JOHN McCONNACHIE AS THE ORIGINAL ADVOCATE OF THE THEOLOGY OF KARL BARTH IN SCOTLAND: THE PRIMACY OF REVELATION

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Students of Scottish church history and theology are now immeasurably indebted to the editors of the *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* [1] for their considerable labour in bringing such a near-comprehensive guide into their possession. However, one or two names worthy of note have inevitably escaped attention. I wish to highlight one such, John McConnachie, whom I judge worthy of inclusion. For McConnachie might reasonably be regarded as the original advocate of the theology of Karl Barth in Scotland. If this claim can be proven, McConnachie surely deserves a place in any account of the course of Scottish theology in the first half of the twentieth century. This article seeks to justify the contention that McConnachie has earned the right to such a title, and, in particular, to focus upon what I take to be his central concern, the primacy of revelation in Barth's theology.

Introduction

John McConnachie was born at Fochabers, Moray, on October 13, 1875. He graduated M.A. from the University of Aberdeen in 1896, before proceeding to study Divinity at New College, Edinburgh. Here McConnachie gained a prestigious Cunningham Fellowship in 1900,[2] enabling him to study in Germany under Wilhelm Herrmann at the University of Marburg. In so doing, McConnachie stood in line with such theologians as H.R. Mackintosh, D.S. Cairns, John Baillie and Donald Baillie who had made a similar journey in their own day. Of that Marburg experience McConnachie wrote:

> Like most of my contemporaries in Scotland... I was also trained in the School of Ritschl, as interpreted by Herrmann, being one of the Scottish 'caravan' of students, as Barth was one of the Swiss 'caravan' who travelled yearly to Marburg to sit at the feet of the master. I also think of Herrman as 'my unforgettable teacher,' kindest of men, to whom I owe more than I can tell.[3]

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1 N.M. de S. Cameron, *et al.* (eds) *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (Edinburgh, 1993).

2 On John McConnachie, see J.A. Lamb (ed.), *The Fasti of the United Free Church of Scotland 1900-1929* (Edinburgh, 1956), pp. 144, 194, 338; *idem, Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticanae,* vol. 9 (Edinburgh, 1961), p. 515; H. Watt, *New College Edinburgh* (Edinburgh, 1946), pp. 263, 264, 267.

3 McConnachie, *The Barthian Theology and the Man of Today*

McConnachie was licensed in the Free Church of Scotland Presbytery of Forres in 1900, before being ordained and inducted in 1902 (*i.e.* after the church union of 1900) to Perceton and Dreghorn United Free Church. He was translated to Uddingston: Chalmers in 1905, before coming to Dundee: St John's in 1911, where he was to minister until his death on October 4 1948.[4]

In reviewing McConnachie's student days, we may note a parallel between his career and that of Karl Barth: throughout the course of his ministry, like Barth, he wrestled with the legacy of Herrmann,[5] before finding in Barth a 'revivification of the Word of God'. The latter phrase is borrowed from R.H. Roberts, whose account of the reception of Barth's theology in the Anglo-Saxon world highlights a particular receptivity within Scotland to Barth's thought.

> [I]t is clear from an early stage that enthusiasm for Barth's work (as opposed to mere curiosity) was primarily a Scottish attribute. J.H. Morrison, N. Porteus [sic], H.R. Mackintosh, J. McConnachie and (presumably) A.J. MacDonald were all Scots, and it would seem apparent that Barth's revivification of the reality of the Word of God as the existential core of the human encounter with the divine corresponded with their expectations.[6]

Our exposition of McConnachie on Barth will justify Roberts' contention, for McConnachie published considerably more than any other person in Scotland (and Britain?) on the subject of Barth's theology in the period up to his death. Such an active interest in matters theological led to the award of a D.D. by the University of St Andrews in 1931. His interest among the general Scottish interest in Barth is highlighted by the fact that of the four contributions by English-speaking writers in the 1936 Barth Festschrift *Theologische Aufsätze: Karl Barth zum 50. Geburtstag*, three were by ministers of the Church of Scotland – John McConnachie, Norman W. Porteous and G.L.B. Sloan.[7] The fourth one was by Sir E.C. Hoskyns, the translator of Barth's *Epistle to the Romans*.

(London, 1933), p. 34.

4 See n.2 above.

5 McConnachie, *op. cit.*, pp. 35-7.

6 R.H. Roberts, 'The Reception of the Theology of Karl Barth in the Anglo-Saxon World: History, Typology and Prospect', in *idem, A Theology on its Way?* (Edinburgh, 1991), p. 107.

7 N.W. Porteous, 'Volk und Gottesvolk im Alten Testament', pp. 146-63, G.L.B. Sloan, 'Das Problem der Judenmission und die dialektische Theologie', pp. 514-22, and J. McConnachie, 'Der Einfluss Karl Barths in Schottland und England', pp. 559-70, in E. Wolf (ed.), *Theologische Aufsätze: Karl Barth zum 50. Geburtstag* (Munich, 1936).

The First Encounter with Barth

McConnachie's 1927 article in *the Hibbert Journal*, 'The Teaching of Karl Barth: A New Positive Movement in German Theology', [8] offers the first significant published assessment of Barth by a Scot. McConnachie suggests that Barth's theological method is to be viewed as dialectical in nature, with the principal opponent against whom the method is deployed being Schleiermacher, 'the leader of the romantic movement which made religious experience the starting-point of theology, and the only subject of theological consideration'.[9] McConnachie contends that in Barth's critique the very religiosity of humanity is under attack, with 'the romantic pietistic view of religion' drawing his fire once more. This Barth regards as 'a betrayal of theology, in so far as everything is based on subjective experience, instead of on the objective, that is, on God'.[10] Thus McConnachie is clear on what Barth opposes, and in assessing Barth's counter to it suggests that this is governed by his doctrine of God. For Barth 'God is "the completely other," the invisible, the transcendent, the presuppositions of all events, the incommensurable yonder over against all here; the absolute, over against all relative.'[11]

McConnachie then suggests that, in the light of this, there is for Barth no knowledge of God to be found in nature, history or human experience. 'Our only knowledge of God comes through Revelation with a capital R, that is, as it has reached us in the Bible. The distinctive view of the Bible is ... the breaking through of the divine into human life.'[12] This revelation, contained in the Word of God, is characterised by its focus upon Jesus Christ, though McConnachie contends that for Barth there is no revelatory significance in Jesus of Nazareth as such. The life of Jesus culminating in the cross, looked at from the human side, is fraught with ambiguity. The resurrection likewise is no more accessible. However, McConnachie highlights Barth's contention that if you

> place it into the category of revelation, as an act of God... the Resurrection becomes the great wonder, the miracle 'direct from above,' the breaking through of the new world out of the unknown dimension into the known world.[13]

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8 McConnachie, 'The Teaching of Karl Barth: A New Positive Movement in German Theology', *Hibbert Journal* 25 (1927), pp. 385-400.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 388.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 389.

11 *Ibid.*, p. 391.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 391.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 395.

McConnachie criticises Barth as being 'one-sided', with a 'religious and ethical pessimism' pervading his scheme. Further, he regards Barth as having left no place for the 'verification of faith by experience', and as failing 'to work out satisfactorily the relation between the historical Jesus and the Risen Christ... leav[ing] an unaccountable break between the earthly and the heavenly life of our Lord'.[14] He sees Barth's aim, praiseworthy in itself, as being the deliverance of faith from the uncertainties of the historical and psychological, but views his project as failing because he rejects precisely the point from where our knowledge begins. However, his conclusion on the contribution of 'Barth and his group' is that

> They have restored the category of Revelation to a place of honour, and called Christian thought anew to reverence the Word of God. This, and not their negative criticism, is their central contribution.[15]

I have reproduced McConnachie's views here in fairly full fashion, on the grounds that it is indeed the first significant Scottish assessment of Barth to appear, and because McConnachie focuses unmistakeably on Barth's restoration of 'the category of Revelation' to its rightful place. Equally, McConnachie may be viewed as one whose stress, in expounding Barth, tends to fall towards emphasising the element of discontinuity between Barth's thought and that of his liberal forebears. However, for all that, it can hardly be said that McConnachie unreservedly commends the theology of Barth. Once more, we may note that only in the focus upon 'the category of Revelation' is there an unambiguous affirmation of Barth.

An Early Populariser of Barth

Nonetheless, it may be said that with this article in 1927 McConnachie began his advocacy of the cause of Barth, and as his engagement with Barth's thought deepened so the advocacy rang out the more unequivocally. That McConnachie came to be regarded as an advocate of Barth's thought may be found in the credit extended to him by others for his efforts in popularising Barth. R.H. Roberts describes him as 'a faithful populariser of Barth's work',[16] while H. Jochums, in his German perspective on the reception of 'Dialectic Theology in the English-speaking World' (1935), regards McConnachie as being more sympathetic in his response than many other writers in English.[17] Equally, A.L. Drummond notes that the cause of Barth in Great Britain

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14 *Ibid.*, pp. 399-400.

15 *Ibid.*, p. 400.

16 Roberts, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

17 H. Jochums, 'Dialectical Theology in the English-speaking World', *Union Seminary Review* 46 (1935), pp. 313-20. See p. 315.

was aided by 'judicious interpreters' such as McConnachie,[18] while A.C. Cheyne suggests that his adherence to that cause gave 'added respectability' to it.[19] Furthermore, T.F. Torrance acknowledges the extent to which McConnachie influenced him in introducing him to the thought of Barth,[20] and at least one other early populariser of Barth, F.W. Camfield, an English Congregationalist,[21] found the inspiration to learn German, in order to read Barth in the original, from the reading of McConnachie's article in the *Hibbert Journal*.[22] In reciprocal fashion, McConnachie acknowledged that he had been influenced by Camfield's work *Revelation and the Holy Spirit: An Essay in Barthian Theology* (1933), which McConnachie had originally examined when in thesis form.[23] In speaking of the Barthian theology as expounded by Camfield, he writes

> As this is the only theology which, in my opinion, is taking seriously at the present moment the rethinking of the doctrine of Revelation, I would bespeak for this able and scholarly volume a warm welcome from the whole Church.[24]

So, we may detect a movement in McConnachie's thought, from the critic whose 'outlook was affected but who in the end withheld their whole-hearted approval', to the theologian who could be regarded as one of the 'out-and-out converts' Cheyne refers to in his analysis of Barth's influence on Scotland.[25]

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18 A.L. Drummond, *German Protestantism since Luther* (London, 1951), p. 159.

19 A.C. Cheyne, *The Transforming of the Kirk* (Edinburgh, 1983), p. 216.

20 T.F. Torrance, *Karl Barth: Biblical and Evangelical Theologian* (Edinburgh, 1990), p. 83.

21 Roberts, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

22 McConnachie, 'Foreword', in F.W. Camfield, *Revelation and the Holy Spirit* (London, 1933), p. vii.

23 *Ibid.*, pp. vii-viii.

24 *Ibid.*, p. viii.

25 Cheyne, *op cit.*, pp. 207-8.

The Further Encounter with Barth – 1931

McConnachie's books, *the Significance of Karl Barth* (1931)[26] and *The Barthian Theology and the Man of Today* (1933),[27] as well as a number of articles,[28] serve to emphasise this latter point, and we shall now turn to an exposition of these works. The two books expound Barth's thought, with the former assessing the early Barth, and the latter supplementing it in terms of the impact of the *Kirchliche Dogmatik* I/1 (hereafter *KD* I/1).

With respect to *KD* I/1, published in late 1932 (August is the date of Barth's Foreword),[29] we note that McConnachie had read, assimilated and written on it by February 1933.[30] Of McConnachie's 1931 book Barth wrote that

> I have read it attentively and I am glad to tell you that I am entirely satisfied with its contents, I acknowledge it gladly as a good and accurate introduction to the work which I am trying to do.[31]

McConnachie opens *The Significance of Karl Barth* by affirming that 'The "Barthian" movement is an attempt to recollect, what is so often forgotten, God's Revelation',[32] and that in liberal Christianity the category of revelation has been particularly diminished. This is so in spite of the fact that 'the school of Ritschl, and particularly W. Herrmann, emphasised the independence of Christian experience, and sought from this point to establish the character of Christianity as a Revelation'.[33] For, insofar as human experience became the key to the knowledge of God, human beings became the centre and measure of all things. McConnachie is well aware of Barth's dependence on Herrmann in his younger days, and notes that, in addition to Herrmann's picture

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26 McConnachie, *The Significance of Karl Barth* (London, 1931).

27 *Idem, The Barthian Theology and the Man of Today* (London, 1933).

28 I note here in addition to those recorded above, all the articles by McConnachie on Barth of which I am aware: 'The Barthian School III – Friedrich Gogarten', *ExT* 43 (1932), pp. 391-5, 461-6; 'Natural Religion or Revelation?', *ibid.* 45 (1934), pp. 441-7; 'The Barthian Theology in Great Britain', *Union Seminary Review* 46 (1935), pp. 302-7; 'Reformation Issues Today', in F.W. Camfield (ed.), *Reformation Old and New* (London, 1947), pp. 103-20; 'The Uniqueness of the Word of God', *SJT* 1 (1948), pp. 113-35; review of Karl Barth, *Die Protestantische Theologie im 19 Jahrhundert* (Zollikon-Zurich, 1947), *SJT* 1 (1948), pp. 332-6.

29 E. Busch, *Karl Barth* (Philadelphia, 1976), p. 212.

30 McConnachie, *The Barthian Theology*, p. 9.

31 *Ibid.*, p. 9.

32 *Idem, The Significance of Karl Barth*, p. 10.

33 *Ibid.*, p. 15.

'having an honoured place on his wall', Barth 'accepted without question' Herrmann's 'repeated insistence that Revelation was not doctrine' and that religious experience was the means of access to that revelation.[34]

McConnachie then describes the new perception of the category of revelation, as worked out in Barth's *Dogmatik* I (1927), and offers a sympathetic and enthusiastic exposition of his teaching.[35] He commences by noting Barth's crucial concern to distinguish religion and revelation, and writes that

> Here Barth makes his great assertion, on which his whole teaching hinges, that the two are not one and the same. Religion is not the subjective possibility of Revelation. *Religion* is one thing, *Revelation* is quite another thing.[36]

Further, he emphasises the once-for-allness of the Christian revelation, and that this stands in contrast to the line of Schleiermacher and Otto for whom religion and revelation are correlates.

> All this type of theology evacuates the objective content of the Christian revelation, making Christian doctrine a product of the religious mind, and basing the Word of God on faith, instead of faith upon the Word of God. Even if it uses the word 'revelation', as it does, it uses it in an entirely different sense from its use in the Scriptures.[37]

In conclusion, McConnachie suggests that the fact of Barth's beginning on 'the plane of Revelation' excludes, in principle, the possibility of dialogue between 'Science and Revelation' because they operate on wholly other planes,[38] and here McConnachie refers to natural science.[39] Neither, McConnachie suggests, can historical science equip us with the tools to categorise revelation, for 'Historical science simply cannot cope with Revelation',[40] and is ultimately irrelevant for faith, for once more the stress is on God as the active and speaking God who transcends history. He continues in similar vein to argue that, for Barth, 'There is in the Bible... no static, traditional Word of God, abstracted from the acting Person of God. God is always the speaking Subject, not the object of Revelation.'[41]

McConnachie is anxious to defend Barth against the charge that his conception of revelation depreciates the historical aspect of Christianity,

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34 *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.
35 K. Barth, *Dogmatik I. Die Lehre vom Worte Gottes* (Munich, 1927).
36 McConnachie, *The Significance of Karl Barth*, p. 67.
37 *Ibid.*, p. 69.
38 *Ibid.*, p. 92.
39 *Ibid.*, pp. 90-92.
40 *Ibid.*, p. 113.
41 *Ibid.*, p. 115.

and that the impact 'of his teaching will be to empty history of content'.[42] In the face of this charge, McConnachie avers that

> To say that God revealed Himself in Jesus Christ is to say that He revealed Himself in One who entered into history, and at a definite place in history, and Who is only to be found there. It is this historical aspect which, to Barth, makes Christianity a Revelation, and not a mere myth or speculation. *Revelation is History*... But it is not in the Jesus of History – and not in the historical facts of Christianity – that Barth finds the Revelation of God. In so far as Jesus belongs to historical events, He is irrelevant for salvation.[43]

However, it does not seem to me that McConnachie has adequately resolved the tensions implicit in Barth at this point, and to suggest that 'Barth's mind is chiefly occupied with the "eternal moments," when this new strange world of God breaks through into the world of time'[44] serves only to exacerbate the tensions rather than to resolve them. Indeed, when he affirms of Barth that 'He does believe in the fact of the Virgin Birth. He does believe in the fact of the Resurrection. But in so far as they are historical events, they can only be perceived as historical events. They can never be matter for faith,'[45] might it not be contended that Barth's conception of the matter is not so far removed from that of Wilhelm Herrmann?[46]

Thereafter, McConnachie seeks to set Barth's apparent neglect of 'revelation in Nature' in its wider context, and suggests that in fact 'For Barth, God is hidden also in the creation.' Similarly he contends that Barth does not deny the truth of 'natural revelation',[47] and that 'In the *theologia revelata* (revealed theology) the *theologia naturalis* (natural theology) is comprised.'[48] In truth however, these things means little to us with respect to our apprehension of revelation, since 'Nature is not capable of revealing what is beyond all the relativity of concrete existence.'[49] Once more then, we see McConnachie seeking to defend Barth and obviate charges of neglect against him. Furthermore, we note with interest that Barth could be read in terms which did not preclude the inclusion of a theology of nature, as opposed to a natural theology, a position which might be judged to anticipate that of T.F. Torrance.[50]

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42 *Ibid.*, p. 276.
43 *Ibid.*, pp. 276-7.
44 *Ibid.*, p. 277.
45 *Ibid.*, p. 112.
46 W. Herrmann, *Systematic Theology* (London, 1927), pp. 125-7.
47 McConnachie, *The Significance of Karl Barth*, p. 279.
48 *Ibid.*, p. 280.
49 *Ibid.*, p. 280.
50 See, for example, J. Polkinghorne, *Science and Creation* (London, 1988), pp. 13-15.

McConnachie states explicitly that his estimation of Barth has altered since that taken in the *Hibbert Journal* article, and he issues a general withdrawal of his earlier criticisms.[51] Thus we may judge *The Significance of Karl Barth* to be the first whole-hearted embracing of the Barthian position by a Scot. Equally we note that McConnachie now clearly sees the issue of revelation to be central to the basis of his claim that Barth stands in discontinuity with Herrmann *et al.* Further, we may observe that this embracing of Barth occurs prior to the appearance of *KD* I/1. However, as noted, McConnachie does not seem to have sufficiently acknowledged the extent to which it could be contended that Barth's position exhibits certain similarities to that of Herrmann. Indeed, the very focus on the category of revelation, along with the rejection of natural theology and of the possibility of dialogue between theology and natural science, might betaken to be not so much bold Barthian initiatives as natural extensions of Herrmann's position.

A Scottish Interlude

Within the Scottish context, it is of interest to note that McConnachie can find sufficient examples of the positions Barth opposes in the work of his fellow Scots. This in criticising Ritschl and Herrmann for seeking 'to find some basis for faith in scientifically ascertained facts of our Lord's life',[52] McConnachie may quote H.R. Mackintosh's *The Doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ* as a typical example of that approach, and suggest that Barth begins intentionally at the opposite pole from Mackintosh in expounding his concept of revelation.[53] Therefore, we note that in 1931, as far as McConnachie perceived it, H.R. Mackintosh was to be regarded as one indebted to Ritschl and Herrmann for his understanding of the nature of revelation. However, we may also note that by 1935 he may observe the 'generous, if not uncritical, welcome to Barthian theology' given by one 'of the older Scottish theologians ... H.R. Mackintosh.'[54] McConnachie thus points us to the movement of thought in the theologian who has most usually been taken as the original advocate of Barth's thought in Scotland, that is, H.R. Mackintosh.[55] As he does so, we may observe for ourselves the fact that

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51 McConnachie, *The Significance of Karl Barth*, p. 271.

52 *Ibid.*, p. 120.

53 *Ibid.*, p. 122.

54 *Idem*, 'The Barthian Theology in Great Britain', *Union Seminary Review* 46 (1935), p. 304.

55 On the interpretation of H.R. Mackintosh's advocacy of Barth, see J.W. Leitch, *A Theology of Transition: H.R. Mackintosh as an Approach to Karl Barth* (London, 1952); T.F. Torrance, 'Hugh Ross Mackintosh: Theologian of the Cross', *SBET* 5 (1987), pp. 160-73.

McConnachie's advocacy of Barth precedes that of Mackintosh. Moreover, we should remember that the volume of McConnachie's writings on Barth far exceeds that of Mackintosh, with the latter offering us only a brief article and a single chapter in *Types of Modern Theology* by which we might judge the nature of his commitment to Barth's thought.[56] Furthermore, it seems to me that the nature of McConnachie's commitment to the cause of Barth is far more unequivocal than that of Mackintosh. Therefore, if these latter points are accepted, McConnachie would seem to stand ahead of the person whom I would judge to be the only other serious contender for the title of 'the original advocate'.

In looking again at the Scottish context for typical opposition to the standpoint of Barth, McConnachie can cite John Baillie's *The Interpretation of Religion* as 'one of the ablest expositions of the modernist position', writing that 'if Roman Catholic theology leaves the door ajar between man and God, modernism flings it wide open'. He concludes that 'Barth and Baillie here face each other across a gulf over which no bridge leads.'[57] Once more, he takes Baillie to be the antithesis of Barth, in respect of the notion 'that conscience is an organ of Divine Revelation', a position which he regards as impossible for Barth.[58] McConnachie says of Barth:

> Conscience is not to him the organ of Revelation. In the voice of conscience we have a broken echo of God, as He is reflected back in the conscience of His creature, who is fallen from Him.[59]

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[56] H.R. Mackintosh, 'Leaders of Theological Thought: Karl Barth', *ExT* 39 (1928), pp. 536-40; *idem, Types of Modern Theology* (London, 1937), pp. 263-319. In addition, Mackintosh makes a number of passing references, principally in book reviews. On these references, see J.L. McPake, 'H.R. Mackintosh, T.F. Torrance and the Reception of the Theology of Karl Barth in Scotland' (Ph.D thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1994), pp. 104-8.

[57] McConnachie, *The Significance of Karl Barth*, p. 144.

[58] *Ibid.*, p. 212.

[59] *Ibid.*, p. 213.

The Further Encounter with Barth – 1933

In turning to *The Barthian Theology* I do not propose to detail this as fully as *The Significance of Karl Barth*. Instead, I shall focus upon those places where he develops issues we have already highlighted, with the book being, quite explicitly, a coming to terms with the impact of *KD* I/1.[60] It can readily be discerned from *The Barthian Theology* that the embracing of Barth which occurred prior to the appearance of *KD* I/1 is now intensified,[61] such that we can further 'discern the unqualified zeal of (an) out-and-out convert'.[62]

The first significant development which he highlights is the conflict between Barth and Brunner with respect to our capacity to receive revelation, as a result of which the question of the *imago Dei* is now very much to the fore. Of Barth he says that

> He will not allow to man... any natural capacity to take hold of God. The capacity for God is lost through sin, and the lost point of contact must be restored by grace. The point of contact is to be found not outside but inside faith.[63]

In the light of this reality, Barth is perceived to intensify the stress on the necessity of revelation, such that 'It is the Revelation itself which creates in man the necessary point of contact.'[64] Further, Barth emphasises the exclusive nature of that revelation, and McConnachie suggests, in consequence that

> Barth will not have the Christian Revelation treated as a species of the *genus*, revelation. The knowledge of God, which the Church has, does not stand or fall with the possibility of man's religious knowledge. Revelation to Barth... is an event of faith. Man does not possess it as a natural capacity, but only by faith.[65]

McConnachie then heightens the sense in which we are to understand the exclusive nature of revelation, when he notes that Barth, in reformulating his concept of the Word of God as expressed in *KD* I/1, was 'astonished now at what he wrote in his first edition... that the Word of God was made dependent on its reception by man', and that this shortcoming was remedied by 'a deeper stress on the objectivity of the Word of God'.[66] Thus, for McConnachie, the place of human receptivity is made to stand in the greater, and all-consuming, light of the givenness of revelation.

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60 *Idem, The Barthian Theology*, p. 40.
61 *Ibid.*, pp. 38-58.
62 Cheyne, *op cit.*, p. 208.
63 McConnachie, *The Barthian Theology*, pp. 45-6.
64 *Ibid.*, p. 46.
65 *Ibid.*, p. 46.
66 *Ibid.*, p. 47.

The above notwithstanding, McConnachie notes that Barth does not reject the concept of analogy, but rather seeks to re-express it, such that he can claim that

> While Barth rejects the *analogia entis* (likeness of being between God and man)... he does not deny the idea of analogy, but substitutes for it an *analogia fidei* (likeness through faith).[67]

Further, in rejecting the *analogia entis*, he wishes to guard against the suggestion that by this Barth 'leaves no room for the Revelation of God in Nature and conscience when once the Divine image in man is restored by grace'.[68] He writes that

> On the contrary, he sets forth from the position that the Word of God is, first of all, the Word of God the Creator and Lord of our being. He holds that there can be no right understanding of God as Redeemer apart from the Revelation of God as Creator, just as there can be no right knowledge of God as Creator apart from the Revelation of God as Redeemer. To the image of God lost in Adam, but restored in Christ, belongs the capacity to hear the Word of God that is spoken to us, and to know it and to receive it as the Word of God (Rom. x. 8).[69]

Therefore, Barth, with McConnachie's approval, wishes to place alongside the denial of a prior human capacity to receive the Word of God, a new emphasis upon how we do receive that which is given.

Throughout our exposition of McConnachie's earliest thoughts, and in *The Significance of Karl Barth*, the central place he gives the revelation within Barth's thought is self-evident. This continues in *The Barthian Theology*, such that he asserts that 'The Barthian Movement, in its origin, might be described... as an effort "to think through again the category of Revelation." It was a recognition that Revelation had become the most vital concern of the Church of our time.'[70] We note moreover the extent to which McConnachie is in sympathy with this approach, when he writes that 'Barth has rightly perceived that the problem of Revelation constitutes the central problem for our time'.[71] What then are the consequences of this perception? McConnachie's reply to this, which most fully displays the gravity of the situation he understands the church to face, might be found in the following. He contends that

> The recognition that this problem of Revelation has become critical for our time, and that the very future of historical Christianity depends upon it, has led Barth and those associated with him, to set themselves against the whole modernist tendency in theology, and to seek to bring the Church back to what they believe to be New Testament foundations. For the New

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67 *Ibid.*, p. 46.
68 *Ibid.*, p. 70.
69 *Ibid.*, p. 70.
70 *Ibid.*, p. 210.
71 *Ibid.*, p. 210.

Testament places in the foreground not an approach of man to Reality, but an approach of Reality to man, in answer to his quest.[72]

Therefore, there is no sense in which we can see the New Testament reflecting 'an evolutionary process of discovery'. Instead, it points to 'a revolutionary Act of God upon the world'.[73] In the final analysis, McConnachie understands that 'Barth proposes to put the Revelation of God in Christ into a category by itself, as describing God's approach to man in His Word.'[74] This being so, the necessity of building a philosophical basis for theology is excluded, and the possibility of seeking an apologetical dialogue with modern thought is discarded.[75]

Conclusion

John McConnachie's reading of Karl Barth, whatever its defects (and I have not especially highlighted these), has this merit: it embodies a passionate desire to recover the hearing of the revealed Word of God. As such, his work merits our attention. The more so is this the case when we observe that he is in fact the first Scot – and a parish minister at that – fully to engage with the theology of Barth. Undoubtedly, theologians such as H.R. Mackintosh and T.F. Torrance have played a significant role in the mediation of the theology of Karl Barth into the English-speaking world. However, I would contend that prior to their names another one is worthy of a place, that of John McConnachie.

To highlight an omission in the *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* is not to bring opprobrium on the heads of its editors. Rather, it is to highlight the exception which proves the otherwise all-embracing coverage of the *Dictionary*. In their defence, it can hardly be said that there has been an appropriate acknowledgement of McConnachie's contribution in any other forum. Indeed, we may feel moved to ask why McConnachie's contribution suffered from such neglect in the years following his death. There is no one decisive answer to this question, but we may suggest that the fact of his being a parish minister, rather than the holder of an academic post, meant that he had no acolytes to further his own particular interpretation of Barth. Equally, the year which marked McConnachie's death (1948), also marked the beginning of the *Scottish Journal of Theology*, which may be regarded as the principal organ for the dissemination of Barthian thought within Scotland, as well as beyond. Thus, only in the first volume of the *Journal* was he able to renew his contribution to the understanding of Barth, which was no doubt in abeyance during the years of the Second

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72 *Ibid.*, p. 212.
73 *Ibid.*, p. 212.
74 *Ibid.*, p. 213.
75 *Ibid.*, pp. 214-6.

World War (1939-45), with the editors of the said publication noting 'with deep regret the death of Dr. John McConnachie, whose encouragement and counsel did much to bring this *Journal* into being'.[76] The speculations which I have offered as reasons for the neglect of McConnachie's work may seem to be essentially non-theological in character. However, given the almost total absence of engagement with the substance of his thought in the years following his death, it is impossible to identify specifically theological causes for the neglect of his contribution. He may simply be a prophet without honour in his own land.

Therefore, let us rectify this state of affairs by taking cognisance of the Scottish theologian who most fully and consistently exhibited the characteristics of an 'out-and-out convert' to Barth's teaching and thus deserves to be called the original advocate of the theology of Karl Barth in Scotland.

[76] Editorial note, *SJT* 1 (1948), p. 336.