

Harry Blamires, one of the most important defenders of orthodox Christianity, died in November 2017, aged 101.

Great Harry!

Harry Blamires (1916-2017) was a pupil of C. S. Lewis at Oxford and, like Lewis, is known for his scholarly writings on English literature (in particular, his studies of James Joyce, T. S. Eliot, and surveys of the development of our literature) and his writings (fictional, and non-fictional) in defence of orthodox or authentic Christianity. His significant work *The Bloomsday Book* (Leopold Bloom is the central character of *Ulysees*) was published in 1966, revised in 1988, became *The New Bloomsday Book* in 1996. His study of Eliot's *Four Quartets*, *Word Unheard*, was first published in 1969.

In the mid-1950s, he began publishing fictional works in defence of orthodox Christianity, and went on to produce a series of important books, particularly *The Christian Mind: How Should a Christian Think?*, in 1963. This book has remained in print from that year to this, and has been used in many bible and theological classes, particularly in the United States; a sequel, *The Post-Christian Mind*, was published in 1999. Among his Christian fiction, a central work, in my view, is *The Kirkbride Conversations. Six Dialogues of the Christian Faith* (1958), in which Blamires uses a technique not unlike Lewis's *The Screwtape Letters*, in that he uses a story as a thinly-veiled setting for theological discussions.

A late fictional work is *New Town. A Fable ... Unless You Believe* (2005). Most probably the work was written some while earlier, it reflects an earlier time, and my guess is that the British publishing industry predictably failed to accept it; instead, it was issued by Revell of Michigan (the USA, where, as Blamires said to me, "it is still possible to market fiction with a theological content" (27 September 2005*)). It always surprised me, somewhat, that one who was clearly steeped in the writing and diction of Joyce and Eliot, used such a straightforward, unelaborate style in his own fictional writing.

Another Blamires favourite of mine is *A Defence of Dogmatism* (1965) – never more than now is a defence needed of the idea that dogma – Christian teaching – is a thing of great value, and that genuine, total, liberation lies only by way of that teaching, and Christian beliefs and truths; but now, today, is not, of course, the climate that these books first addressed, which was the Church's first capitulation (in the late-1950s/early 1960s) to the rising tide of secularism and materialism, that is currently reaching its climax, in the West.

As Canon Brian Davis said, in his obituary of Blamires (*The Church Times*, 8 December 2017), "The enemy for him was the secularism that had infiltrated into every part of intellectual life, and had been swallowed whole by liberal Christians, who failed to see how they had succumbed to the spirit of the age".

"It is of great pleasure to me that I was privileged to enjoy a very brief correspondence with Harry, in his last years; but of course, such friendships will not, truly, be brief, for without doubt such as he will be present in eternity".

January 2018