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**Theology in the Shadow of War
The Baird Lectures as Contextual Theology**

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Contextual Theology

This paper is an essay in contextual theology, at least contextual theology as I understand the term. I developed my understanding and practice of contextual theology over a number of years, mainly through an evening seminar which attracted typically some dozen students from nine or ten different countries, with very varied cultures, political and economic systems, religious views and histories.

In each session we would study selected ethical writings of Karl Barth, or Reinhold Niebuhr, or Jacques Ellul, or Kierkegaard, or another notable moral theologian. Each seminar was divided into three sections. First, we read and discussed as carefully and critically as we could the set text for the day. Next, we asked how the text interacted with its original context. Did it reflect and reinforce the conventional wisdom of the time? Did it strike out on its own and criticise on the basis of the gospel the generally accepted positions of the day? Out of such engagements with the context, did there emerge insights of perennial and universal significance? In the third section of each seminar we asked whether the passage was challengingly relevant in some or all of the varied situations from which the members of the seminar came. Did it 'come alive' in apartheid South Africa, or in Myanmar, or Zimbabwe, or in Canada – or even in Scotland today? And it was at this point that the seminar often became excited and passionate: here was Barth after many years speaking to the Scottish situation with its challenges and opportunities, or here was Reinhold Niebuhr in writings that were already fifty years and more old speaking with startling and challenging relevance to the situation in the United States today.

I developed a conviction that in a real sense, all theology is contextual, even if it denies this, and claims to be timeless and universal. Theologians' work may reflect uncritically the context in which they find themselves writing, or they may criticise their

context on the basis of the gospel. But they cannot detach themselves totally from the context and treat theology as dealing with ageless truths which are the same everywhere and at all times.

With this understanding of contextual theology in mind, I have selected two very demanding and complex periods of the twentieth century – the periods of the First and Second World Wars and their aftermaths. Then I will examine two series of Baird Lectures delivered in the relevant time and with titles which suggest that they may engage constructively with the difficult theological and ethical issues which arose in the times of these two wars – and perhaps are still with us today. In 1920, less than two years after the end of the First World War, Robert Stevenson, DD, of Dunfermline Abbey delivered a series of Baird Lectures on *A Christian Vindication of Patriotism*¹. And in 1947 Dr T.B.Stewart Thomson, MC, TD, DD, the minister of Govan Old, where he succeeded George Macleod, delivered Baird Lectures on *The Chaplain in the Church of Scotland*.² After considering the relevant contexts I will ask how effectively these lectures relate to their contexts.

The First World War and its Aftermath.³

What was the First World War about? What caused the nations of Europe and America, to say nothing of the Ottoman Empire, to engage in a conflict which was by far the bloodiest and most destructive so far in human history? We learned in school that it had something to do with the assassination of the Archduke Ferdinand in Sarajevo, but on the face of it that was hardly a justification for such carnage. Yet it was the spark which ignited a great bonfire of simmering conflicts between the nations of Europe. And as the historian J.M.Roberts writes, ‘More than any other force, patriotism moved people everywhere, mobilizing the emotions the war needed. The crowds which heard the Kaiser say, “I no longer know anything of parties” accepted the claim of national loyalty

¹ Robert Stevenson, DD, *The Christian Vindication of Patriotism*. Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, , 1921.

² T.B.Stewart Thomson, *The Chaplain in the Church of Scotland*. Edinburgh and London, William Blackwood and Sons, 1947.

³ In this section I am greatly indebted to my friend, Stewart J. Brown’s paper, ‘A Solemn Purification by Fire: Responses to the Great War in the Scottish Presbyterian Churches, 1914-19’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 45/1 1904, pp. 82-104.

as unquestioningly as those which sang “God save the King” outside Buckingham Palace.”⁴

On both sides, the Christian Churches played a major role in justifying patriotism and entry into the war. Prominent and belligerent churchmen and theologians in England, and in Scotland too, gave unqualified support to the conflict, declaring the war against Germany to be a holy war. The Bishop of London called on every able-bodied man to fight for God and country, and wrote to the *Guardian* in 1915 proclaiming that it was the Church’s duty ‘to mobilise the nation for a holy war’. In a now notorious Advent sermon he called on British soldiers in the field ‘to kill the good as well as the bad, to kill the young men as well as the old’.⁵ In Scotland Christian support for the war was just as prevalent, if perhaps less strident. O. Douglas’s novel, *The Setons*, first published in 1917 notices and applauds the large numbers of ministers who volunteered as chaplains, or indeed as combatants. Andrew Seton, the young minister, is speaking to his wife, Kirsty:

“I’m going to enlist, with as many Langhope men as I can persuade to accompany me. It’s no use. I can’t stand in the pulpit - a young strong man – and say Go. I must say Come!”

Now that it was out, he gave a sigh of relief.

“Kirsty” he pleaded, “ say that you think I’m right”

But Kirsty’s face was white and drawn.

“I thought you were happy,” she said at last, with a pitiful little sob on the last word.

“So happy,” said her husband “that I have to go. Every time I came in and found you waiting for me with the kettle singing, when I went out in the morning and looked at the hills, when I walked in the garden, and knew that every bush in it was dear to me – then I remembered that these things so dear were being bought with a price, and that the only decent thing for me to do was to go and help to pay that price.”

“But only as a chaplain, surely?”

Andrew shook his head.

“I’m too young and able-bodied for a chaplain. I’m only thirty-two, and though I’m not big I’m wiry.”⁶

At the end of the war a whole generation of prominent ministers who had opted to serve as combatants appeared with MCs after their names, and some of them,

⁴ J.M.Roberts, *Europe 1880-1945* London and New York: Longman, 1970, p. 264

⁵ Hastings, Adrian (1986) *A History of English Christianity 1920-1985*. London, Jonathan Cape, p. 45

⁶ O. Douglas, *The Setons*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1917, pp. 211-212.

interestingly, becoming pacifists as a result of their war experiences, like George Macleod or Archie Craig,

On the German side, on the day in 1914 when the First World War broke out, a group of ninety-three leading German intellectuals issued a statement giving unqualified support to the war policy of Kaiser Wilhelm II.⁷ The young pastor of Safenwil in Switzerland, Karl Barth by name, who had recently completed his theological studies in Germany, read what he called this ‘terrible manifesto’, and discovered to his dismay among the signatories almost all his German theological teachers. ‘It was,’ he wrote, ‘like the twilight of the gods when I saw the reaction of Harnack, Herrmann, Rade, Euken and company to the new situation.’⁸ Theological scholarship, it seemed to Barth, had been converted into an ideological weapon of war, and his teachers had been fundamentally compromised. This ethical and political failure, he believed, called into question the theology he had been taught, and ‘a whole world of exegesis, ethics, dogmatics and preaching, which I had hitherto held to be essentially trustworthy, was shaken to the foundations, and with it all the other writings of the German theologians.’⁹ Schleiermacher, the father of German liberal theology, was, Barth believed ‘unmasked’. A new and very different theological beginning must now be made.

Barth’s distress was not because he was a pacifist, opposed to violence and coercion on principle in all situations. He never was a pacifist in the thoroughgoing or principled sense, but he continued to wrestle with the theology and ethics of particular wars and acts of violence throughout his life. Indeed, in the early days of the Second World War Barth himself issued rousing theologically grounded calls to Christians in France and Britain and the United States to take up arms against Nazism. It was rather that in 1914 the young Barth saw the liberal theology that almost all his teachers in Germany shared had come to do little more than reflect and reinforce the context, the assumptions and purposes of the German state, giving an aura of holiness to its bellicose military and political purposes. Theology, he believed, had, as it were, been enlisted into

⁷ These paragraphs reflect the argument of the Prologue to my book, *Apocalypse Now: Reflections on Faith in a Time of Terror*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005. I compare Barth’s ‘Terrible Manifesto’, with support for the Iraq war on the part of numerous American theologians today

⁸ Letter to W. Spöndlin, 4 January, 1915, quoted in Busch, E., (1976) *Karl Barth: His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts*. London: SCM Press, p. 81.

⁹ *Nachwort*, 293. cited in Busch, (1976) p. 81.

the army, where it was under orders to act as the ideological wing of the state. Its prophetic voice was silenced, and its arguments had scant reference to the gospel of the Prince of Peace. Instead, theology issued a singularly unqualified call to arms. Barth responded by affirming that only a theology which returned to basics, and re-entered ‘the strange new world of the Bible’ would be capable of making a proper response to the conflicts and hostilities of the day. A new or renewed theology that was far more critical, and suspicious of the intentions of politicians, and sensitive to the ambiguities of politics was required; indeed what was needed, Barth believed, was a theology which actually proclaimed the gospel in the circumstances of the day, in the context, and denounced sin, aggressive violence, and the arrogance and idolatry of power.

Theology, Barth realised in 1914, must operate in a different way. It should provide a distinctive and challenging discernment of ‘the signs of the times’, and call believers to new patterns of costly obedience. It should not collude in the often shady purposes of ‘The Powers’; or amplify their voice, at that time an unambiguous clarion call to battle. It should rather speak clearly and faithfully with its own voice. Barth’s reaction to the pro-war letter of his liberal theological teachers has been argued to be the single most significant turning point of twentieth century theology,

Unfortunately for us, there were, as far as I know, no powerful and influential prophetic voices such as Barth’s in Scotland, challenging the war and the way it was conducted. But there were, of course, chaplains and ministers in influential positions. G.S.Duncan, for instance, was not only Field Marshall Haig’s chaplain, but also his confidant and friend. Later, Duncan became Professor of Biblical Criticism and Principal of St Mary’s College in the University of St Andrews.

As the realities of trench warfare became clear, disillusion spread rapidly, and went deep. O.Douglas put a fine gloss of the deep-seated agony of despair when she makes one of her soldier characters describe trench warfare: “Well, it isn’t a picnic, you know. It’s pretty grim sometimes. But I wouldn’t be out of it for anything.”¹⁰ But perhaps the most moving expression of the disillusion with trench warfare to be found in Scottish literature is in Lewis Grassie Gibbon’s *Sunset Song*. Ewan in the trenches with all their squalor and suffering and fear, gets the air of Blawearie, of home, in his nostrils,

¹⁰ O.Douglas, op.cit., p. 217

the smell of home calling him. He leaves the trenches and starts, alone, the long trudge home. But after he has gone a couple of miles he is arrested as a coward and a deserter, tried, condemned and executed a few days later.. On hearing the news, his wife in despair shouts:

Country and King? You're hivering, hivering. What have they to do with my Ewan, what was the King to him, what their damned country? Blawearie's his land, it's not his wight that others fight wars!¹¹

And it was from Scotland that the most dramatic and devastating exposés of trench warfare came – poems written in Edinburgh at Craiglockhart Sanatorium for the victims of shell shock by Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon - denouncing ‘The old lie: Dulce et decorum est/Pro patria mori.’ And here I quote one of Owen’s most moving, biblical and theological poems, The Parable of the Old Man and the Young:

So Abram rose, and clave the wood, and went,
And took the fire with him, and a knife.
And as they sojourned both of them together,
Isaac the first-born spake and said, My Father
Behold the preparations, fire and iron,
But where the lamb for this burnt-offering?
Then Abram bound the youth with belts and straps,
and builded parapets and trenches there,
and stretched forth the knife to slay his son.
When lo! An Angel called him out of heaven,
Saying, Lay not thy hand upon the lad,
Neither do anything to him, thy son.
Behold, caught in a thicket by its horns,
A Ram. Offer the Ram of Pride instead.

But the old man would not so, but slew his son,
And half the seed of Europe, one by one.

And half the seed of Europe, one by one.¹²

In the early days of the War, there was a widespread hope among Scottish ministers that the hardships and trials of the war would lead Scots back to God. In 1914 Professor W.P.Paterson declared , ‘as so often in the past, the perils and uncertainties of war are leading us back to God’, and Professor James Denney announced that the war

¹¹ Lewis Grassie Gibbon, *A Scots Quair* .London: Penguin, 1998, p. 178.

¹² Jon Stallworthy, ed., *The Poems of Wilfred Owen*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1990, p. 151

had made the ‘multitudes who were living on the surface of existence suddenly became aware of its unsounded depths...The unseen and the eternal have forced themselves into their thoughts’.¹³ But chaplains reported great ignorance about the Christian faith among the men,¹⁴ and huge disillusion with the war and with their leaders. And it was not only soldiers in the trenches who became disillusioned.. A. Wallace Williamson, minister of St Giles Cathedral and prominent defender of the righteousness of the war, visited the trenches for the first time in 1915, and returned deeply shaken. A close friend remembered that ‘One was aware of the virtue that had gone out of him, and how burdened he was with the grim horror of the thing.’¹⁵

Disillusion continued and even intensified after the war, when multitudes of soldiers returned deeply scarred, to find not a heroes’ welcome but mounting unemployment and hardship for many, while the aristocracy assumed that life could return to what it had been before the war. Every village, every parish had long lists of the dead, and there were erected war memorials throughout the land, part of whose rationale was to suggest that something great and noble had been achieved through the sacrifice of so many lives. And in Edinburgh Castle there was erected the magnificent Scottish National War Memorial, majestic and rich with symbolism, with at its heart a granite ‘altar’, constructed on an outcrop of the castle rock.

The Vindication of Patriotism

Robert Stevenson had courage and an eye to relevance when he chose to deliver Baird Lectures in 1920, in the context we have just discussed, on *The Christian Vindication of Patriotism*. The reader finds very few explicit references to the Great War, or the intellectual and religious turmoil that came in its wake. Rather, Stevenson discerns an ‘almost universal uprising of the “nationalist” spirit’, and asks how far, if at all this may be ‘congruous with religious ideals’ and may be ‘baptised into Christian service.’

Stevenson makes very little explicit reference to the Great War, He quotes Edith Cavell as affirming that ‘patriotism is not enough’. But he has to face the problem of deep disillusion with patriotism in the aftermath of that War:

¹³ Cited in Brown, op. cit., p. 87.

¹⁴ See D.S. Cairns, ed., *The Army and Religion. London:1919*

¹⁵ S.J.Brown, op.cit., p.93.

If an appeal to patriotism is reported by all qualified observers to fall absolutely flat upon the sympathies of an audience of working men since the Great War, the reason must be found in the fact that owing to their ignorance of the history of the nation, and of the achievements of the past, these men have been building their patriotism, like a pyramid on its apex, upon mere instinct, or upon the fighting impulse.¹⁶

Stevenson then turns to Germany, and finds there ‘an instinct called by the same name, and presumably of the same kind’. This had flourished in Germany, another country, geographically near, and akin in racial origin’ which had ‘plunged the world into a war which is now generally held to have been as needless as it was destructive’¹⁷ Germany had developed, according to Stevenson, a false and aggressive patriotism. The task to which he set his hand was to develop a true and vital sense of patriotism which was rooted in the Christian faith and set a high value on peace and reconciliation. This ‘noble love of country’ raises the individual above self-interest’ and the community above class interest. A true patriotism ought to be one of the major virtues in ‘modern Christendom’.

Early on, Stevenson praises the Scottish tradition of patriotism – a land where ‘patriotism has to a rare extent been informed and energised by religion.’¹⁸ Somewhat complacently, perhaps, he declares that in Scotland ‘Love of God and love of country seem well matched – brethren who may dwell together in unity.’ He notes, almost in passing, that patriotism has been much rejected. But the task of today, to which he is himself committed, is ‘the discovery and fostering of a noble patriotism – capable on the one hand of stirring into action all that is best in human nature for the good of the land wherein it dwells, and of vitalising the “nationalism” whose awakening in the world is the most conspicuous tendency of our times; and yet capable also...of being purged from “frantic boast and foolish word” and of being dedicated to the glory of God and the good of mankind.’¹⁹

Stevenson starts into the ambitious programme to which he is committed with some general remarks about the congruity between love of country and love of God. He even argues for ‘race-distinctness’ and suggests that ‘natural religion justifies national

¹⁶ Stevenson, op. cit., p.45

¹⁷ Robert Stevenson, DD, *The Christian Vindication of Patriotism*. Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, , 1921, p. 4.

¹⁸ Stevenson, op. cit. ,pp. 9-10.

¹⁹ Stevenson, op. cit. pp. 17-18

separateness as part of the providential order”.²⁰ For patriotism ‘is something given in human nature, and there is no sign that it is passing away.’²¹

Stevenson starts with examining the Old Testament, and discerns there that ‘it is nearly impossible to exaggerate the extreme intimacy of the connection...between love of country and love of God.’²² The Old Testament could almost be called ‘The Devout Patriot’s Handbook’! But there is also in the OT plentiful material for the correction and restraint of excessive nationalism. Unfortunately Stevenson’s examples of excessive nationalism are taken from Germany. The Kaiser is reported as speaking of God as ‘an unconditional and avowed ally’ on whom the German people may absolutely rely. And one Friedrich Lange in his book, *Deutsche Religion* is said to have called the German people the elect of God, whose enemies are the enemies of God.. The OT, on the other hand, sees the election of Israel as a Chosen People as being for the blessing of the nations, and for responsibility rather than privilege.

It is, for a variety of reasons, harder to find a New Testament vindication of patriotism. But Jesus wept over Jerusalem, and commanded his disciples to go first to the lost sheep of the house of Israel rather than to the Gentiles. ‘[T]he teaching of Jesus’ we are told, ‘leaves room for an unselfish love of country...and the example of Jesus confirms us in the ancient loyalties of patriotism...if only to seek first the Kingdom of God.’²³ Paul is proud to be a Jew, and also proud of being a Roman citizen. He teaches that believers should respect the Emperor and the civil authorities, as sanctioned by God.

The fundamental duty of the patriot is ‘hearty identification of himself with the interests of his fatherland, as far as these are “according to the pattern shown in the mount” of Christian vision.’²⁴ This leads into a long celebration of Britishness and of Scottishness, the virtues characteristic of our nation, and the virtues of patriotism. The British Empire is the result of a divine purpose:

Nothing is more certain than that Greater Britain has not reached its present magnitude and importance through careful study, coherent policy, firmly grasped

²⁰ Ibid. p. 35.

²¹ Ibid., p.52

²² Ibid., p. 60

²³ Ibid p. 128.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 161.

design – Machiavellian or otherwise – but after a fashion which suggests that on the helm has rested a Hand “other than ours”.²⁵ And this is developed with particular reference to India, and specifically the Christian missionary project, which is to prepare India for freedom and then setting her free. And as Sir Herbert Edwardes said in 1860, there is only one way that India can be prepared for freedom: ‘Till India is leavened with Christianity she will be unfit for freedom. *When* India is leavened with Christianity, she will be unfit for any form of slavery, however mild.’²⁶

Stevenson’s argument is summarised at the end of his book: It is only as subservient to a higher Patriotism that earthly patriotisms fall into place:

Earthly patriotism, if it is to avail for the good of the human race, must learn to say with the Roman centurion, ‘I also am under authority’. But so speaking and so yielding submission, it will be caught up to higher service and clothed with more tender beauty. Love of country and love of God will dwell together in unity. Love of Go will prompt to love of country; and love of country will pay homage to love of God. Whether as citizens of the Heavenly Kingdom or as citizens of an earthly, Christian men will embody their patriotism...in ‘the vividness of thought, the ardour of a passion, the energy of an action’.

Comments

Stevenson’s Baird Lectures developed as strong a case as possible to vindicate the role of Christianity in shaping and supporting a humane and moderate patriotism as love of country. The patriotism he affirms is not aggressive or violent. Rather it is a love of the motherland which will only have recourse to limited and constrained force to defend the country that one loves. All this is well argued and largely uncontroversial. But one wonders whether it in fact meets and responds to the deep suspicion that patriotism, particularly patriotism that is articulated religiously has landed the countries of Europe in a devastating, bloody and ultimately unnecessary war. One of the consequences of this kind of conflict was the bitter distrust on the part of the men in the trenches of their senior officers, who seemed so often to be callous about the loss of such multitudes of young lives. After the war, this distrust continued, so that many people thought Britain in the 1920s was on the verge of internal class warfare. And, in opposition to Stevenson’s

²⁵ Ibid., p. 219.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 221

view, many shrewd observers saw religion, any religion, as making matters worse. A few years later one theological commentator wrote:

[I]t is extremely doubtful if the war would have lasted as long as it did, or would have ended as it did, if the enormous influence of organised religion had not been cast in every country into the balance on behalf of patriotism, so heightening and maintaining the morale of the peoples and increasing their will to win and power to resist.²⁷

Then he asks whether the Church can in the modern world ‘resist the stampeding influences such as hurried us all over the precipice in 1914.’ The implied answer is No. And if we conclude that Stevenson is not entirely convincing in vindicating on a Christian basis the virtue of patriotism, his 1920 lectures leave tantalizingly in the air the the role of the churches and the Christian faith in a future war where patriotism, often in bizarre and dangerous forms, was bound to play a major role.

And so we turn to the Second World War, and T.B.Stewart Thomson’s Baird Lectures on Chaplaincy, delivered in 1947.

The Second World War and its Aftermath

Britain entered the Second World War in a chastened mood. The First World War had started as a crusade, and ended in disillusion and deprivation for many. This time it was as if there were an implicit condition in the nation’s willingness to fight against Hitler: that promises of a better future should not be made, only to be broken as soon as peace was restored. The hardships of the Depression had left a deep scar on the consciousness of the British working class; there must be no return to the conditions of the 1930s. The Second World War differed from all previous wars in as far as the traditional distinction between combatants and civilians was seriously eroded, especially by the blitzes and other attacks on the civilian populations on both sides. Paradoxically, the sufferings of the civilian population in the blitz seemed to create a new and hospitable sense of community. And, in comparison with the Great War, the issues at stake seemed to almost everyone to be crucial and clearcut – an impression which was strengthened as details of the Holocaust and of Hitler’s apocalyptic strategy became generally known.

And yet, a sanctified patriotism played far smaller a part in the Second World War than in the First. The emerging ecumenical movement mobilised support in the

²⁷ W.R.Forrester, ‘The New Patriotism’, *The British Weekly*, April 10, 1934.

churches around the world for the German Confessing Church, and suggested that the war was in a sense a conflict between Hitler, the false Führer, and the Lord Jesus Christ, the true Führer. Certainly after the war the churches and the young ecumenical movement were buoyant and confident. I remember vividly how, when I went up to university in the early 50s I found the SCM full of wonderful and dynamic men who had fought in the war and were now 'intending the ministry'. The general atmosphere was that our task in the SCM and the Scottish churches was to gather in the fringes of Scottish society that were not yet fully Christian, with the help of a cluster of eminent leaders – George Macleod, Billy Graham, Tom Allan, D.P. Thompson, and others. Our confidence that the churches and the Christian Faith would dominate Scottish society remained unshaken, and we hardly noticed when after 1956 statistics of church membership and church attendance began to decline. The contrast with the aftermath of World War I could hardly have been more marked.

The war had been a time of hardship and suffering of a very different kind from the Depression, or indeed from the trenches of the First World War. In it many people found seeds of hope and intimations of a better social order. For one thing, the sufferings and the sacrifices were shared more or less equally throughout the society. No one group bore a disproportionate share of the costs, as had the frontline troops in the trenches in World War I, or the unemployed in the 1930s, and few were able to profit at the expense of their fellows. In all sorts of ways, some of them quite superficial, but others with profound implications, social barriers broke down. A new sense of national community and interdependence was experienced, and this fellowship and mutual care in the light of a common purpose was found to be good.

People were thrown together in a quite new way. Most of the middle classes had been insulated from the sufferings of the Depression, except when a hunger march passed through their suburb, or they read about the conditions of the unemployed in the papers. Through the programme of evacuation in the early period of the war, many middle class people had their first face-to-face encounter with what poverty and slum conditions did to children, and old people, and others. People of different classes fought side by side, ate the same rations, shared the same shelters. The common goal, the sharing of sacrifices and the sharing of joys produced a new quality of fellowship.

The churches shared very fully in the euphoria and the sense that together we were building Jerusalem, a new and fairer society, with a lively sense of community and responsibility for and to one another. And euphoria in the churches easily merged into complacency.

A Variety of Chaplains and their Roles

I chose Stewart Thomson's Baird Lectures of 1947 as the only set of Baird Lectures that according to its title seemed likely to engage with the issues arising from the context of the Second World War. The theme was 'The Chaplain in the Church of Scotland', and Stewart Thomason himself had been a military chaplain and earned a TD as well as an MC.. He had also served as 'a colonial, school, hospital and industrial chaplain.'²⁸ So he knew from his own experience what the work of a chaplain involved.. But I was increasingly puzzled why Stewart Thomson chose such a clutch of forms of chaplaincy rather than concentrating, in the immediate aftermath of a major war on military chaplaincy.. For him the parish ministry is the enduring core of ministry, which deserves to be celebrated as such. Chaplains, on the other hand are exercising specialised ministries, and such ministries also deserve to be celebrated as such. And chaplains and parish ministers, he suggests, should always work in close harmony, for their vocations are in essence the same.

I shall pass rapidly over the other types of chaplain that Stewart Thomson identifies – Royal chaplains, colonial chaplains, continental chaplains, educational chaplains, and institutional chaplains – this last pointing forward to the development somewhat later of industrial chaplains. In the Second World War there had been 327 Church of Scotland military chaplains, of whom 17 were killed in action, 30 had been decorated, and 40 had been mentioned in despatches. The military chaplaincy department had as its motto *In hoc signo vinces*, buying into the Constantinian tradition in a rather risky fashion. And while the chaplain in many ways shared the life of the men, he also conducted compulsory church parades which were often resented by soldiers who were sometimes considered hostile and ignorant of the Christian faith.

²⁸ T.B.Stewart Thomson, *The Chaplain in the Church of Scotland*. Edinburgh and London, William Blackwood and Sons, 1947.

My problem with Stewart Thomson's discussion of chaplains is that he sees the chaplain's role as purely pastoral, and never prophetic. Royal chaplains are not like the medieval fathers confessor, whose task was to deal among other things with the sinfulness and the wrong decisions that are often taken at the centre of power and authority. Dr Hilary Smith, in a fine PhD, has argued convincingly that prison chaplains should have a prophetic role in relation to what goes on in prisons. It never seems to have crossed Stewart Thomson's mind that such a prophetic role may be absolutely necessary, from time to time.. In his brief discussion of prison chaplaincy he offers an order of service to be used on the morning of an execution. But one looks in vain for any theological critique of the death penalty.

There is a real tension here, which has emerged several times in my lifetime when in the General Assembly the chaplains committee has opposed the Church and Nation Committee's wish to persuade the Assembly to declare a particular war or armed conflict to be unjust, on the grounds that this would complicate the chaplains in the exercise of their pastoral ministry among the troops.

* * *

I examined these two series of Baird Lectures as exemplars of contextual theology. My hope was that they would engage prophetically with their contexts, and thus maintain the old Scottish tradition that there were two kingdoms in Scotland, and the Church was given a mandate to criticise or support the civil state as appropriate....This had been dominant in Scotland from the time of the Reformation. Theology and the gospel are not seen as the concerns of the spiritual realm alone; they are the basis for a *confessional* politics and a *confessional* economics, based on an unashamedly christological foundation. The Scots Confession is thus in interesting ways comparable to the Theological Declaration of Barmen of 1934. Perhaps this is what attracted Barth to it in 1937, as the theme for his Gifford Lectures in Aberdeen..

The working out in Scotland of two kingdoms theory in terms of church-state relations is also distinctive and radical. The basic position is that the power of the crown may be, and sometimes must be, confronted, even while honouring and respecting the office. Andrew Melville, the leader of the Second Reformation, who in an encounter with James VI at Falkland in 1596 called the king 'bot God's sillie vassall', typified the

early relationship between Church and State. Melville sees his task at a time of crisis for Church and Crown to speak truth to power and clarify what he sees as the true Reformed relationship of church and state. He addresses the King:

And thairfor, Sir, as divers tymes befor, sa now again, I mon tell yow, thair is twa Kings and twa Kingdomes in Scotland. Thair is Chryst Jesus the King and his kingdome the Kirk, whase subject King James the Saxt is, and of whase kingdome nocht a king, nor a lord, nor a heid, bot a member! And they whome Chryst hes callit and commandit to watch over his Kirk, and governe his spiritual kingdome, hes sufficient powar of him, and authoritie sa to do, bathe togidder and severalie; the quhilk na Christian King nor Prince sould controll and discharge, but fortify and assist, utherwayes nocht fathfull subjects nor members of Christ.²⁹

Here is a strong affirmation of the sole Lordship of Christ, and a powerful suggestion that this is mediated to the civil authorities by the Kirk, which in a special sense is the Kingdom of Christ. This distinctively Scottish version of the two kingdoms theory may from time to time have been open to the opposite dangers to those latent in the Anglican Reformation's affirmation of the royal supremacy.³⁰ It certainly involved a claim on the part of the Church to spiritual independence, which was seen by royalists in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as an unacceptable limitation on royal power. Because in the seventeenth century they were used as agents of royal control, bishops were - and are often still - seen in the Presbyterian mind as infringing both the freedom of the Church and its populist, democratic polity as a folk-church. As a consequence Scotland had four and a half centuries of controversy about the authority of the crown, of parliament, and of the civil courts over the Church of Scotland.

Thus the sixteenth century Reformation period established a sharp distinction between the spheres of Church and State, yet spoke of the mutual responsibilities that they had for each other. Scotland was to be a Christian commonwealth in which the activities of Church and State were to be complementary. The Church was to be

²⁹ Robert Pitcairn, ed., *The Autobiography and Diary of Mr James Melville*. Edinburgh: The Wodrow Society, 1842, p.370.

³⁰ On the development of the idea of royal supremacy in the early English reformation, see especially Diarmid MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996, esp. pp. 278, 349,364,576f., 617.

responsible for education at all levels, for the relief of poverty, and for the maintenance of moral standards, as well as for the worship of God and the preaching of sound doctrine. The state had the responsibility for defense, for most serious matters of law and order, and for legislation in temporal matters. Much depended on smooth co-operation between Church and state in their separate roles.

But these two series of Baird Lectures that I have discussed indicate how thoroughly the Church of Scotland deserted its radical tradition and embraced instead an establishment role.