence at football matches. The point here is that anti-Catholicism, a deep-seated feeling among Evangelicals, has been a distasteful attitude in Scotland. Anti-Catholicism has certainly remained strong, not just in the nineteenth century, but also in the twentieth century; in the 1920s some extraordinary reports to the General Assembly of the Kirk urged racial purity by the deportation of Irish Catholic paupers and criminals from the country.

Although it has to be conceded that Evangelicals have sometimes expressed unpleasant attitudes, prejudice was not universal among Evangelicals. Many supported Roman Catholic emancipation in 1829. Although they disagreed with Roman Catholics theologically, they supported their civil rights. The great upsurge in anti-Catholic feeling amongst Evangelicals came in the 1840s because of the huge Irish immigration following the appalling famine in Ireland of that decade. A lot of it at grass-roots level can be recognised as a symptom of fear about competition for scarce jobs. There was an economic explanation of this prejudice which was at least as strong for many people as the theological. Furthermore, this anti-Catholic feeling has now quite properly been diagnosed by Linda Colley in her notable book *Britons*, as part of the nation-building process whereby British identity was cultivated by Protestantism and war against the French. British nationalism was a strongly anti-Catholic force that could not help but affect Evangelicals. It was not just evangelical Protestantism that was responsible for anti-Catholic attitudes, for they were also encouraged by the secular context and by the state itself. This instance of anti-Catholicism in the ambience of Evangelicalism shows the risk of accepting cultural attitudes because they seem to mesh with evangelical theology. Catholicism appeared to be a bad thing because it was wrong about the way of salvation, and hence many Evangelicals inferred that Catholics were a bad lot. The result of that prejudice has been the virtual impossibility for Protestants to spread the gospel amongst Irish immigrants to Scotland and their

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descendants ever since the 1840s. The Christian faith in Scotland has suffered in consequence.

Scottish Common-Sense Philosophy

A third distinctive cultural influence has been common-sense philosophy. In the late eighteenth century there was a philosophical movement often called the 'Scottish philosophy'. It stemmed from Thomas Reid, whose *Enquiry into the Human Mind* in 1764 was an answer to the scepticism of David Hume. According to Hume we cannot know for certain even whether the sun will rise tomorrow. Reid thought on the contrary that some things are certain because our intuitions are reliable. The concept of cause and effect, for example, is part of our intellectual make-up. Such basic concepts for reasoning need no proof, since they are like basic axioms in mathematics. This Scottish common-sense philosophy became very widespread in the English-speaking world in the nineteenth century. It was taken to America by John Witherspoon, who became the President of Princeton University. Witherspoon and other leading advocates were Evangelicals and this school of thought was taken up eagerly as a vehicle for the gospel. Spurgeon's College, for example, one of the major theological seminaries of the late nineteenth century in London, naturally taught Scottish common-sense philosophy.

The problem was that 'common-sense' was a particular phase in the history of philosophy, a set of ideas stemming from the later Enlightenment. As Romanticism advanced following the Enlightenment, it affected philosophy. The Romantic temper nourished a new school of idealist philosophy which began to influence Scotland in the 1860s. This movement denied that common-sense philosophy was truly common sense, a part of the human condition. The idealists taught a wholly new approach, so that Scottish philosophy seemed *passé*. Younger men trained in the universities from the 1860s rejected common-sense philosophy and the evangelical assumptions which seemed to be bound up with it as part of the same package. Liberal thinkers, often beginning within the evangelical movement, standardly moved away from evangelical belief because it seemed incompatible with modern thought. This instance reveals a danger in the interaction of culture and gospel, the risk of too close identification of the gospel with a transient phase in human culture. When the phase passes, so does the appeal of the gospel to people of intellectual stature.

Education

A fourth Scottish factor has been education. Scotland was noted for the extent of its parish school system. The Reformation ideal, largely carried out, meant that by 1800 only ten parishes in the whole of the land lacked a public school. The system was designed to encourage literacy and in turn to promote Bible reading. Associated with it was the belief that all

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ministers should be graduates, a conviction that remained in the Church of Scotland throughout the period we are examining. This intellectual emphasis led to able theology being written from an evangelical perspective, especially in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and especially in the Free Church and United Free Church. Men such as James Denney wrote extraordinarily powerful evangelical works that still stimulate many today.

But a problem arose with this intellectual emphasis in Scottish life. Some began to rate the intellectual higher than the evangelical. There was, for example, an uncritical acceptance of a particular phase in biblical criticism, so that some of the pupils of George Adam Smith, that distinguished Principal of the University of Aberdeen, began to think that criticism of the Bible could be pursued without application to believers' lives. Ministers trained in this way of looking at the Bible became infinitely less effective in the cause of the gospel in the inter-war period and fostered the liberal evangelical trend of that period. This reveals the risk associated even with scholarly endeavour. It can put too much emphasis on the academic to the detriment of the cause of Christ.

Social Philosophy

Fifthly, there was Chalmers' social philosophy. Thomas Chalmers in his *Christian and Civic Economy of Large Towns*, published in 1821, developed social policies for the period. Population increase, industrialisation and urbanisation led him to ask: how can we Christianise and civilise the rising proletariat? The answer was to restrict poor relief to the really needy – the able-bodied should help themselves. There should be an effort to investigate the circumstances of the poor very carefully and to concentrate relief on the deserving alone. This was to be the aim in every parish. The result, in Chalmers' view, would be a godly commonwealth in Scotland, with a sober, industrious workforce, attached to their superiors and church-going. Chalmers' ideal became the entrenched policy of the Church of Scotland and the Free Church alike after the 1843 Disruption. This set of values, predicated on self-help, formed Victorian values more than any other strand of influence, not just in Scotland, but throughout the English-speaking world. Respectability and church-going were bound together.

The results of this development were ambiguous. The ideal was widely accepted by the upper working classes. Respectability became ingrained there, encouraging educational aspirations and many other good things. Amongst the lower working classes, however, it was deeply resented. They received little relief, even when they were really poor, and so Christianity appeared a hypocrisy. This perception contributed much to the twentieth century's growing alienation of the working classes from the churches in Scotland. A social philosophy, which at first for noble and Christian reasons was grafted on to the gospel and in the short term

SCOTTISH CULTURAL INFLUENCES ON EVANGELICALISM did good, was at least partly responsible in the long term for a disaster for Christian witness. This is a practical result of too close an identification of the gospel with an aspect of culture.

Conclusions: Niebuhr's Analysis in Scottish Perspective

There, then, are five case studies of Scottish cultural influence on Evangelicalism. What do they show? Let us try to sum up the gospel-and-culture relationship, returning to Niebuhr's five positions and asking what light the Scottish experience sheds on them.

First, there was the stance of 'Christ against culture'. In Scotland, religion has been deeply embedded in the culture, and the culture deeply influenced by religion. Interaction, it is plain from these examples, has been unavoidable; and that would, of course, be true elsewhere also. Culture may be a vehicle for the gospel or else an obstacle to the gospel, but culture cannot fail to interact with the gospel. Religion cannot be isolated from it. The sectarian response, it seems, is ultimately fruitless.

The second option was 'the Christ of culture'. Education, we have seen, led to a close identification of scholarship with Evangelicalism. It was thought that Christian values would be reinforced through close study of the Bible by the critical method. Not to offer a Christian critique of the techniques of biblical criticism, the intellectual fashion of the times, seems to have been a mistake. There was no sense of potential disharmony between scholarly technique and Christian values, between an aspect of high culture and the standards of Christ. It may be suggested from the Scottish experience that the notion of Christ being visible in cultural progress is very doubtful and certainly not consistently valid.

Thirdly there was the idea of 'Christ above culture'. Common-sense philosophy did lead people to Christ in its period of vogue, but when it ceased to be popular, its association with Evangelicalism dragged the gospel down with it. Culture, therefore, may lead away from Christ as well as towards him. Culture, in fact, is deeply ambiguous, created by human beings who are made in the image of God and yet fallen. Therefore one cannot expect that it will always draw people to Christ. Here then is another position we would not wish to accept.

The fourth stance identified Christ as the 'transformer of culture'. Christian teaching may permeate a culture for good, as did Calvinism in its evangelical form, but it may so conquer one phase of culture that when history moves on, as it has a habit of doing, the gospel can be left behind in a time-warp. This principle is illustrated both by the association of the gospel with common-sense philosophy and by its sanction for Chalmers' social philosophy. There must therefore be a willingness to disengage with culture for the sake of the gospel, just as much as to conquer it in the name of Christ.

Fifthly, there was the view of 'Christ and culture in paradox'. We may in the end decide that there is a permanent tension between gospel and

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culture. There are opportunities in the cultural sphere for the Christian, but equally there are risks, because the relationship is always volatile. The instance of anti-Catholicism constituted an extraordinarily unattractive social force amongst Evangelicals and yet one that was based on jealousy for the honour of the truth of Christ. It was a deeply ambiguous phenomenon. The idea of the ambiguity of the relationship of gospel and culture is essentially Luther's. It is very closely related to his principle that the Christian is *simul justus ac peccator*, that is to say, the believer cannot help continuing to sin, even though he continues to be justified by faith in Christ. All we can hope to do, surely, is to minimise mistakes in cultural endeavour as a result of experience and to maximise the Christian content of our critique of culture.

How then should Christians contribute to cultural enterprise in Scotland in the 1990s and, if it is allowed in the providence of God, in the twenty-first century? They should marry an unselfconsciously creative spirit with extreme wariness. There are immense opportunities and there are major pitfalls. In the cultural sphere, as in so many others, the Christian has to be as innocent as a dove and as wise as a serpent.