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**SERIOUSLY MODIFIED BELIEFS:
THE REVEREND ROBERT REID'S INFLUENCE ON
D. H. LAWRENCE**

LUKE FERRETTTER

In the winter of 1907, during his second year at University College Nottingham, Lawrence wrote twice to the Reverend Robert Reid (1868–1955), minister of the Eastwood Congregational Church from 1898 to 1911, which he had attended since childhood. In the first letter, of 15 October 1907, Lawrence explains that his reading in modern criticism of religion has “seriously modified my religious beliefs”, and he asks the minister “what is precisely the orthodox attitude – or say the attitude of the nonconformist Churches” to the questions raised by modern critics (*IL* 36–7). In the second letter, of 3 December 1907, he tells Rev. Reid more freely about his journey out of the Christianity in which he was brought up, into belief in something more like a “Cosmic God” (*IL* 41). These letters are in fact the culmination of a long relationship Lawrence had with Reid. Lawrence heard him preach twice each Sunday from the time he was thirteen until he left Eastwood at the age of twenty-three. Reid presided over the other Congregational Church groups which Lawrence attended, including Sunday School, the youth society Christian Endeavour and the temperance group Band of Hope, and he was the founder and president of the Congregational Literary Society, which was a major source of intellectual stimulation for Lawrence and his circle. In her PhD dissertation and her article, ‘D. H. Lawrence’s Congregational Inheritance’, Margaret Masson has written about the sermons of Rev. Reid published in the *Eastwood and Kimberley Advertiser* during Lawrence’s years in Eastwood.¹ John Worthen also mentions some of them in *D. H. Lawrence: The Early Years*.² I read all the issues of the *Eastwood and Kimberley Advertiser* from 1903 to 1909, and found a

considerable number of other sermons and addresses by Reid published there in addition to those discussed by Masson or Worthen.³ By my count, there are twenty-three published during these years. There are also at least two more published after 1909, and three further pieces of Reid's work available elsewhere.⁴ These add up to a clear picture of the kind of thinking, ministry and preaching the young Lawrence experienced from Reid. In this essay, I will discuss Reid's thought and work, and trace its influence on that of Lawrence.

Robert Reid in Eastwood

In 1903, a contributor to the *Eastwood and Kimberley Advertiser* with the pen name "Gemini" published an article, one of a series on Eastwood and its distinguishing characteristics, entitled 'Eastwood – Its Institutions'. "The institutions of a place naturally include its Churches", the author begins, and so the article begins with them, and indeed over half its space is devoted to them. After a paragraph on the Anglican Church, Gemini writes, "The Congregational Church is the abode of fashion. On entering, one feels that the place whereon we stand is respectable ground. Here are no hungry faces, but on the contrary, the chastened and satisfied smile of the man who is doing well both for this world and the next".⁵ Lydia Lawrence had joined the Eastwood Congregational Church in 1897, the same year that the congregation had called Robert Reid, then in his final year of training at the Congregational Institute for Theological and Missionary Training (later Paton College) in Nottingham, to be its pastor, the role he took up from 1898 to 1911.⁶ Reid was a popular pastor and preacher. In 1917, when the Church celebrated its fiftieth anniversary, the *Advertiser*, in describing the six men who had ministered in it during its fifty years, reports that Reid was "one of the most delightful and genial of men who will always stand foremost amongst the best products of the Congregational Institute during the long regime of the late Dr. Paton".⁷ Membership of the church increased considerably during his pastorate. The Church Minutes

Book records 30 new members joining in 1902.⁸ By 1903, after five years under Rev. Reid, church membership had grown from 82 to 150.⁹ The following year displays a “remarkable increase in attendance at Sunday School” – there are 240 students on the roster with an average attendance of 87 in the morning and 174 in the afternoon.¹⁰

Jessie Chambers tells us that her family had been “accustomed to hearing a reasoned discourse” in church during the time of Reid’s predecessor, Mr Loosemore, with whom her father “used to have long and animated discussion about the authenticity of the Bible”. During Reid’s time, her father would want to discuss the sermon with Lawrence on the way home, as she and Lawrence would during his college years: “Our minister used to preach interesting sermons that were more lectures than sermons, and on the walk home we would discuss the sermon and religion in general”.¹¹ May (Chambers) Holbrook remembers Lawrence’s attitude of concentration in church: “There was a quiet yet alert expression on his face, a high seriousness. He did not need to gaze or even glance around for entertainment, having more than enough to occupy his thoughts”.¹² In this essay, I will ask two questions about the sermons Lawrence heard in the Eastwood Congregational Church – what impression did they give him of Christianity, and to what extent did they cause him to reject it?

‘Modern Religious Dangers’

The first of Reid’s sermons to be published in the *Eastwood and Kimberley Advertiser* are a selection from a series entitled ‘Modern Religious Dangers’, which he began in November 1903. These thoughts on the problems for religious life posed by contemporary society give us a good introduction to what Reid conceived the true or authentic practice of Christianity to consist in. On Sunday 8 November, his first subject was ‘Sentimentalism’; on 15 November it was ‘Inconsistency’; and on 29 November, ‘Indifference’. Three more sermons in the series are advertised in the paper, but not

described, the following week – ‘Distinctions’ on 22 November; ‘Worldliness’ on 20 December and ‘The Decay of Reverence’ on 7 February 1904. In the sermon on sentimentalism, he gives what the *Advertiser* calls an “eloquent and forceful” address on the text of Luke 14:15, “Blessed are they [sic] that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God”. According to the summary of the sermon, Reid expounds this text as words “uttered at a Pharisee’s table by one evidently desirous of changing the subject which the Saviour was engaged in discussing – words most edifying in themselves, but uttered by the lips and not coming from the heart”.¹³ Reid is keenly alive to hypocrisy amongst Christians, that is, and he urges his congregation to live genuinely and not superficially religious lives. The sense he gives Luke 14:15 is not self-evidently the text’s meaning, and his exposition of it can only derive from an already long-held and serious concern with the practice of authentic Christian life in himself and in his congregation.

He says something very similar in the next week’s sermon, on ‘Inconsistency’, that “the religion of Christ has received far more damage at the hands of professing Christians than from openly avowed enemies”. Such Christians, Reid says, whose lives are inconsistent with their professed beliefs, “brought religion into contempt” and “were the cause of great numbers of people remaining outside the pale of the Church”.¹⁴ In the next and final sermon to be reported in the series, on ‘Indifference’, the newspaper summarises the sermon at greater length, making it clear that Reid had made at least two points about indifference; first that “today of all things which Christian people had to fight against, Indifference was the most powerful”, because “the great masses of the people were not hostile to religion – they were Indifferent and open hostility was easier to combat”. Second, Reid says that it is a fault also of professing Christians, in the sense that “even so-called Christian people were apparently careless as to the immortal welfare of their fellow creatures”.¹⁵ Again, Reid’s concern is primarily with the practice of a genuinely Christian life, a living relationship with God and one’s neighbour, in his congregation and beyond.

We can already note a marked difference, therefore, between Reid's preaching and that of Anna Brangwen's minister in *The Rainbow* (1915). The sermons of the vicar of Cossethay, to Anna's frustration, consist primarily of moral exhortation. "The vicar told her to be good in this way and in that"; he speaks of "being good, and doing one's best"; "The Church talked about her soul, and about the welfare of mankind, as if the saving of her soul lay in her performing certain acts conducive to the welfare of mankind" (R 146). None of this touches, far less satisfies, Anna's religious emotions – "They talked about her soul, but somehow never managed to rouse or to implicate her soul ... There was something else she wanted to hear" (R 146–7). Reid's preaching is not like this. It is true that he expects that good moral choices will be made by the Christians in his congregation, and precisely insofar as they are Christians, but there is much more clearly a spiritual relationship between the individual and God in Reid's preaching, from which he expects these moral choices to derive, than in the preaching of the vicar of Cossethay. Reid expects religion to be based in "the heart", as he puts it in the sermon on sentimentalism, and he expects it to be genuine, based on the practice of the relationship of the soul to God which his congregation believe that they experience.

This is especially marked in the funeral orations Reid gives, three of which are published in the *Advertiser* between December 1904 and May 1905. Masson speaks of the "largely moral tone" of Reid's sermons, of his "emphasis on moral rather than on numinous or mysterious religion", whilst acknowledging another trend of "more spiritual" thinking, in which "the numinous potential of religion was also hinted at".¹⁶ Ultimately, she is right to argue that Reid's thinking is complex, containing elements of conflicting traditions. She does not read two of Reid's three funeral sermons, however, in both of which his thought is overtly spiritual, dealing with the lived experience of the Christian's relationship to God, as opposed to the primarily moral message of the preaching that does not satisfy Anna Brangwen. In his sermon on the death of Mrs Robert Harrison, of 16 December 1904, he preaches from the text "And thy life shall be

clearer than the noon-day; though there be darkness, it shall be as the morning" (Job 11:17), on the subject 'Christian old age'. He begins the sermon with a device he uses very frequently, that of contrasting the meaning of the concept about which he is preaching in ordinary language with the meaning it has in the Bible. In his previous memorial sermon, he had spoken on "the New Testament interpretation of Death", in which "one finds the whole perspective in which it is set, the names by which it is called, the interpretation which is placed on it, and the feeling with which it is regarded, entirely changed".¹⁷ In the same way, in his sermon at the memorial service of Mrs Harrison, he points out that "The sadness of old age is a common theme. The popular estimate of age is low, gloomy and melancholy", but that "that is not how the Bible speaks of old age". Rather, in the Biblical view, Reid says, "amid the decay of the physical faculty of sight there comes ... an increasing clearness and certitude concerning other and deeper things ... [The aged] know now, as never before, Him whom they have believed". He speaks of the way in which the aged are "persuaded of the unchangeable goodness of God", of their "restful contact with the unseen and eternal" and that, as "the assurance of God's constancy grows and deepens" with old age, "the future is filled with hope". Reid asserts as a general principle, "Life is not measured by its activities, but by its quality. Christian life is not expressed in terms of work, but in terms of growth", and goes on to speak of the spiritual maturity that takes place in and because of the decline of the physical faculties in old age.¹⁸ There is no doubt that he expects Christian life to produce moral action. There is no doubt that, as he makes clear in several sermons, he values the "welfare of mankind", as the Church does in *The Rainbow* (R 146). Nevertheless, in these earlier sermons, unlike Anna Brangwen's vicar, he firmly locates the ground of moral action in the supernatural, spiritual relationship of the Christian's soul with God.

The New Theology

In February 1907, a sermon by Reid entitled ‘The New Theology and the Atonement’ was published. The New Theology was a highly publicised and controversial movement associated with the leading Congregationalist preacher R. J. Campbell, minister of the City Temple in London from 1903 to 1915. Campbell was a popular preacher – thousands of people attended his sermons each Sunday and, with their publication in weekly and fortnightly church periodicals, they were read by some sixty thousand people.¹⁹ Like many Nonconformists at the turn of the century he was attracted by the Social Gospel, the reform movement for Biblical principles of justice in industrial labour, declaring himself a socialist in 1906, and frequently speaking at political events in support of the labour movement.²⁰ His book *The New Theology* (1907) aimed to give a clear account of the ideas he had been expressing in the pulpit and the press, and caused widespread controversy among Congregationalists and Christian readers in general.²¹

In the book, Campbell re-interprets the traditional doctrines of Reformed Christianity in the light of Biblical criticism and modern science: “The New Theology is an untrammelled return to Christian sources in the light of modern thought. Its starting point is a re-emphasis of the Christian belief in the divine immanence in the universe and in mankind”. He rejects the way in which the traditional emphasis on God’s transcendence tends to “amount to a practical dualism”, in which God is thought to be “above and apart from His world instead of expressing Himself through His world”. By “God” Campbell means “the mysterious Power which is finding expression in the universe, and which is present in every tiniest atom of the wondrous whole”, adding that “whatever else [this Power] may be, it is myself”, so that “the real God is the God expressed in the universe and in yourself”. This fundamental belief leads him to criticise many Reformed Christian doctrines. “Certain dogmatic beliefs”, he writes, “about the Fall, the scriptural basis of revelation, the blood-atonement, the meaning of salvation, the punishment of

sin, heaven and hell, are not only misleading but unethical".²² His views on sin were especially contested in the press, and it is with this controversy that Robert Reid deals in *Eastwood*.

The debate had reached *Eastwood*. In January 1907, Willie Hopkin observes in his weekly column in the *Advertiser*, "We cannot open a paper without finding big headlines about the new theology".²³ Two months earlier, he had commented:

I am glad the Rev. R. J. Campbell, of the City Temple, has had the courage to say about religion what thousands of us think ... No doubt the Scribes and the Pharisees will be shortly shouting "Crucify him!" but he can afford to wait, for time and common sense are both on his side, as well as Truth.²⁴

Jessie Chambers recalls that she and Lawrence read *The New Theology* during his college years, and that it was a catalyst for their criticism of traditional Christian doctrines:

This was the time when the specific Christian dogmas came up for discussion, particularly after we had read the Rev. R. J. Campbell's book *The New Theology*. Such things as the Virgin Birth, the Atonement, and the Miracles we talked out and discarded as irrelevant to the real matter of religion.²⁵

Lawrence himself wrote to Reid:

A glance through J. R. [sic] Campbell's *New Theology* suggested to me that his position was untenable, indeed almost incomprehensible to an ordinary mind that cannot sustain a rationalist attitude in a nebulous atmosphere of religious yearning. I do not think Campbell solves any problems; I do think he is practically an agnostic, – and a mystic. (*IL* 37)

Reid's response to Campbell is complex, and it is precisely in this complexity that the relationship between Lawrence and his minister

starts to emerge. Reid begins his sermon by referring to “the theological discussion now proceeding in the pages of the public press”, commenting with approval on its “indication that the great and profound questions of the spiritual life had still a constraining interest for the minds of men”. He says, “Surely it is better that the traditional Christian faith should be the subject of serious discussion, hostile criticism, or even violent attack, than that it should be simply ignored – left entirely out of account by the multitude as something of no real practical importance in the scheme of life”.²⁶ Reid makes clear his commitment to understanding Reformed Christianity in the context of the modern thought in which it is criticised. Lawrence writes to him, “I should like to know whether the Churches are with [Campbell] on the subjects of the Miracles, Virgin Birth, The Atonement, and ... the Divinity of Jesus” (*IL* 37), and it is clear that Reid agreed that these were critical questions that needed to be asked if one were to believe and practice the Christian faith in contemporary society. Whilst his answers did not satisfy Lawrence that Christianity had the resources to respond to the questions raised by the authors he was reading during his college years, Reid was clearly willing at least to ask these questions along with Lawrence.

Reid’s response to Campbell is more traditional than his acceptance of Campbell’s questions. The methodological starting-point of his thought on Campbell’s view of the atonement is this: “Did it not suggest itself as a reasonable course that we should enquire, as far as possible, how [Christ] regarded Himself, and especially how He regarded His own death?”.²⁷ This view of the atonement, namely one derived from the principle of the inerrancy of Scripture, begs precisely the question that Campbell’s theological arguments are based on, namely that the Bible may not be inerrant, but is subject to historical reason and the insights of Biblical criticism. Reid is trying to mount a conscious and honest response to Campbell’s text, and indeed the question he puts is a direct response to one of Campbell’s claims. In *The New Theology*, the latter had written, “The typical theologian never seems to think of looking at the death of Jesus from the purely human point of view, and yet

surely this is the only legitimate thing to do when trying to get at the heart of the subject".²⁸ Reid responds directly, "It had been said of the typical theologian that he seemed absolutely incapable of looking at the death of Christ from the purely human point of view". But despite this quote from Campbell, Reid dismisses his entire methodology as he replies, "The theologian's point of view was not our first concern. The supreme question is, What was Christ's point of view?".²⁹ Reid simply re-asserts his prior belief in the inerrancy of Scripture as he argues that it is only Scripture itself, in the words ascribed to Christ in the Gospels, that can and should be taken into account in constructing a theology of the atonement, precisely the view Campbell puts into question.

At the end of the sermon, however, a slightly unusual phrase appears. The reporter concludes his account of Reid's remarks, "It was in the light of Christ's own life and words and work that we came to understand, however imperfectly, such words as these: 'Christ died for the ungodly'. 'He bore our sins in his own body on the tree'. 'He is the propitiation for the whole world'". The unusual phrase here is "however imperfectly". This may be a gesture of conciliation to Campbell as Reid takes an entirely different view of how to address the question of the atonement. It may be a piece of personal theological reflection. But it does, as Masson rightly says, have a "tentativeness ... which belies dogmatic boldness".³⁰ Having firmly asserted the principle of the inerrancy of Scripture as the methodological basis for any account of the significance of the death of Christ, it is odd to find Reid conceding at the end of his account that Scripture may serve in this way only "imperfectly". There is no theological contradiction here – it is quite possible that Reid should believe both in the inerrancy of Scripture and in the inadequacy of human understanding of it – but it does suggest a multiplicity of theological thought in the minister. He seems to have several ideas in his mind at once as he deals with the question of the New Theology, not necessarily clearly reconciled with one another. He wants to offer a traditional, Reformed response to Campbell's liberal view of the atonement, and, on the whole, he does. But he seems

increasingly unable to prevent himself acknowledging that he is, to some extent at least, persuaded by the kind of critical questions that Campbell is raising. He is beginning to show that his thought is in flux with respect to the questions of modernity, and as attentive a mind as Lawrence's, especially since he too is passionately alive to these questions himself at the time, would surely be aware of this.

Religion and science

Lawrence wrote to Reid on 15 October 1907, "I would like to know ... what is precisely ... the attitude of the nonconformist Churches to such questions as Evolution" (*IL* 37). On 1 December, Reid began a series of sermons on 'Religion and Science' in which, as the newspaper reports, "he dealt with the proper position for religious people to take up with regard to science". In this series, the split in his thought that begins to emerge over the New Theology develops and deepens with surprising speed. In the first, introductory sermon, Reid argues that "none of the views now held by the leading exponents of these [astronomical, geological and biological] sciences were at all opposed to real religious truth". He takes his stand in making this case on the assertion that "religion and theology were not the same".³¹ It is revealing to see how much he has been influenced by his dialogue with Campbell earlier in the year, as he refers here to the very first point Campbell had made in *The New Theology*, namely, "Religion is one thing and theology another".³² Campbell's point is that "religion and theology are necessary to each other, and it is a man's duty to try to make his theology as nearly as possible an adequate and worthy expression of his religion". By religion, he means "experience of the relations of God and the soul", and by theology he means "the intellectual articulation of religious experience".³³ The need for a "new theology", Campbell believes, arises from the fact that traditional theological doctrines no longer adequately articulate modern people's religious experience. All such experience has to be expressed through theology, and what we now need is a true, modern theology. Reid, however, although he begins

by quoting the first point in this argument, in fact means something different. He preaches, "Religion is one thing and theology another. Christianity remained and would remain a great and living force quite strong enough to withstand the shock of all opposing forces".³⁴ He means that, whatever theological doctrines are contradicted by modern science, the real matter of religion, the soul's experience of God, remains untouched and profoundly necessary to human life. The problem, though, with this half-use of Campbell's opening argument is that Campbell is right to say that all religious experience, if it is to be shared in language, has to be articulated in theological discourse. Reid does not acknowledge this, however. When Campbell took his stand on the difference between religion and theology, he meant that we need a new theology; when Reid follows Campbell, he means that religion remains true whatever science may do to theology, and this point is much weaker. What does Reid mean by religion? However he would answer that question it would be by speaking theologically, the very thing he has just abandoned to the criticism of science. Presumably, he intends only to reject theological statements that he believes to be wrong; but in fact, his argument has led him to reject theological statements as such, despite the fact that he in principle needs and in fact uses precisely such statements.

He does the same thing in the third sermon in the series, 'Evolution and the Doctrine of the Fall'. There he preaches, "The unthinking man, on hearing that science was proving conclusively that man was higher now than at any other period of his history, at once threw over religion as an exploded idea", but that, in doing so, "like so many people, he confused theology and religion".³⁵ Again, Reid attempts to argue that the authenticity of religious experience remains untouched by the criticism of modern science, although in fact he is forced in doing so to speak theologically, that is to articulate his religious experience in discursive language, precisely the kind of discourse whose value he is denying. Despite the admiration expressed for these sermons by the reporter who transcribes them, Reid is clearly struggling to make sense for his congregation of the conflicting claims of modern science, Reformed theology and liberal

theology. As in his sermon on *The New Theology* itself, but now even more clearly and markedly, he has one foot in the Reformed camp and one foot in the liberal camp, and has not clearly reconciled those two positions within his own thinking. Once again, to an attentive listener like Lawrence, to whose very questions these sermons are a response, Reid must have been showing that the questions of modern science to Nonconformist Christianity were beginning to overwhelm the answers.

In the sermon on ‘Evolution and the Doctrine of the Fall’, Reid takes a much more liberal view than any that has been previously published. He no longer holds to the traditional doctrine of the fall of mankind as the correct way to interpret the story of Adam and Eve. He preaches:

Young children did not at first know right from wrong. They had to be taught the difference as their intelligence expanded. Science taught that at some stage in human history man began to discern that there was such a thing as righteousness and morality, and the Bible by the beautiful story of Adam and Eve declared the self same thing.³⁶

This is a very marked change in Reid’s thinking, especially as compared to his earlier sermons. He has replaced the Reformed view that Scripture describes an act of the human will in contradiction to the will of God with a more modern, liberal account of the gradual moral enlightenment of the human race. He says that “there were parables also in the Old Testament” that do not relate facts to be understood literally any more than do the parables of Jesus in the New: “As a matter of fact, the story of Adam and Eve, and other incidents related in the Old Testament, were allegories, just as were the parables of the New Testament”. Less than a year earlier, Reid had based his account of the atonement on the inerrancy of Scripture; now he interprets Scripture in the light of contemporary science. As he tells his congregation, “the finest minds and most saintly men of the day accepted these things with no injury to their faith”. Reid’s

thought is in flux, and seems to be moving fast, under the influence of the seriousness with which he takes his duty to respond to the questions of modern science, precisely the questions about which Lawrence is asking him.

Still he remains conflicted, however. In almost the same breath as the one in which he re-interprets the traditional doctrine of the fall, Reid nevertheless wants to continue to assert it. The sermon ends, "It had been said that to disprove the so-called 'fall of man' was to take away the need of Christ. What an ignorant idea! A man had only to open his eyes and look round about him to see the necessity of Christ's life and death".³⁷ It is now becoming difficult to know exactly what Reid means. Having argued for the gradual moral enlightenment of the human race as the meaning of the story of Adam and Eve, he then restates the Reformed doctrines, which he has just moved beyond, that Christ's incarnation and crucifixion were necessary for the human race. But why? The traditional answer is to save human beings from the consequences of sin, but Reid has just rethought the traditional doctrine of sin. Once again, and in an even more striking contrast, Reid is thinking in two conflicting traditions of thought at once, that Reformed Christian doctrine is true, and also that it needs to be rethought and restated in the light of the critiques of modern science. As his earliest sermons show, he was once persuaded entirely by the former, and he remains committed to Reformed orthodoxy. But at the very same time, he is also persuaded that modern science and ethics demand a rethinking of that orthodoxy. He cannot consistently hold both positions at once, but he does. In fact, as we ask the question of Reid's influence on Lawrence, by 1907 it is Lawrence who is exerting the greater influence on Reid, rather than the other way around. As Lawrence, in his well-read and serious letter, asks Reid to explain the attitude of the Nonconformist churches to such questions as evolution, Reid is conscientiously willing to do so. But the intellectual development that responding to Lawrence's questions demands causes a significant development in his own thought, leading him away from the Reformed orthodoxy with which he began as a minister in

Eastwood into a complex, conflicting position in which he remains loyal to such orthodoxy while at the same time being persuaded by modern critiques of it. None of this could have escaped Lawrence as he sat in the pews listening to Reid grapple with the very questions he had asked him to address.

The resurrection of the body

Perhaps the strongest critique of Christianity raised by Lawrence's aesthetic works is the one articulated both in *The Rainbow* and in *The Escaped Cock*, that Christianity does not adequately acknowledge the resurrection of the body. In *The Rainbow*, as the Brangwens live out the liturgical year, they feel:

Surely Christ rose with healed hands and feet, sound and strong and glad? ... But no ... A small thing was Resurrection, compared with the Cross and death, in this cycle ... For the Resurrection was shadowy and overcome by the shadow of death ... Alas, that a risen Christ has no place with us! Alas, that the memory of the passion of Sorrow and Death and the Grave holds triumph over the pale fact of Resurrection! (*R* 261–2)

This is the heart of the failure of Christianity, for Lawrence, that it traduces its own doctrine of the resurrection of the body, failing to acknowledge the sacred life of the body, that the life of the body is the ground of the sacred. In this section I will examine Reid's thought on the body, as it appears in his sermons, and ask to what extent Lawrence learned from his preaching that Christianity was a system of thought and practice that devalued the sacred life of the body.

First, there is no doubt that Reid's view of the good life is not Lawrence's. His view of a fully lived life is one in which reason, the moral sense and the will govern the passions in a well-ordered whole person. He can be positively dualistic with respect to the passions and his distrust of them. In a sermon of January 1904, entitled 'The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll [sic] and Mr. Hyde', which is summarised

in the *Advertiser*, Reid said that “in that weird story, R. L. Stevenson had preached a most powerful sermon to the world”:

Every man resembled Dr. Jekyll in possessing two distinct sets of qualities – a good and an evil – and if, like Dr. Jekyll, we allowed the evil free play, and did not do our utmost to restrain our wicked desires and stamp out the tiger and the ape in our nature, so surely should the time come when we should find that even if we desired to cultivate the good, we should be unable to do so.³⁸

In this sermon the desires, the passions are associated with primitive human nature, which Reid describes with the phrase “the tiger and the ape”, a reference to Tennyson’s *In Memoriam*, in which mankind is exhorted to “Move upward, working out the beast, / And let the ape and tiger die”.³⁹ The poem suggests that human beings are morally evolving away from the ape and tiger. Reid does not take that view, however, but rather takes a dualistic view of human nature, in which the passions are not only primitive and evil but, if not properly restrained by the habit of virtue, will dominate the entire personality. This is of course precisely the kind of psychology which Lawrence will reject and move beyond. Reid never wavers from this view, writing three years later in his sermon on the virtue of temperance, “The truly temperate life is the well-proportioned and well-disciplined life; the life in which wild and wayward impulse is checked and restrained by reason and conscience”.⁴⁰ Again, this is just the kind of Christian view of human nature that Lawrence will reject. The *Advertiser* gives the titles of 52 more of Reid’s sermons in addition to the 23 it publishes between 1903 and 1909. From what one can infer from these titles, not one of them seems to be about the body, about the natural world or about resurrection, the phenomena that Lawrence feels that Christianity neglects. The only sermon advertised during these years to fall on an Easter Sunday is that of Easter 1904, and it is entitled ‘Impossible Secrecy’.⁴¹ It is not reported on after it is delivered, and although it is difficult to imagine an Easter sermon that does not mention resurrection, the title does

not suggest that the resurrection of the body, in particular, was emphasised.

Nevertheless, Reid's thought is not one-sided with respect to the body. He does not privilege the life of the spirit over against that of the body, nor does he devalue or degrade the body in general, as Christianity does in *The Rainbow* and *The Escaped Cock*. Whilst his emphasis is on moral and spiritual life and whilst his view of the good life is that of the passions ordered by reason, nevertheless he has a relatively holistic view of the human person. In his sermon on temperance, he says:

The chief aim of all good government is to promote the best interests of the governed. The first and highest function of all wise rule is, not to impose needless and irritating restrictions, but to provide the conditions under which the sum of individual energy and capacity may be exercised and developed to the advantage of the entire commonwealth ... All the several activities of our nature must be so controlled by the will as to make each minister to the others, and each to promote the balance and effectiveness and integrity of the whole.⁴²

This is not of course a view with which Lawrence was able to sympathise. But when Reid speaks about the government of the passions by reason, conscience and the will for the good of the person as a whole, he is saying something different than the Christ figure of *The Escaped Cock* is said to have taught. In the novella, as the man who had died rises into the life of the body, Madeleine reflects, "This was not the Master she had so adored, the young, flamy, unphysical exalter of her soul". Unsatisfied in her "excessive need for salvation" by the man's resurrection into "touch", she invents the entirely spiritual risen Christ which the novella implies is that of Christian tradition: "He was risen, the Saviour, the exalter, the wonder-worker! He was risen, but not as man; as pure God, who should not be touched by flesh, and who should be rapt away into heaven. It was the most glorious and most ghostly of the miracles" (VG 134). The

imbalance of this view, in which Christ is said to be risen entirely spiritually and not physically, as he had also lived, cannot be traced to Reid's view of the passions. Despite his distrust of unrestrained passion, despite his view that the psyche should be ordered by reason, the conscience and the will, his view of the person is more holistic, more balanced than that of the Christian tradition articulated by Madeleine in *The Escaped Cock*. She denies the value of physical life altogether in order to privilege spiritual life, and on this division she founds Christianity. Reid's view of the well-balanced person, despite being alien to Lawrence's moral thought, is nevertheless much less divisive, much less a system in which the whole person is split into body and soul, than the Christian tradition Lawrence represents in his fiction.

Conclusion

In this article, I have been asking two questions. First, what did Christianity seem to be to Lawrence as a result of his upbringing in the Congregational Church in Eastwood, and second, why did he reject it? From his fiction, we learn that his two strongest critiques of Christianity are first, that it is in practice an exclusively moral system, which does not speak to the depths of the human person. Second, that it is a system of belief and practice which divides the complete person into body and spirit, and which speaks only to the life of the spirit. As a result, it oddly fails to teach or to live by its own doctrine of the resurrection of the body. From Lawrence's life, we know that, most acutely during his college years, he found Christianity unable to respond adequately to the modern critiques of science and of Biblical scholarship. To what extent did the ministry of Robert Reid, whose sermons Lawrence heard every week for more than ten years, contribute to these views? With respect to modern critiques of Christianity, Reid believes firmly both in the necessity of responding to those critiques and in the resources of Christianity to mount such a response. He responded willingly to Lawrence's questions, which he regarded as legitimate. He was so conscientious

a modern thinker, however, that he was increasingly persuaded by those critiques even as he remained loyal to the traditional doctrines of Reformed Christianity. To an attentive mind like Lawrence's, it must have been clear that Reid was struggling his way through rather than clearly answering precisely the same questions that for him would eventually prove decisive in rejecting Christianity.

With respect to the portrayal of Christianity in Lawrence's mature fiction, there is no doubt that Reid is a primarily moral thinker. He expects Christian life to result in moral action. But there is equally no doubt that he grounds this expectation in the kind of living, consoling, consummating relationship of the person to God that is absent from the Christianity of Lawrence's fiction. Reid distrusts the passions, believing them to be unruly and destructive. His view of the good life is one in which the passions are ordered by the reason and the moral sense. As a result, he does not emphasise the resurrection of the body. Nor, it should be said, does he emphasise the crucifixion. He does not preach the kind of Christ to which Ursula objects in *The Rainbow*, who would "thrust His hands under her face and, pointing to the wounds, say: 'Look, Ursula Brangwen, I got these for your sake. Now do as you're told'" (R 256). On the one hand, therefore, Reid contributed to Lawrence's sense that Christianity devalues the life of the body, failing to understand its fundamentally sacred nature. On the other hand, however, Reid's view of the well-balanced person, whose passions are integrated into the whole personality, is so much less dualistic or divisive a view of the human person than the Christianity of Lawrence's fiction that I would suggest that some of Lawrence's view of the Christian devaluation of the body comes from elsewhere. Jessie Chambers believed that Lawrence's mother dominated his understanding of Christianity: "I think that L[awrence] inherited his 'philosophy', and especially his manner of expressing it, directly from his mother, and also his conception of Christianity with the Congregational Chapel at Eastwood, and with his mother's interpretation of it".⁴³ This sentence is not perfectly clear, but it seems to mean that Christianity for Lawrence was, in Jessie's view, first what was taught at the

Congregational Church, and second the way in which that teaching was filtered through his mother's understanding of it. It is certain that Lawrence's response to the Christianity of his youth exceeds the rational criticism that can be made of the preaching of Robert Reid, although such criticism can indeed be made. Lawrence's intellectual concerns would prove decisive in his rejection of the Christian faith, but his response to that faith exceeds these concerns, and is a passionate, emotional and not entirely conscious response. Had Reid's replies to liberal theology or to science been more internally consistent, Lawrence would still not have been persuaded, since he felt so passionately about what he took to be the Christian view of the body. He needed to hear about a religion that respected, cherished and promoted the sacred life of the body. For all Reid's conscientious defence, exposition and practice of the Christian faith in modern society, he could not persuade Lawrence that Christianity was such a religion.

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¹ Margaret J. Masson, 'The Influence of Congregationalism on the First Four Novels of D. H. Lawrence' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Durham, 1988); 'D. H. Lawrence's Congregational Inheritance', *D. H. Lawrence Review*, 22 (1990), 53–68.

² John Worthen, *D. H. Lawrence: The Early Years, 1885–1912* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991), 171–2. See also David Newmarch, 'Congregationalism in the Early Life of D. H. Lawrence: Ministers at the Eastwood Chapel', *The Journal of the D. H. Lawrence Society* (1990), 9–24.

³ By my count, Masson reads seventeen of Reid's texts; I found another eleven.

⁴ See Appendix for a list of all known texts by Rev. Robert Reid.

⁵ Gemini, 'Eastwood. II – Its Institutions', *Eastwood and Kimberley Advertiser*, 10 Apr. 1903, 3. The *Eastwood and Kimberley Advertiser* will hereafter be cited as *EKA*.

⁶ *Record of the Congregational Church Assembling at Eastwood, Notts.*, 28 Sept. 1897.

⁷ 'Jubilee of Eastwood Congregational Church', *EKA*, 14 Sept. 1917, 3.

⁸ *Record of the Congregational Church Assembling at Eastwood, Notts.*, 1902.

⁹ 'Eastwood Congregational Church: Fifth Anniversary of the Pastor's Settlement', *EKA*, 10 July 1903, 2.

¹⁰ 'Annual Meeting of Congregational Church at Eastwood', *EKA*, 29 Jan. 1904, 2.

¹¹ Jessie Chambers, *D. H. Lawrence: A Personal Record* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1980), 52, 17, 53, 83.

¹² Edward Nehls, *D. H. Lawrence: A Composite Biography*, Vol. 3 (Madison, NJ: U of Wisconsin P, 1959), 605.

¹³ 'Local and District News: Eastwood', *EKA*, 13 Nov. 1903, 2.

¹⁴ 'Local and District News: Eastwood', *EKA*, 20 Nov. 1903, 2.

¹⁵ 'Local and District News: Eastwood', *EKA*, 4 Dec. 1903, 2.

¹⁶ Masson, 'The Influence of Congregationalism', 48, 62, 54, 101.

¹⁷ 'Memorial Service: The Late Mr. R. S. Pender, of Langley Mill', *EKA*, 2 Dec. 1904, 2.

¹⁸ 'Memorial Service by the Rev. R. Reid: The Relict of the Late Alderman Harrison', *EKA*, 16 Dec. 1904, 3.

¹⁹ B. J. Worrall, 'R. J. Campbell and His New Theology', *Theology*, 81 (1978), 342–8, 343.

²⁰ Keith Robbins, 'The Spiritual Pilgrimage of the Rev. R. J. Campbell', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 30 (1979), 261–76, 271–3.

²¹ R. Tudur Jones, *Congregationalism in England* (London: Independent Press, 1962), 349–51; Worrall, 'R. J. Campbell and His New Theology', 346–8.

²² R. J. Campbell, *The New Theology* (New York: Macmillan, 1907), 4, 18, 20, 8.

²³ Anglo-Saxon, 'Week by Week', *EKA*, 25 Jan. 1907, 2.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 30 Nov. 1906, 2.

²⁵ Chambers, *D. H. Lawrence: A Personal Record*, 83–4.

²⁶ 'The New Theology and the Atonement', *EKA*, 8 Feb. 1907, 3.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Campbell, *The New Theology*, 114.

²⁹ 'The New Theology and the Atonement', 3.

³⁰ Masson, 'The Influence of Congregationalism', 55.

³¹ 'Local and District News: Eastwood', *EKA*, 6 Dec. 1907, 2.

³² Campbell, *The New Theology*, 1.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ 'Local and District News: Eastwood', *EKA*, 6 Dec. 1907, 2.

³⁵ 'Evolution of the Doctrine of the Fall: Religion and Science', *EKA*, 27 Dec. 1907, 3.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ 'Local and District News: Eastwood', *EKA*, 22 Jan. 1904, 2.

³⁹ Alfred, Lord Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, CXVIII.

⁴⁰ 'The Virtue of Temperance: The Third of a Series of Sermons by the Rev. R. Reid', *EKA*, 5 Jul. 1907, 2.

⁴¹ 'Local and District News: Eastwood', *EKA*, 8 Apr. 1904, 2.

⁴² 'The Virtue of Temperance', 3.

⁴³ 'The Collected Letters of Jessie Chambers', ed. George Zytaruk, *D. H. Lawrence Review*, 12 (1979), 1–223, 126.

**APPENDIX: SERMONS AND ADDRESSES OF REV. REID
PUBLISHED IN THE *EASTWOOD AND KIMBERLEY*
ADVERTISER BETWEEN 1903 AND 1909**

1. 'Pentecost Church, Eastwood: Re-Opening Service'
(23 Feb. 1903)
2. ['Modern Religious Dangers': 'Sentimentalism'] (13 Nov. 1903)
3. ['Modern Religious Perils': 'Inconsistency'] (20 Nov. 1903)
4. ['Temperance'] (4 Dec. 1903)
5. ['Modern Religious Perils': 'Indifference'] (4 Dec. 1903)
6. ['The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll {sic} and Mr. Hyde']
(22 Jan. 1904)
7. 'Annual Meeting of the Congregational Church at Eastwood:
Interesting Presentations' (29 Jan. 1904)
8. 'Memorial Service: The Late Mr. R. S. Pender, of Langley Mill'
(2 Dec. 1904)
9. 'Memorial Sermon by the Rev. R. Reid: The Relict of the Late
Alderman Harrison' (16 Dec. 1904)
10. 'The Late Mr. Edward Lindley: Impressive Memorial Service at
Eastwood' (19 May 1905)
11. ['The Debasement of the Imagination'] (23 Nov. 1906)
12. ['An Impossible Demand'] (30 Nov. 1906)
13. 'The New Theology and the Atonement' (8 Feb. 1907)
14. ['Dr Paton, of the New Hebrides'] (15 Feb. 1907)
15. 'Courage: One of the Cardinal Virtues. Sermon by the Rev. R.
Reid' (21 Jun. 1907)
16. 'The Virtue of Temperance: The Third of a Series of Sermons by
the Rev. R. Reid' (5 Jul. 1907)
17. ['The Virtue of Justice'] (12 Jul. 1907)
18. 'The Virtue of Faith: Sermon by the Rev. R. Reid' (26 Jul. 1907)
19. 'Sermon by the Rev. R. Reid: The Virtue of Hope' (9 Aug. 1907)
20. ['Religion and Science': 'Some Guiding Principles']
(6 Dec. 1907)
21. ['Religion and Science': 'Evolution and Traditional Views of
Creation'] (13 Dec. 1907)

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22. 'Evolution of [sic] the Doctrine of the Fall: Religion and Science' (27 Dec. 1907)
 23. 'Science and Religion: The Evolution of Revelation' (3 Jan. 1908)

Addresses published after 1909:

1. 'Eastwood's Farewell to the Rev. R. Reid: A Memorable Gathering' (31 Mar. 1911)
2. 'Eastwood Congregational Church Jubilee Celebrations: An Expression of Appreciation and Gratitude by the Rev. R. Reid' (21 Sept. 1917)

Texts by Reid in other sources than the *Eastwood and Kimberley Advertiser*:

1. Letter of Acceptance to Eastwood Congregational Church, 16th Jun. 1897, *Record of the Congregational Church Assembling at Eastwood, Notts.* Eastwood United Reformed Church, Eastwood, Nottinghamshire.
2. 'Eastwood Congregational Church: Ordination Ceremony', *Nottingham Daily Express*, 30 Sept. 1898, p. 6.
3. Letter to John Lewis Paton, in John Lewis Paton, *John Brown Paton: A Biography* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1914), pp. 99–105.