

## **Glen G. Scorgie, *A Call for Continuity***

Scorgie, Glen G. *A Call for Continuity: The Theological Contribution of James Orr*. Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1988. 189 pp.

This book is well researched, thoroughly documented, clearly organized, and well written. Glen Scorgie is obviously and explicitly sympathetic with Scottish theologian James Orr (1844-1913) and his well-informed, scholarly, conservative theology; Scorgie early voices “the hope that this study will not only illuminate the past but also suggest lessons for the future” (p. 2). Given this interest, it is significant to find pointed criticisms of Orr’s theological position and of some personal characteristics included along with the more generally appreciative treatment.

Indeed, the tension between Scorgie’s voiced hope and the critical analysis from Orr’s contemporaries as well as Scorgie provides the most intriguing part of this work. As the title indicates, Orr’s position was consistently “a call for continuity” with the doctrines of evangelical orthodoxy. The few concessions made were more tactical than substantial. First as a pastor and then as a professor, Orr took on the various movements which challenged his basic convictions that evangelical orthodoxy was nothing other than the doctrinal expression of the gospel and as such was self-authenticating, that all truth made up a rational unity, and that reality included two distinct realms of the natural and the supernatural. His major opponents both from within Christianity and from beyond included Ritschlianism, biblical criticism, evolutionary theory, and the quest for the historical Jesus. Orr argued relentlessly against these for his beliefs in the transcendent God, in God’s miraculous interventions in nature and history, in the possibility of and need for personal faith, in scriptural truth and integrity, and in the doctrines of creation, original sin, incarnation, and resurrection. It probably does not need to be said that he certainly did not carry the day in any of these vigorous battles. The scholarly community increasingly dissented from his views. Yet Orr held steady and even grew more firm, taking his case to the Christian public from which he received an eager hearing.

Given that the nineteenth and early twentieth century challenges which Orr and the rest of Christianity encountered have not abated, the fascinating cumulative effect of this book is that Scorgie is encouraging his readers to join Orr—apparently unconvincing in his own day—in standing firm with the historical doctrines of evangelical orthodoxy, come what may. Orr thought that his faith and theology were right and that it was the times in which he lived that were out of kilter. Scorgie seems to think the same of our time.

As a contribution to historical theology, this work presents us, clearly and concisely, with one conservative Christian theologian’s well articulated response to some of the various challenges of modernity. As a contribution to the study and practice of religion today, Scorgie in effect reissues the “call for continuity,” inviting his readers to keep the same faith. Many will still dissent. Time will tell wherein the greater wisdom lies.

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