



Donald Macleod, *From the Marrow Men to the Moderates: Scottish Theology 1700–1800* (Fearn: Christian Focus, 2023), pp. xv + 355, ISBN 978-1527110489. £24.99

Like Donald Macleod's previous volume, *Therefore the Truth I Speak: Scottish Theology 1500–1700* (2020), this is not *just* a work of historical theology. Published in the year of Macleod's death (2023), it contains both historical theology and theological instruction. And like his previous volume, this makes the work useful for the church today through its evaluation of the theology of the past. Macleod sets out this approach in the Preface: 'the task of historical theologians is not finished when they have merely given a faithful account of the theological discussions of the past [...]. They must also venture, in all humility, to subject these discussions, and the conclusions they led to, to a theological evaluation' (p. xv).

In my view, this approach adds much value to the current work. However, such a method is not without risks. When moving between giving an account of past theological discussion and evaluation of those discussions, there is the risk that if the moves are not clearly signalled, the reader is not entirely sure whether they are reading an account of the history of those discussions or the personal judgments of the author. While Macleod often handles this quite well, there were times when I was left wondering where and when Macleod had moved from discussing the history of Scottish theology on its own terms to discussing his own assessment of that theology. This has impacted my judgement of the audience for whom this book can be recommended. The volume will prove of value to Christians with an interest in Scottish theology and may be of use to those studying in theological colleges. However, for those undertaking academic work on the history of theology in Scotland, care must be taken to make sure they know which parts are Macleod's own evaluation and which parts are descriptions of previous theology.

Looking to the contents of the book, after the Preface, Macleod jumps straight into discussing Thomas Boston (1676–1732) whose theology precipitated the Marrow controversy through his use of Edward Fisher's *Marrow of Modern Divinity* (1645). He became one of the main 'Marrow Men', together with Robert Riccaltoun, James Hog, John Williamson, James Bathgate, and Ebenezer Erskine. Boston gets two chapters, the first about him and his ministry, the second about his well-known work *Human*



Nature in its Fourfold State (1730). Following on from these chapters, Macleod discusses the Marrow controversy in general (Chapter 3) and its relationship to the Covenant of Grace specifically (Chapter 4). The controversy came about following Boston's reading of the *Marrow of Modern Divinity* and his subsequent recommendation of the book to friends. James Hog (1658–1734) 'had the First Part reprinted with a Preface from his own pen' (p. 60). This stirred up disagreements in the church over the conditionality of the Covenant of Grace and led to the Assembly moving against the work. The Marrow Men opposed the acts of the Assembly and so came to be known by their opposition. After discussing the controversy, Macleod moves on to focus in on one of the Marrow Men, Ebenezer Erskine and the secession of 1733 (Chapter 5). In Chapter 6 he covers a number of theologians of the secession before moving on to focus on James Fraser of Brea (Chapter 7) and his hypothetical universalism (Chapter 8).

This brings him to the Moderates who he spends the last three chapters discussing (Chapters 9–11). The Moderate Party emerged 'in the 1750s' and operated 'very much in the manner of a modern political party' (pp. 246–47). The party operated as 'a system of ecclesiastical management rather than a theological movement, and the label was [...] one "the Moderates" chose for themselves, and in which they gloried' (p. 247). Macleod states that William Robertson (1721–1793) was primarily responsible for the creation of the party and that 'at the heart of Robertson's policy was a determination to ensure that the Church complied with the Patronage Act of 1712' (p. 247). Thus we see Macleod's argument coming out that the Moderates were primarily focused on the political rather than theological; that is, they were concerned more with obedience to the law of the land than upholding a specific set of theological tenets.

As with *Therefore the Truth I Speak*, in this work Macleod addresses misconceptions related to theologians and their theology. His approach generally demonstrates great care in taking into account the various influences and nuances of the theological discussions in their theological contexts. For example, in reading his chapters on the Moderates we see a fairly balanced discussion. The Moderates are sometimes blamed for more than their share of the turn in Scottish theology away from confessional orthodoxy. However, Macleod takes the time and effort to demonstrate that their theology was generally in line with the Westminster Confession to which they subscribed. The issue was not that they denied such things as



the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ and justification through faith, but that they barely mention them and instead focus on virtue (and so things that could be considered the outworking of salvation becomes their primary theological focus). In fact, as Macleod points out, it was actually the evangelical camp themselves who, in the 1800s, brought in the German higher criticism that led to the deconstruction of Westminster orthodoxy.

Moving beyond bare historical theology, Macleod provides thoughtful evaluations and guidance to the church today. This work will be of greatest interest to the evangelical stream of the church and to those wishing to interact with it. This comes with the caveat that there are times when extra care needs to be taken to sort out Macleod's theological evaluations from his descriptions. Overall, an excellent work of historical theology and of theology.

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Lama Yeshe Losal Rinpoche, *From a Mountain in Tibet: A Monk's Journey* (London: Penguin, 2023), pp. 272, ISBN: 978-0241988954. £10.99

It was a joy and a privilege to be asked to review one my most enjoyable reads of the last decade, not least because I have had the privilege to meet the author, Lama Yeshe Losal Rinpoche, on a number of occasions. Lama Yeshe is the protagonist in this beautiful and vivid memoir of family life in rural Tibet, and a dramatic and dangerous escape across the Himalayas. The story includes his encounter with the Woodstock generation in America, where he enjoyed the excesses of the lifestyle, before a personal transformation led to him eventually becoming Abbot of a Tibetan Buddhist Monastery in Dumfries and Galloway, established by his brother Akong Rinpoche. One of his lasting contributions is procuring Holy Isle, off the island of Arran, where he set up a beautiful retreat centre.

This is not a self-congratulatory tale but a very human story of inner struggle, as the author takes on the responsibility of becoming a religious leader in Scotland, a far cry from his joyful simple childhood in the

