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John Bligh

The Doctrinal Premises of Hogg's
Confessions of a Justified Sinner



Since 1924, when André Gide announced that he had read Hogg's masterpiece "with a stupefaction and admiration that increased at every stage," the *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* has received a generous measure of critical attention.¹ No one, however, has had much to say about its doctrinal implications. This present essay will attempt to establish that the novel is meant to reveal the dangers inherent in the Antinomian form of Christianity, and that its innovative narrative technique is designed to control the reader's response so that he will hate Antinomianism but will pity (not hate) its adherents. The novel will be shown to rest upon two theological premises--not one, as has been commonly supposed: in addition to the Antinomianism derived from St. Paul's Epistles, Hogg uses a popular demonology not derived from St. Paul; and his attitude to his two premises is widely different: he uses the demonology as a means of showing up the dangers of Antinomianism, but, as he completes his work, he has serious misgivings about the use he has made of it.

The popular form of Christianity which the novel seeks to discredit can be called, for brevity's sake, Antinomianism (from the Greek *nomos*, law), but more accurately it is Antinomian Predestinationism, which teaches that the Christian

elect, predestined to eternal glory and justified by their faith, are so absolutely and unconditionally predestined that no breach of any law can imperil their final salvation. The propagators of this doctrine presented it as the correct interpretation of the gospel preached by St. Paul. One reason why Hogg's novel is of permanent and universal interest and deserving of a place among "The World's Classics" is that it explores obscure areas of the thought of St. Paul, who is of permanent and universal interest. The story is not just a light-hearted satire on Calvinism, like Burns's "Holy Willie's Prayer"; it is a serious examination of strands of St. Paul's thinking which have always appealed to men and women who have tried and failed to live up to the exacting demands of Christian morality. These strands constantly reappear in Christian preaching.

St. Paul's preaching of the Christian gospel as a proclamation of freedom from law can of course be interpreted in a wholesome sense (if read in the context of the whole New Testament canon), but, as Hogg shows, when isolated and over-emphasized, it lends itself with the greatest of ease to an interpretation which is subversive of morality and social order. The book is much more than a satire on an early eighteenth-century Scottish misunderstanding of Calvinism (indeed, if satire treats its object as matter for laughter, it is not a satire at all); it reveals dangerous tendencies in Pauline Christianity itself. The only critic who has shown awareness of this is Douglas Gifford, who argues that the novel highlights an "intrinsic weakness of Christian dogma," but even he does not explain this weakness in any detail.²

To understand the novel correctly, it is necessary to know how St. Paul came to make the statements out of which the Antinomians constructed their system. The great debate in which the Apostle of the Gentiles (as he calls himself) worked out his own theological position concerned the treatment of Gentiles converted to Christianity: When they became Christians by baptism, should they at the same time become Jews by submitting (if males) to circumcision and by undertaking (whether males or females) to obey the Jewish law? Implicit in this practical question was the wider issue: Should Christianity remain, as it began, a movement within Judaism, or should it break through the wall of the Jewish law and become a world religion, stripped of its Jewishness? Embracing the latter view, Paul proclaimed that "Christ is the end of law unto righteousness for everyone who believes" (Rom. 10:4).³ Paul made no distinction between the laws of Rome and the laws of Moses, nor between the moral laws of the decalogue and the ceremonial laws about eating kosher food, washing of hands,

offering of first fruits, etc. He proclaimed in general terms that believers in Christ live not under law but under grace (Rom. 6:14); that law is not the remedy for sin; and that Jew and Gentile alike are "justified" (or freed from sin and made just in God's sight) not by law but by faith in Christ.

Paul's opponents naturally ask, "What, then, was the purpose of the law of Moses?" He replies polemically: "the law entered that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Rom. 5:20). That is to say: Law (personified) entered the human world, not to prevent sins but to multiply them, and by so doing to lay the scene for an even greater display of the grace of God. Paul's opponent replies: "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" (Rom. 6:1). The opponent is not an Antinomian; he is a law-observing Christian who is trying to refute Paul's teaching by revealing its absurd implications (later, Antinomians did not think the implications absurd). Paul's next reply, instead of clearing the matter up, seems to entail a further absurdity. "Heaven forbid!" he says; "you have been baptized into Christ's death so that you may live in grace, not die in sin; therefore you must yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for *you are not under the law, but under grace*" (Rom. 6:13-14, my emphasis). To the law-observing opponent this last clause sounds even worse. "What then? [he retorts] shall we sin, because we are not under the law but under grace?" (Rom. 6:15). It is a reasonable objection: if a Christian is no longer under law of any kind, presumably what was previously forbidden him by law is no longer forbidden him; according to Paul's own principles, "sin is not imputed when there is no law" (Rom. 5:13). Since Paul has not distinguished between the decalogue and the ritual law, it may well seem to follow that a Christian can kill his enemy, sleep with his neighbor's wife, take his property, damage his good name, and so on, without transgressing any law or incurring any penalty; whatever his conduct, he will remain a justified sinner by reason of his faith. The objections which the opponent is allowed to voice in Romans 6:1 and 6:15 are designed by Paul to give him an opportunity to refute them. Each time, however, the answer leads to fresh difficulties.

The essential tenet of Antinomianism, that one who is justified by faith is no longer subject to law or to its penalties, is easily combined with the doctrine of predestination which Paul uses in the same Epistle in his attempt to assure the Christian believer that once justified by faith he can face the final judgment with complete security:

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?

(Rom. 8:28-31)

Paul later qualifies this seemingly limitless assurance by allowing that there is one thing which can cause a Christian to be "cut off" and rejected, namely, lack of faith. At present, he says, the Jews are cut off for lack of faith; Gentile Christians too will be cut off if they abandon their faith (Rom. 11:20-22).

By putting together Paul's unqualified polemical utterances about law, grace, justification by faith, and predestination, one can easily reach the conclusion that a sinner who has been justified by his faith cannot, properly speaking, sin at all, and so long as he holds fast to his faith in his own predestination, his final salvation is certain. One of St. Paul's defects as a thinker and teacher is that he does not draw the conclusions entailed by his own theoretical premises and becomes irate with others who do. He was proud to proclaim that in Christ "there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female" (Gal. 3:38); however, when Corinthian females set aside the veils that were the symbols of their servitude to their husbands, he promptly told them to put them back on again (cf. I Cor. 11:2-16). Though liberal in his speculative theology, he was extremely conservative in his social thinking.⁴

At one point in the novel, Robert Wringhim's servant Penpunt makes the observation that Satan "has often been driven to the shift of preaching it [the gospel] himself, for the purpose o' getting some wrong tenets introduced into it, and thereby turning it into blasphemy or ridicule" (p. 196). But this is not quite accurate. The Antinomian does not need to introduce any tenets of his own; he has only to select from St. Paul, to omit certain distinctions and qualifications which Paul himself omitted, and from the selected passages to draw inferences which Paul himself did not draw.

For the historical setting of his novel, Hogg chose a peri-

od at the beginning of the eighteenth century when the presbyterian Church of Scotland was seriously disturbed by an outbreak of Antinomianism. The General Council of the Church of Scotland in 1720 condemned a book called *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, which was believed by some presbyters to propogate Antinomianism.⁵ Such was not the intention of its author, Edward Fisher; however, in a dialogue between three characters called Evangelista (representing Fisher), Nomista and Antinomista, the Antinomist is made to describe how he was converted to Antinomianism by the preaching of Evangelista (who is not altogether pleased with this compliment). He says:

After that I had been a good while a legal professor, just like my friend Nomista, and heard none but your legal preachers, who built me up in works and doings, as they did him and as their manner is; at last a familiar acquaintance of mine, who had some knowledge of the doctrine of free grace, did commend you for an excellent preacher; and at last prevailed with me, to go with him and hear you; and your text that day I well remember was, *Tit. iii. 5: Not by the works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his own mercy he saved us*; whence you observed, and plainly proved, That man's own righteousness had no hand in his justification and salvation; whereupon you dehorted us from putting any confidence in our own works and doings, and exhorted us by faith to lay hold upon the righteousness of Jesus Christ only: at the hearing whereof it pleased the Lord so to work upon me, that I plainly perceived that there was no need at all of my works and doings, nor nothing else, but only to believe in Jesus Christ. And indeed my heart did assent unto it immediately; so that I went home with abundance of peace and joy in believing, and gave thanks to the Lord, for that he had set my soul at liberty from such a sore bondage as I had been under. And I told all my acquaintance what a slavish life I had lived in, being under the law; for if I did commit any sin, I was presently troubled and disquieted in my conscience, and could have no peace till I had made humble confession thereof unto God, craved pardon and forgiveness, and promised amendment. But now I told them, that whatsoever sins I did commit I was no whit troubled at them, nor indeed

am not at this day; for I do verily believe, that God, for Christ's sake, hath freely pardoned all my sins, both past, present, and to come: so that I am confident, that what sin or sins soever I commit, they shall never be laid to my charge, being very well assured, that I am so perfectly clothed with the robes of Christ's righteousness that God can see no sin in me at all.⁶

Besides being a good statement of the Antinomian position, this passage helps us to understand its popularity: Antinomianism offers relief from spiritual anguish to those who find that though baptized they remain enslaved to sinful habits.

In 1824, when the novel was published, *The Marrow* was still in use. In 1823, Joseph Cottle, the friend of Coleridge and Southey, was moved to publish a book called *Strictures on the Plymouth Antinomians*, in which he says "the evil [Antinomianism] has increased and is increasing." The "great patron and apostle of the creed" was a certain Dr. Hawker of Plymouth who in 1822 preached to "a spacious Church thronged to the ceiling"; sometimes his audience included hundreds of "charity children."⁷ Hogg is therefore dealing with a form of popular Christianity which was still very much alive at the time of writing. The novel contains an interesting study in abnormal psychology; this, however, is introduced not for its own sake but as an example of the evil effects of embracing Antinomianism.

The second theological presupposition of the novel is the belief that the devil can impersonate human beings both living and dead. (Impersonation is not, of course, the same as possession.) This belief is not derived from St. Paul. He does indeed say that his law-observing opponents and critics are agents of Satan, and that Satan disguises himself as an angel of light (II Cor. 11:13-15), but he does not say that Satan disguises himself as a human being and appears among men as a teacher. Belief in demonic impersonations is derived from other sources, to be discussed below.

In the novel, when Robert Wringhim first encounters Gil-Martin, he meets a demonic impersonation of himself (pp. 116-7). While Robert is confined to his room for a month, the figure who is always at George's right-hand side is presumably a demonic impersonation of Robert (p. 37). On later occasions, Gil-Martin impersonates Thomas Drummond and the dead George in the presence of Bell Calvert.

There are, however, in the novel other phenomena of a

similar kind which are not to be explained as demonic impersonations. After Robert has entered into possession of Dalcastle, he falls asleep for long periods, after which he wakes up and is told that he has committed crimes of seduction and oppression, and later that he has murdered the seduced girl and killed his own mother; yet he has no recollection of having done any of these things. The first hypothesis which is likely to suggest itself to the reader is that the Devil, Gil-Martin, has impersonated Robert during his sleep, and that this impersonation, not Robert, has committed the crimes. However, this hypothesis soon runs into a snag: Robert's personal servant, Scrape, is convinced that Robert has not been asleep in his bed all the time (p. 187). Some other hypothesis is therefore needed. Either an alien personality has invaded Robert's body and used it without his knowing, or more probably Robert's own mind has undergone so radical a split that two distinct personalities alternately inhabit his body, and the permanent or dominant one has no memory of the actions of the occasional intervener, which it knows of only from the witness of others.⁸ More will be said about this below.

Starting from his two theological premises, Hogg has constructed a story which can be conveniently divided into three parts, each having its own didactic purpose. First there is a story of successful usurpation through murder; second there is a story of almost successful revenge; and third there is a narrative of persecution ending in suicide. From the point of view of the devil, who is the chief manipulator throughout, these are three phases of a single plot aiming at the eternal ruin of Robert Wringhim's soul.

Of the three parts, the first and longest is probably modelled on the ancient story of Abraham and his two sons, which St. Paul uses in connection with his doctrine of predestination (Rom. 9:6-10) and in his polemic against defenders of the law (Gal. 4:21-30): as Ishmael, the slave, "persecuted" Isaac the freeborn, so Paul's law-observing critics were persecuting his non-observing disciples (Gal. 4:29). In Hogg's story, the legitimate son and heir is the law-observer and the illegitimate Robert Wringhim is the Antinomian; and in this case, the illegitimate son's persecution is successful: he kills his brother and usurps his inheritance. In the early part of the story he is not seen "playing" with his brother or "mocking" him (Gen. 21:9); on the contrary, he interferes with his brother's play, but this interference is the occasion of his first attempt to kill his brother.

Hogg's revision of St. Paul's story conveys, by indirect-

tion, his criticism of it. In a household where one son is an observer of law and the other considers himself free from law, it is the lawless one who will feel free to drive out and dispossess the law-observing one. Paul uses the story to incite his non-law-observing Gentile converts to expel from their churches Jewish and/or Gentile Christians who observe the law of Moses. Abraham's expulsion of Agar and Ishmael, which Paul holds up as a model, was in fact equivalent to a death sentence: driven out into the desert, the mother and child were in danger of death until an angel of God intervened to save them (Gen. 21:16-21). St. Paul's anathemas against the defenders of law may have been meant to expose them of some kind of bodily harm (cf. I Cor. 5:5). The roots of Antinomian intolerance and oppression are in the Pauline Epistles themselves. Hogg's book, as will be shown below, is much more in the spirit of Jesus (cf. Mt. 13:28-30 and 13:41); he does not urge his readers to root out the cockle of lawlessness or to persecute the Antinomians but rather to understand and pity them. He himself, in writing the book, is showing them how dangerous is their error, both to themselves and to the peace of society.

The first effect of Robert's full commitment of himself to Antinomianism is that it draws upon him the special attention of the devil. This begins on the very day when he allows himself to be convinced that he is absolutely predestined. (It may seem to be a defect in the novel that Robert achieves this conviction simply by accepting the word of Robert Wringhim Sr. without any argument or personal experience; however, in this Hogg is true to life. Joseph Cottle observed that the followers of Dr. Hawker believed themselves to be the predestined elect simply and solely because Dr. Hawker told them so and they found it gratifying to believe him.) The reasons why Antinomianism attracts diabolic attention are two: by undermining respect for law and fear of sanctions after death it weakens two bulwarks which normally keep temptation at bay; and secondly, there is a natural kinship between the devil and the Antinomian, since both believe that their eternal destiny is already fixed and cannot be altered by conduct good or bad. The devil knows that Antinomianism is false, but he is glad to propagate it because it makes its adherents amenable to his solicitations.⁹

After Robert has allowed himself to be persuaded, at the age of eighteen, that he is absolutely and unconditionally predestined to eternal glory, even the sins mentioned in Revelation (22:15) as excluding sins lose some of their terror for him, and he is soon induced to commit murder. Antinomianism can easily provide specious grounds for murder. To preach

against moralistic Christianity is a waste of time if predestination is as absolute as St. Paul says in his parable of the Potter (Rom. 9:21-23). If people are predestined one way or the other before they are born, the only way to make the doctrine of justification-by-faith prevail is to kill off the preachers of morality (pp. 122-23). It is on these grounds that Robert Wringhim consents to join in the murder of Blanchard, the exponent of law-observing Christianity. After committing murder once, Robert finds that it is much easier to do it again. He allows himself to be persuaded that if the property of Dalcastle were in his own hands, he could use it in the cause of true religion; on these grounds he consents to murder his brother, and he succeeds at his third attempt; next he consents to murder his father--who, however, dies as a result of the shock of his elder son's death, without any further intervention by Robert; and finally he consents to murder his mother.

Hogg does not say that embracing Antinomianism immediately makes a man reckless. Common sense will raise its voice; like anyone else, the Antinomian may lack the courage of his convictions; and he will continue to fear the sanctions of civil law. To lead Robert into crime, Gil-Martin has to promise him security from natural as well as supernatural sanctions and to convince him by experience that he has power to fulfill this promise (p. 142).

To the end, Robert retains his fear of the sins of idolatry and self-slaughter. He finally commits these sins, but not because he is convinced that he can do so with impunity. Gil-Martin gives him an equivocal prayer for use in a situation of extremity (p. 238); Robert fears to use it, not because it is explicitly blasphemous, but because its ambiguity may conceal a sin of idolatry (perhaps: "To him whom I serve I surrender my soul without reservation for ever!").¹⁰ Near the end, to gain release from extreme torments, Robert utters the tremendous prayer, but with an uneasy conscience. When he finally takes his life, he knows that he is doing wrong but does it to escape from torments worse than hell and in the hope that his tormentor will fall along with him (p. 254). In the end, therefore, the Antinomian is driven to commit the very worst of sins.

Thirdly, Antinomianism is shown to lead to peculiar disassociations of personality. In addition to the form mentioned above (between the waking and sleeping personalities) there is the strange malady which Robert experiences even before he commits his first murder:

I generally conceived myself to be two people. When I lay in bed, I deemed there were two of us in it; when I sat up, I always beheld another person, and always in the same position from the place where I sat or stood, which was about three paces off me towards my left side....Over the singular delusion that I was two persons, my reasoning faculties had no power. The most perverse part of it was, that I rarely conceived *myself* to be any of the two persons. I thought for the most part that my companion was one of them, and my brother the other; and I found that to be obliged to speak and answer in the character of another man, was a most awkward business at the long run. (p. 154)

The hypothesis which this passage at once suggests is that Robert's antinomian beliefs are causing him, during his waking hours, to identify with Gil-Martin the part of himself of which he approves, and to project into an image of his brother the part of himself of which he disapproves. There is a snag: Robert's brother George experiences a similar thing at the same time: his brother Robert is always at his side within a few yards (p. 36)--and this cannot be attributed to Antinomianism. However, the snag is not fatal. The two cases are similar but not identical. Robert feels himself to be two persons, whereas George never identifies the figure that haunts him as a part of himself. In George's case, on most occasions the figure must be a demonic impersonation (at the tennis and cricket matches and at Arthur's Seat Robert himself is present; in the intervening time, while Robert is confined to his room, George is beset by a demonic impersonation of Robert); in Robert's case, the George-like figure appears to be a dissociated part of Robert himself--though the dissociation is due to demonic influence as well as to psychological causes.

Hogg may have arrived at the notion of this strange malady simply by reflecting that if the reality of a man's conduct is grossly at variance with his splendid self-image, he is likely to suffer serious psychological problems. However, an easier supposition is that he arrived at it by reflecting on some passages in the Epistle to the Romans where St. Paul uses a primitive two-man psychology to contrast the condition of the unjustified sinner with that of the justified. He talks of the "old man" and the "inner man" as living in an uneasy marriage within each individual until the old man (who lives under the law) dies in baptism and leaves the inner man free to enter into marriage with Christ and live the life of the

Spirit (Rom. 7:1-16).¹¹ A little later, he gives his well known description of the dissociation that tears apart the personality of the sinner (Rom. 7:14-20), a description which doubtless owes something to his own spiritual experiences at some time of his life.

Again perhaps the psychological origin of the disorder is less significant than the devil's purpose in manipulating it. The devil's purpose with Robert is to make him believe that he is bewitched by his relations according to the flesh, so that he will thirst to be revenged upon them (p. 156). His purpose in haunting George with an impersonation of Robert is to isolate George from his friends, so that Robert can attack him when he is alone at Arthur's Seat.

As was mentioned above, after Robert has entered into possession of Dalcastle, he begins to suffer from a new and deeper form of dissociation, his personality splitting into two parts between which there is no communication. This is so far from common experience that most readers probably seek to explain it to themselves as being the result of diabolical impersonation; however, this explanation runs into insuperable difficulties; and in fact, alternations of personality within the same man do occur and are documented in psychiatric literature. The theoretical possibility of such alternations was discussed by John Locke in his *Essay on Human Understanding* (1690), which Hogg had probably read, but Locke does not appear to know of any actual cases. He argues that personal identity consists not in identity of substance but in identity of consciousness. That is why

to punish Socrates waking for what sleeping Socrates thought, and waking Socrates was never conscious of, would be no more of right, than to punish one twin for what his brother-twin did, whereof he knew nothing, because their outsides were so like, that they could not be distinguished; for such twins have been seen.¹²

Locke goes on to consider the speculative possibility that the same man might have two waking personalities alternating within him.

But if it be possible for the same man to have distinct incommunicable consciousness at different times, it is past doubt the same man would at different times make different persons; which, we see, is the sense of mankind in the solemnest declaration of their opinions, human laws not punishing the madman for the sober man's actions,

nor the sober man for what the mad man did,--thereby making them two persons.

In the story of Robert Wringhim after he has entered into possession of Dalcastle, Hogg has created the case history of a man who has two distinct incommunicable consciousnesses at different times. What he experiences during the long "sleeps" of his normal personality might perhaps be classed as a spontaneous hypnotic trance.¹³

The second phase of the devil's plot against Robert Wringhim has the pattern of an Elizabethan revenge tragedy invented by Thomas Kyd in *The Spanish Tragedy* and adapted by Shakespeare in *Hamlet*. In Hogg's story, the avenger is Miss Logan, old George Colwan's buxom mistress, herself one of the lesser victims of Robert's persecution of young George. From the hour of old Colwan's death she suspects the Wringhims of being responsible for young George's death; a long time elapses before she learns from Bell Calvert the identity of the murderer. She then obtains the confirmatory witness of the man who was with Bell at the time of the murder; thereupon she seeks vengeance through the law, and an arresting party is sent to Dalcastle to seize Robert Wringhim. At this point, the normal pattern of the revenge story is abandoned: thanks to a disguise provided by Gil-Martin, Robert escapes through the midst of the arresting party.

Throughout this part of the action, Miss Logan believes that she is acting on her own initiative and fulfilling a good purpose. The reader, however, knows that unwittingly she is being used as a tool of the devil's purpose. It was Gil-Martin who prevented Robert Wringhim from murdering Miss Logan (p. 173) and who arranged that there should be two eye-witnesses of the slaying of George.

This part of the story conveys a lesson about revenge and forgiveness: a well-meaning person who takes upon herself or himself the task of seeking revenge, even through legal channels, may unawares be doing the work of the devil. Miss Logan is inconsistent in the matter of mercy and revenge. At first she rejects Bell Calvert's plea for mercy; then she tries to make a deal with her, which is rejected; but finally, in court, she is moved to pity and refuses to incriminate Bell--with the result that she retrieves her property and gets the information she wanted. But she does not allow herself to pity or forgive Robert Wringhim; unawares she does what the devil wants. By contrast, in the first part of the story, when George Colwan feels pity for Robert and resolves to seek a reconciliation, George is blessed for it: he goes up to Arthur's Seat in joyful communion with nature. As David

Eggenschwiler pointed out in a valuable article,

in his forgiveness and generosity, which his brother had not deserved, George experienced a unity that was manifested as a unity of all things. The thesis of the little scene is Blakean: the forgiveness of sins is the way back to wholeness, to a resurrection of the fallen self and a transformation of the natural world.¹⁴

This critic is right: the novel is very much concerned with the pity and forgiveness to be shown to Antinomians.

During the final phase of the story, Robert is hunted from place to place, persecuted by demons and protected from them by Gil-Martin. The attacking demons have their counterpart in the theology and perhaps in the experience of St. Paul, who believed that the law of Moses was given, not by God himself, but by angels of dubious allegiance who resent the termination of their control. At the beginning of the Epistle to the Galatians (1:8), when Paul anathematizes any angel that preaches a gospel other than his own, he may well be thinking of the angels of the law mentioned later in the same Epistle (3:19). From Robert's point of view, in the last phase of his autobiography, he, the defender of freedom from law, is being assailed by demonic powers who want to prevent the dissemination of his doctrine.

Gil-Martin at this time continues to pose as Robert's defender, though he is defending him from his own subjects--his kingdom is divided against itself. But the obvious lesson of this part of the story is that the security which the devil promises to his own is equivocal and illusory. "No human hand," Gil-Martin said, "shall ever henceforth be able to injure your life" (p. 165). Like Macbeth, Robert learns at the end that he has been duped by a juggling fiend that palters with a double sense.¹⁵

Hogg's chief didactic purpose becomes even clearer when his narrative technique is examined. The bulk of the story is narrated twice--first by a third-person narrator of limited omniscience, and then by a first-person narrator who is not wholly reliable.

The fictional "Editor" tries to tell the story as it was preserved in popular tradition, in parish registers, and in justiciary records (pp. 1 and 92); however, before writing it, he has already studied the contents of the rediscovered "Memoir." In his own narrative, he is therefore trying deliberately to limit his own much greater knowledge. It is

not clear that he altogether succeeds: it is hard to believe that popular tradition could retain all the detail of what passed between Miss Logan and Bell Calvert (e.g., pp. 82-85). However, the Editor's professed aim is to let the reader know the story as preserved in popular "history" before he reveals the inside story. Popular history or tradition is, of its nature, incomplete and unreliable; the inside story will help to correct it.

However, the inside story or autobiography of Robert Wringhim is itself not completely reliable. He gives his own inaccurate version of each of his three attempts to kill his brother George, on the tennis court, at King Arthur's Seat, and at the washing green.¹⁶ Moreover, the Memoir changes towards the end from a retrospective autobiography to a current diary, and the implied judgment changes. Robert writes his autobiography proper at a time when he is still wedded to Antinomianism and plans to propagate his views at Oxford. In the diary section, he comes to recognize that his supposed friend is his greatest enemy, and he sees the tragedy of his fate (pp. 227 and 238).

One possible explanation of Hogg's use of the twofold narrative is that it is part of an elaborate strategy to create the illusion of historicity. However, there are fairly obvious snags in this explanation which need not be dwelt on here. More probably Hogg wished to put his reader through an educative experience. While reading the Editor's Narrative, having an imperfect understanding of what is going on, the reader will feel that Robert Wringhim is a malicious villain, a religious hypocrite, an unforgiving prig, a fratricidal murderer, and in general a detestable character. Then, as he goes through Robert's own memoir, the reader will revise his harsh judgment: he will understand the workings of Robert's mind and see him as an object of pity rather than of hatred--because he is the victim of his education and of the devil. The reader will end up holding Antinomianism in abhorrence, but pitying, not hating, those who embrace it.¹⁷

One of the valuable effects of any tragic story or play is to teach us by experience that our initial, hasty response to a sinner may be unjust or unkind; if we could understand the workings of his mind and the intensity of the provocations to which he was subjected, we should judge him more gently. The purpose of Hogg's twofold narration is to provide us with an instructive experience of this kind. The suggestion that his story was revised and improved by his friend John Gibson Lockhart has been sufficiently disposed of by Louis Simpson, but it is possible that Hogg's book owes something to Lockhart's example. In 1822, shortly before Hogg wrote his

Justified Sinner, Lockhart published *Some Passages in the Life of Mr. Adam Blair*, which is similar in overall structure and purpose: half of the novel explains how an exemplary parish clergyman comes to the point of committing adultery; the rest describes the repercussions of the sin upon the sinners; the whole is designed to inhibit condemnatory judgments and to make the reader look upon Adam Blair with understanding and pity.

The most questionable aspect of Hogg's novel considered as a vehicle of instruction is the employment of demonic impersonations to scare the reader out of all sympathy with Antinomianism. Since Hogg himself clearly does not believe that such impersonations ever occur in the real world, he is in effect using falsehood to overthrow falsehood, or using deception to establish truth.

In Shakespeare's time, the belief that spirits, good and bad, may assume human forms or impersonate particular individuals, living or dead, was common. It is accepted, for example, by King James in his *Daemonologie* (1597).¹⁸ Marlowe exploits it in *Dr. Faustus*, Spenser in his *Faerie Queene*, and even Shakespeare in some of his plays--though it has been conjectured that Shakespeare has misgivings about the legitimacy of well intentioned deceptions.¹⁹

The last page of the novel shows that Hogg was uneasy about what he had written. Having exploited the popular superstition throughout the novel, he seems to realize that his story, if taken as history, will confirm, at least in simple minds, a superstition which he himself does not accept. Therefore, in spite of all his previous efforts to create the illusion of historicity, he finally calls the whole in question. He makes the Editor say: "With the present generation, it will not go down, that a man should be daily tempted by the devil, in the semblance of a fellow creature," and he ends by suggesting that the author of the Memoir was "a religious maniac, who wrote and wrote about a deluded creature, till he arrived at the height of madness, that he believed himself the very object whom he had been all along describing" (p. 254). The suggestion is, of course, false: the Memoir was made up by Hogg, to scare people away from Antinomianism. He wants them to think it true while reading it, but finally, perhaps as a further measure of self-protection against criticism, he inserts a warning that it is not true. By so doing, he does not, at a stroke, destroy the book's didactic value. Myths influence the minds even of those who disbelieve them.²⁰

NOTES

¹André Gide's Introduction to the Cresset Press edition (London, 1947), p. ix. The edition quoted in this article is the one by John Carey in *The World's Classics* (Oxford, 1981); page references are inserted in the text.

²Cf. Douglas Gifford, *James Hogg* (Edinburgh, 1976), p. 179.

³The King James Version here has "Christ is the end of the law," but the definite article is not in the Greek: *Christos telos nomou*. (For all further quotations from Scripture the KJV will be used; references are inserted in the text.)

⁴Cf. Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (1907; rpt. New York, 1964), p. 102.

⁵Cf. W.M. Hetherington, *History of the Church of Scotland*, pp. 206-08. *The Marrow* was first published in 1645 and frequently reissued. The 19th edition (Montrose) was issued in 1803.

⁶*The Marrow* (Edinburgh, 1761), pp. 131-33.

⁷Joseph Cottle, *Strictures on the Plymouth Antinomians*, 2nd edn. (London, 1824), pp. 2, 48 and 154.

⁸Robert himself entertains these two hypotheses (p. 182) but without deciding between them.

⁹In the same way, Robert is willing to appeal to George's respect for law, when it suits him to do so. See p. 22.

¹⁰On p. 138, Gil-Martin uses "The God whom thou servest" equivocally.

¹¹D. Eggenschwiler, "James Hogg's *Confessions* and the Fall into Division," *SSL*, 9 (1972), p. 28, observes that in the opening scenes between Lord and Lady Dalcastle we have "a metaphysical domestic farce, which represents the division of man's self as marital squabbles."

¹²John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (New York, 1959), p. 460. The other passage quoted from Locke is on pp. 460-61.

¹³William James, *The Principles of Psychology* (New York, 1950), p. 392, mentions such a trance lasting two months.

¹⁴Eggenschwiler, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

¹⁵On the frequent use of equivocation in the Memoir see Ian Campbell, "Hogg's *Confessions* and *The Heart of Darkness*," *SSL*, 15 (1980), pp. 192-3.

¹⁶Cf. L. Simpson, *James Hogg, A Critical Study* (London and Edinburgh, 1962), p. 183.

¹⁷Cf. Douglas Gifford, *James Hogg*, p. 162: "The very jailer of Robert's prison suddenly shines through the tormented account to remind us that this lunatic is a 'callant,' a poor adolescent to be pitied, however sick and dangerous he may be."

¹⁸G.B. Harrison (ed.), *King James the First, Daemonologie and Neues from Scotland* (New York, 1966), pp. 60-1 and 66-9.

¹⁹Philip Edwards, "Shakespeare and the Healing Power of Deceit," *Shakespeare Survey*, 31 (1978), p. 124.

²⁰Cf. J.B.S. Haldane, *Possible Worlds and Other Papers* (1928; rpt. New York, 1971), p. 247.