Portraits from Memory

12—The Very Reverend Dr Archie Craig, MC, DD (1888-1985)

JAMES HOWIE

On a day early in 1957 I met my friend Archie Craig very unexpectedly in a street in Troon. I greeted him: "You are not here for the golf, I presume."

"No indeed," he replied, "perhaps it were better had it been so. I am here with a few friends working on a report for the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. I fear that it may prove controversial."

As usual, he was not only right, but very right. The report was the one that came to be known in Scotland as "The bishops report"—not to be confused with the one which the House of Bishops recently presented to the Synod of the Church of England on the subject of the ordination of women to the priesthood. Archie's bishops report was vigorously debated throughout Scotland and at the General Assembly in 1957 and 1958. To put it bluntly, it was in effect rejected although discussions on unity with the Anglicans were continued. Efforts to breathe real life into these discussions continue but make only a little and very difficult progress. "Bishop" is not a good word in most of Scotland—not even Archie's bishop in presbytery, different in many respects from the seemingly monarchical bishops who sit in the House of Lords. The theological and the non-theological causes of disunity prevailed and prevail despite the genuine affection which everyone had for Archie in person, and despite a good measure of sympathy for his idea that something was needed to make Christian unity visible. Intercommunion—yes: bishops—no. That was the verdict. So Archie left that debate to others. In 1961, in spite of the rejection of his 1957 report, he was elected Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, the highest honour available to a minister from the Church of Scotland although it is held for a period of only one year. "For one year: it; then: ex-it," as it has been described. During his year of office as Moderator he visited Pope John XIII in Rome. They had what Archie described as a cordial meeting which established relations of courtesy. It was recognised even by those who were critical as an encounter of two great and good men.

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Listener

Two things made Archie Craig a loved and respected figure and a warm friend of all who came in contact with him, however briefly. First, he really liked and wanted people to reveal themselves to him; and second, he was always ready to tell a story against himself with a touch of gentle humour. He loved to tell how, on a train journey, a lady seated opposite noted that he was reading a theological book but not wearing a dog collar. She asked why.

"I am ordained as a minister," he replied "but I am not now in a parish."

The lady nodded her head kindly and asked sympathetically, "Was it the drink?" He was at the time General Secretary of the British Council of Churches.

In the war of 1914-18 he served in the Royal Scots and the Intelligence Corps; and he won the Military Cross. His experience of war made him a convinced pacifist, and it is probable that his pacifism cost him a chair in practical theology which he would have filled with great distinction. He was ordained in 1920 and served first as minister in Galston, Ayrshire, and then in Hillhead, Glasgow, until 1929. From 1930-9 he was chaplain to the University of Glasgow and from 1947-57 he was a lecturer in biblical studies. In both of these roles he served the staff and students of the university to a degree and in a manner which marked him as one who knew that leadership meant service. Whether it was his proper duty or not, he listened to and advised all who sought his help, and he followed up his advice with whatever action he could usefully take. What he did for people in any kind of difficulty was outgoing, effective, and unobtrusive. He had an effortless ability to inspire affection, and a boyish gusto for life, irrepressible humour, brilliant intellect, and a profound Christian faith. He was also one of the best preachers in a church which lays great stress on the quality of the sermon. He had one sound rule about sermons: "Every minute over twenty requires double justification."

Preacher

I was president of the BMA, due to have its annual representative meeting in Aberdeen in 1969. During the planning for this meeting I was instructed to find a preacher for the Sunday service: "Get your top man, the best preacher, your—whatever you call him—not archbishop; Moderator is it, or whatever?" I had to explain, as patiently as possible, that the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland was chosen for various qualities, and that there was no certainty that good preaching was one of them. I undertook to ask a minister whom I thought to be a good preacher if he would accept an invitation to preach the sermon—always provided that I could arrange for an invitation to do so to be issued by the minister of the Cathedral Church of St Machar in Aberdeen. Happily all was easily arranged as desired, and Archie Craig delivered one of his very best sermons in a matter of 18 minutes. So effective was his preaching and so attractive his presence that

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innumerable questioners asked where that minister's parish was so that they might go and hear him again. They found it hard to believe that they had been listening to a man of 80 and that he had retired from his last post nine years previously. It was no exaggeration for one of his admirers to describe him as "one of the greatest Scots of his time."

Mediator

One of the things that Archie Craig sought to do was to keep alive a real sense of what it meant to be part of a university. In Glasgow the faculties were becoming inclined to drift apart. So he formed in the 1950s a group which invited new professors to dine with them—handsomely—and then to spend an hour or more putting the case for their having a successor.

"You personally are welcome, most welcome," they said, "but,

on academic grounds, can you justify the university's appointing a successor? In particular, are not the academic principles of your discipline adequately promoted by some other department?"

These were stimulating and enjoyable occasions, and a real challenge to the newcomer as well as a means of keeping interfaculty relationships alive. I recall the occasion when a new professor of divinity—"the queen of the sciences"—was challenged by the professor of moral philosophy.

"I do not see a need for your successor," said the challenger; "I am already dealing with the essentials of your subject."

The professor of divinity looked worried for a moment, but then triumphantly replied: "Not at all. *I* am fostering an uncommitted study of commitment; *you* are making a committed study of uncommitment."

"You're right," generously agreed the professor of moral philosophy; "I hadn't thought of it in that way."

"Revelatory," said Archie. It was one of his favourite words.

For Debate . . .

Role of macrophages in the pathogenesis of alcohol induced tissue damage

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In some people the chronic consumption of excessive quantities of ethanol has harmful effects on one or more tissues. The affected organs and cell systems are the central and peripheral nervous systems, the liver, the pituitary and gonads, cardiac and skeletal muscle, the pancreas, the bone marrow, blood cells, and certain fetal tissues.^{1,6} Alcoholism also impairs the body's defences against infections.^{1,7} Some of the deleterious effects of alcoholism are a direct or indirect consequence of alcohol in the body and others are a consequence of impaired nutrition, which is often associated with alcoholism. Although much research has been carried out, it is not clear how alcohol causes tissue damage, particularly extrahepatic tissue damage. Recent evidence suggests that macrophages and related cells play an important part in the causation of ethanol induced extrahepatic tissue damage.

Acetaldehyde

Hypotheses of the pathogenesis of alcohol related liver disease are centred on the assumption that hepatocellular damage results from a consequence of the high rate of metabolism of ethanol by hepatocytes. Normally hepatocytes first convert ethanol to acetaldehyde, mainly through the action of the enzyme alcohol dehydrogenase and to a lesser extent through the cytochrome P450 dependent microsomal ethanol oxidising system⁸ or by an oxygen radical dependent mechanism.⁹ The acetaldehyde is then converted to acetate under the influence of the enzyme acetaldehyde dehydrogenase⁸; the acetate so generated is incorporated into acetyl coenzyme A and used in

various biosynthetic and energy generating reactions. The metabolism of ethanol by hepatocytes causes an alteration in their redox state since the alcohol dehydrogenase dependent oxidation of ethanol is accompanied by the conversion of the coenzyme nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide to its reduced form (NADH). It has been proposed that hepatocellular damage may result from (i) a consequence of the alteration of the intracellular redox state,¹⁰ (ii) toxic effects of acetaldehyde formed during the oxidation of ethanol,^{11,12} or (iii) deleterious effects of oxygen derived free radicals such as the hydroxyl and superoxide radicals generated by a variety of oxyradical generating systems—for example, the coupled oxidation of hypoxanthine or xanthine through the enzyme xanthine oxidase—for the purpose of oxidising some of the ethanol.^{9,13} Superoxide is known to damage cell membranes by peroxidation of lipids and has been implicated in the pathology of several diseases.^{14,15} It is thought that the wide variation in the susceptibility of different people to alcohol induced damage may be partly based on genetic differences, but the nature of these differences has yet to be defined.

Acetaldehyde is highly reactive, and there is evidence that it may be the most important substance responsible for ethanol related tissue damage. Thus *in vitro* studies have shown that acetaldehyde binds covalently to bovine serum albumin,¹⁶ haemoglobin,¹⁷ and erythrocyte membrane proteins.¹⁸ The formation of acetaldehyde-protein complexes seems to occur in two stages^{17,19}: (i) an initial easily reversible reaction between the carbonyl group of acetaldehyde and free amino groups of the protein (particularly the amino groups of valine, lysine, and tyrosine) to form a Schiff's base and (ii) a subsequent reduction of the Schiff's base to form an irreversible acetaldehyde-protein complex. The formation of stable complexes between acetaldehyde and certain cellular enzymes may impair enzyme activity and hence cell function. Thus it is of interest that acetaldehyde impairs mitochondrial function,^{2,20,21} inhibits cardiac microsomal protein synthesis,²² inhibits protein synthesis and glycoprotein secretion by the liver,^{23,24} and at a concentration of 45-360 $\mu\text{mol/l}$ prolongs the doubling time and increases the modal volume of human cell lines.²⁵ The results of recent studies have shown that some of the ¹⁴C acetaldehyde derived from the oxidation of ¹⁴C ethanol by rat liver slices binds to preformed hepatocyte proteins¹⁹; thus functional disturbances of the type mentioned above may be caused by stable