

RELIGION, REASON AND
THE SELF

ESSAYS IN HONOUR OF
HYWEL D. LEWIS

Edited by

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CARDIFF
UNIVERSITY OF WALES PRESS
1989

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Religion, reason and the self, essays in honour
of Hywel D. Lewis.

1. Philosophy of religion

I. Roberts, T.A. II. Sutherland, Stewart R.
(Stewart Ross), *1941*

III. Lewis, Hywel D. (Hywel David), *1910-*
200'.1

ISBN 0-7083-1042-7

Printed in Great Britain at the Alden Press
Oxford London and Northampton

BL / 51 / R34 / 1989

Contents

	<i>page</i>
<i>Frontispiece</i>	
The Contributors	vii
Hywel D. Lewis STEWART R. SUTHERLAND MEREDYDD EVANS	ix
Meaning in the Bible RICHARD SWINBURNE	1
The Concept of Revelation STEWART R. SUTHERLAND	35
Faith and Philosophy F.C. COPLESTON	47
Decision and Religious Belief THOMAS McPHERSON	61
Religious Experience T.A. ROBERTS	75
The Issue of the Nature of Metaphysics IVOR LECLERC	91
The Soul and Person, in Theological Perspective T.F. TORRANCE	103
The Sinlessness of Jesus H.P. OWEN	119

William James and the Notion of Two Worlds D.Z. PHILLIPS	129
A Bibliography of the Writings of Hywel D. Lewis	145
Index	161
List of Subscribers	169

The Soul and Person, in Theological Perspective

T.F. TORRANCE

I

IN the early centuries of our era when the foundations of classical Christian theology were being laid, the doctrines of the Creation and Incarnation had a decisive impact upon the understanding of *soul* and *person*. Belief in the transcendent God who had created the universe out of nothing and endowed it with a created rational order of its own, called into question Greek philosophical notions of a separation between the intelligible and sensible realms, or between form and matter, and all attendant ideas about the timeless divine nature of rational forms immanent in the world and the ultimate unreality and irrationality of sensible or material phenomena. With Christian theology, matter and form, sensible and intelligible realities, were regarded as equally created out of nothing and as inseparably unified in one contingent rational order pervading the whole universe of visible and invisible realities including the body and mind of human being. The decisive factor, however, was the doctrine of the Incarnation through which the doctrine of creation out of nothing, which Christians shared with Jews, was radicalized. On the one hand, the doctrine of the Incarnation of the Word or Logos of God within the structures of the physical world had the effect of overthrowing the Greek idea of the Logos as an immanent cosmological principle, and demanded a sharp distinction between the uncreated rationality of God and the created rationalities of the cosmos. At the same time it insisted on the full reality of matter and the rationality of contingent existence. On the other hand, the doctrine that in Jesus Christ God's own eternal Logos had personally become man within space and time shattered all forms of cosmological dualism, whether Platonic, Aristotelian

- 3 See my Drew Lecture on Immortality for 1980, reprinted in *Transformation and Convergence in the Frame of Knowledge*, Christian Journals Ltd, Belfast, 1984, pp.333–49.
- 4 See the illuminating essays by Georges Florovsky on ‘Creation and Creaturehood’ and ‘The “Immortality” of the Soul’, *Creation and Redemption, Collected Works*, Vol. 3, Norland Publishing Company, Belmont, Mass., 1976, pp.43–78 and 213–40.
- 5 See especially Pseudo-Justin, *De resurrectione*, 1–10, *Bibliothèque Hellenon Pateron*, Vol. 4, Athens, 1955, pp.224–32; Athenagoras, *De resurrectione*, 13–25, *Bibliothèque Hellenon Pateron*, Vol. 4, Athens, 1955, pp.321–31.
- 6 This was Karl Barth’s way of expressing it, *Christian Dogmatics*, III.2, T & T Clark, Edinburgh, pp. 325ff.
- 7 Athenagoras, *De resurrectione*, 17f and *Presbeia*, 35.6, *Bibliothèque Hellenon Pateron*, pp.26ff and 35f. cf. C. Stead, *Divine Substance*, Oxford University Press, 1977, p.229:

Both Tertullian and Origen... express the view that the emission of human seed is of itself sufficient to release a fully individualized offspring in germinal form, which only needs shelter and nourishment in the womb.
- 8 See *The Didache of the Apostles*, 2.2 and *The Epistle of Barnabas*, 19.5: ‘Thou shalt not procure abortion or commit infanticide’; likewise Athenagoras, *Presbeia*, 36.6; and Clement, *Paedagogos*, 2.96. Cf. also Philo, *De Specialibus legibus*, 3 and Josephus, *contra Apionem*, 2.
- 9 Gregory of Nyssa, *De anima et resurrectione*, MPG 46, 125–8; *De opificio hominis*, 28–9.
- 10 Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orationes*, 37.15; Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catecheses*, 4.18f; Epiphanius, *Anchoratus*, 55; Cyril of Alexandria, *In Johannem*, 1.9, etc.
- 11 Augustine, *De Trinitate*, 15.23.43.
- 12 The individualist conception of ‘person’ which came to prevail in Latin thought derives from Boethius, *De duabus naturis et una persona Christi, adversus Eutychem et Nestorium*, 2.1–5.
- 13 Basil, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 16.38; *Bibliothèque Hellenon Pateron*, Vol. 52, p.262.
- 14 This was the way in which Cyril of Jerusalem presented the teaching of the Church, *Catecheses*, 16–17.
- 15 This was the contrast which Athanasium drew between subjective thinking *kat’epinoian* and objective thinking *kata dianoian*, *De sententia Dionysii*, 2, 23f; *De synodis*, 15; *Contra Arianos*, 1.9, 37; 4.2.f; *Ad Episcopos Aegypti*, 12ff, etc.
- 16 St John, 10.35.
- 17 Cf. Karl Barth’s enlightening exposition of this, *Church Dogmatics*, Eng. Tr, T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 1960, III.2, pp.344–66; and Ray S. Anderson, *On Being Human, Essays in Theological Anthropology*, William B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1982, pp.207ff.
- 18 A. Seth Pringle-Pattison, *The Idea of God in the Light of Recent Philosophy*, Oxford University Press, 1920, p.291. Cf also the Gifford Lectures of C.C.J. Webb, *God and Personality*, Allen & Unwin, London, 1919.

- 19 I have given an account of this development in *Theology in Reconciliation*, Geoffrey Chapman, 1975, pp.243ff.
- 20 Athanasius, *Contra Gentes*, 40,46; *De Incarnatione*, 54; *Contra Arianos*, 4.2, etc.
- 21 Athanasius, *Expositio fidei*, 2; *In illud omnia*, 6; *Ad Antiochenos*, 6f.
- 22 See especially the statement of Gregory of Nyssa, attributed to his brother Basil as *Epistola* 38; and Cyril's second and third *Epistolae ad Nestorium*. Cf. Methodios Fouyas, *The Person of Jesus Christ in the Decisions of the Ecumenical Councils*, Central Printing Press, Addis Ababa, 1976, pp.53ff and 72ff.
- 23 For the *relational* nature of the divine hypostases see Gregory Nazianzen, *Orationes*, 29.16; 30.20; 31.8f; 40.41; 41.15.
- 24 Athanasius, *Expositio Fidei*, 1, 4.
- 25 Cf. the two works attributed to Athanasius known as *Contra Apollinarem*, I & II, *Bibliotheke Hellenon Pateron*, Vol. 37, pp.267-98.
- 26 Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catecheses*, 16.3; 17.5, 28, 33f. Cf. Athanasius, *Contra Apollinarem*, 1.20f. This idea was to be more fully developed by Cyril of Alexandria, Severus of Antioch and Leontius of Jerusalem.
- 27 Cf. T.E. Hulme's account of personality as a 'mixed' or 'bastard' thing, *Speculations*, Kegan Paul, London, 1936, pp.1, 25, 33, etc.