Very Rev Professor John McIntyre

One of the most distinguished Scottish theologians and churchmen of his generation, John McIntyre (1916–2005) served both the University of Edinburgh and the Church of Scotland in important ways.

A talented pupil at Bathgate Academy, McIntyre confirmed his early promise as a student in Edinburgh, graduating MA with first class honours in Philosophy and BD with distinction. His studies under the philosopher Norman Kemp Smith and the theologian John Baillie were to leave an indelible mark on his contribution as a teacher and scholar.

Several years were spent in parish ministry, first in Argyll at Glenorchy and Inishail, and then in Fenwick, Ayrshire. During this latter period, he met and married Jan Buick, the district nurse at Fenwick, with whom he celebrated sixty years of marriage in 2005. In 1946, McIntyre was appointed Professor of Theology at St Andrew's College in Sydney. His ten years in Australia proved immensely productive. Working in a small college, he faced the challenge of teaching across the entire theological syllabus. He regarded this as of immeasurable benefit in his early career and would later commend it to his own pupils as the best means for mastering their discipline. Work on two early books was completed during this period. His DPhil thesis, *Anselm and His Critics* (1954) and *The Christian Doctrine of History* (1957) established his reputation as a measured and lucid writer with a capacity to apply analytic rigour to the central topics of theology. These Australian years were also marked by a series of public debates in which he explored questions of religious belief with the eminent philosopher John Anderson, another Scot who had earlier settled in Sydney. Both McIntyre and Anderson had been pupils of Kemp Smith, though their views on the existence of God differed sharply.

In 1956 following the retirement of John Baillie, McIntyre returned to Edinburgh as Professor of Divinity, a chair he was to hold with distinction for thirty years. His work in Edinburgh was marked by highly effective leadership. Several key positions were occupied. He served as Principal Warden during the time of the construction of Pollock Halls. Following the departure of Michael Swann to the BBC in 1973 he held office as Acting Principal and Vice-Chancellor in 1973–74. This was repeated again in 1979 after the untimely death of Hugh Robson. As Dean of the Faculty of Divinity and Principal of New College from 1968–74, he was deeply committed to the centuries-long Scottish tradition in which ministers were educated in the ancient universities. He positioned the Faculty of Divinity at New College in the centre of university life. Yet while defending the place of the Church of Scotland in his Faculty, he also perceived the importance of ecumenical links and of the burgeoning field of religious studies. By the time of his retirement in 1986, New College had become a more ecumenical institution, but one that retained much of its traditional strength, not least its appeal to students from overseas. An important marker had been set down in 1979 with the appointment of James Mackey, a Roman Catholic theologian, to a chair of theology in Edinburgh. His nomination aroused controversy in the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland and the national press.

As a university administrator, McIntyre possessed a patient and measured style that was to prove highly effective in the building of Pollock Halls, in the reconstruction of New College, and in his many dealings with university staff and students. In the more militant era of the early 1970s, a long-running dispute within the student body was resolved within 48 hours after McIntyre assumed responsibility as Vice-Chancellor. The same qualities were evident in his lecturing. Long before the time when teaching aids became de rigueur, he would provide his students with a complete transcript of his lecture notes. This imposed a significant burden on his secretary, being before the era of the photocopier. A quietly methodical teacher, McIntyre possessed an urbane and self-deprecating humour. He would sometimes remark that he not only put his students to sleep, but gave them the sheets in which to do so. Whether they slept or not, he could remember them clearly years later and was always keen to follow their progress in parish ministry or academic life. Many had cause to be grateful for his concern.

Despite the burdens of university administration, McIntyre maintained a significant scholarly output that continued through many productive years of retirement. A longstanding interest in the role of the imagination in religious belief resulted in the publication of *Faith, Theology and...*
the Imagination (1987), perhaps his most original work. The previous year, a Festschrift collection in his honour had appeared on this same theme. Other volumes on traditional theological topics such as the love of God, the person and work of Christ, and the Holy Spirit were also undertaken.

He was made a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 1977 and served on its Council from 1979 to 1986, the last three years as Vice President.

Also a noteworthy churchman, McIntyre was appointed by the Queen as one of her honorary chaplains in Scotland and as Dean of the Order of the Thistle in 1974, a position he held for fifteen years. The public highlight of his career came in 1982. During his time as Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, he greeted John Paul II before the statue of John Knox in the New College courtyard. In welcoming the Pope, he celebrated the end of years of sectarian division in Scotland and a new era of ecumenical collaboration.

John McIntyre is survived by his wife Jan, their two sons, Eoin and Angus, and their daughter, Catherine.

David Fergusson

Very Rev Professor John McIntyre, CVO, MA, BD, DLitt(Edinburgh), DD(Glasgow), DrHC(Edinburgh), DHL(College of Wooster, Ohio). Born 20 May 1916, elected FRSE 7 March 1977, died 18 December 2005.