
Alexander Moody Stuart: his spheres of influence

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1. Introduction

Alexander Moody Stuart (1809-1898) was a prominent figure in the life and witness of the Free Church of Scotland throughout the five decades from the Disruption until his effective retirement in the mid 1890s. At his death in 1898 at the age of 89, he was the last of a group of intimates who had shaped much of the testimony of Scottish evangelicalism in the Victorian age: among them Robert Murray M'Cheyne, the Bonar brothers, Alexander Somerville, and John 'Rabbi' Duncan.

His ministry spanned the great endeavours and controversies of the Free Church in its first fifty years, and he played an influential role in many of the most significant of these: notably the Committee for the Conversion of the Jews, the first Union overture, and the 'Higher Criticism' controversy. His popular pulpit ministry at Free St. Luke's in Edinburgh (the pastoral charge he held for more than forty years) bore the hallmarks of the lively, experimental preaching which his circle was credited with developing and popularising. He was an encourager of popular evangelism, welcoming the lay-preacher Brownlow North to his pulpit and supporting revivals through the 'probing subjective experience' for which his sermons were known.¹ His extensive writings attest to the diversity of his contributions, embracing, as they do, biography (*Life of the Duchess of Gordon; Life of John Duncan*), biblical commentary (*Song of Songs*), evangelism (*Death-Bed Scenes*), devotion (*The Three Marys; Capernaum*), missionary travelogue (*A Visit to the Land of Huss*), and a number of polemical works (e.g. *The Bible True to Itself*). Indeed, the very length, breadth, and depth of Moody Stuart's ministry is one of its most striking characteristics. This leads us to the thesis of this short study: that Alexander Moody Stuart's contribution to the life of the Free Church of Scotland, and to wider evangelicalism both at home and abroad, was considerably more influential than is generally recognised or remembered today.

¹ David Bebbington, 'A Clash of Cultures: Revival in Forfarshire, Scotland, 1859', in *Victorian Religious Revivals: Culture and Piety in Local and Global Contexts* (Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 159-192 (p. 177).

2. A forgotten figure?

Whilst Moody Stuart's significance was very much a 'given' during most of his lifetime, this fact has been downplayed or even lost sight of ever since. It is interesting to note that even by the end of his life, the 1895 history of the Free Church by Norman L. Walker accords far less prominence to Moody Stuart than the wider evidence of the times suggests that he enjoyed.² Major twentieth century studies continued to overlook Moody Stuart. He is referred to, in passing, only twice in Drummond and Bulloch's *History of the Church in Late Victorian Scotland*,³ while A.C. Cheyne's *Studies in Scottish Church History* does not mention him at all, despite featuring an essay on changing attitudes to the Bible in Scotland during the very era in which Moody Stuart was prolific in publishing works defending orthodox views of Scripture. The same author's *The Transforming of the Kirk* mentions him only once but in doing so gets his name wrong – confusing him with his son, Kenneth.⁴

John Macleod's necessarily concise survey of the whole sweep of Scottish Church history does him greater justice, and Iain H. Murray's more recent *A Scottish Christian Heritage* highlights his prominence in some spheres, but we are left concluding that no work has properly given a full sense of his significance since that of his own biography, edited by his son, published shortly after his death, in 1899. This is a rich resource, both of memoir from his own pen and of testimony from his contemporaries.⁵ Of this volume Macleod remarks, 'there are few ministerial biographies that are better worth reading than his Life by his son.'⁶

Before proceeding to the main body of our study, we will here trace some details of his early life and ministry. Alexander Moody was born in Paisley on 15th June 1809, the sixth son of Mr Andrew Moody, a respected figure in the town. He took the degree of MA at Glasgow University and immediately passed on to the Theological Hall there. However, after two sessions in Glasgow, he transferred to Edinburgh to study under Thomas Chalmers. He was licensed by the Presbytery of Glasgow in 1831. Towards the end of 1832 he was requested by the influential layman George Buchan of Kelloe to go as a missionary to Holy Island, off the coast of Northumberland. An outbreak of cholera blighted the island in the autumn 1834 during which Moody felt obliged to stay and minister to the dying. Some of the most striking of these pastoral visits were recorded and published, first in serial form in the *Scottish Christian Herald*, and later as a short book entitled *Death-Bed Scenes* (1843).

² Norman L. Walker, *Chapters from the History of the Free Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh & London: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, 1895), pp. 172, 179, 246.

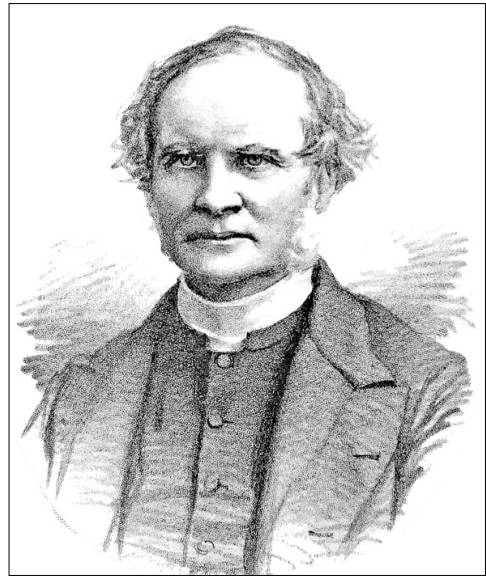
³ Andrew L. Drummond and James Bulloch, *The Church in Late Victorian Scotland, 1874-1900* (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1978), pp. 54, 58.

⁴ A.C. Cheyne, *The Transforming of the Kirk: Victorian Scotland's Religious Revolution* (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1983), p. 69.

⁵ Kenneth Moody Stuart, *Alexander Moody Stuart, D.D.: A Memoir, Partly Autobiographical* (London: Hodder and Stoughton / Aberdeen University Press, 1899). In the preface, his son and biographer Kenneth Moody Stuart states that around half of the volume is taken directly from his father's writings.

⁶ John Macleod, *Scottish Theology in Relation to Church History since the Reformation* (Edinburgh: Publications Committee of the Free Church of Scotland, 1943), p. 292.

Moody returned from Holy Island to become territorial assistant to Dr Robert Candlish at St George's parish church in Edinburgh in 1835 and laboured in a district which was soon disjoined *quoad sacra* from St George's to become the St Luke's congregation. A new building was erected, and in 1837 Moody was ordained by the Edinburgh Presbytery as the new minister of St Luke's. In 1839 he married Jessie Stuart, daughter of Kenneth Bruce Stuart of Annat in Perthshire. Kenneth's father, who had acquired Annat, had stipulated that if the estate pass to a daughter, her husband should take the surname 'Stuart of Annat' to maintain the connection, and Alexander dutifully



Alexander Moody Stuart.

added the name of Stuart to his own.⁷ Moody Stuart was clearly aligned with the Non-Intrusion party during the Ten Years Conflict in the Church of Scotland; he had preached in Strathbogie during the suspension of seven ministers by the General Assembly, and again in public places after the interdicts reinstating them by the Court of Session.⁸ However, it was also at this time that his health began to fail, and on the advice of his doctors he took prolonged leave to warmer climes, staying in Madeira and taking a trip to Brazil. He was thus absent from Scotland during the Disruption itself and was only able to sign the Deed of Demission on his return. The elders and the bulk of the congregation of St Luke's had also departed the Establishment, and so pastor and flock were reunited on Moody Stuart's return to his duties.⁹

3. A man of many spheres

Given that it was Moody Stuart's involvement in a number of areas in the religious life of Scotland that make a cumulative case for his overall significance, we shall examine five of these in turn. They are: his involvement in the Free Church Mission to the Jews for more than four decades; his work promoting evangelical renewal in Hungary and Bohemia; his defence of the Establishment Principle during the proposed Union with the United Presbyterian Church; his extensive written defences of orthodoxy during the Higher Criticism controversy; and his support of popular evangelism and revival along with his influential pulpit ministry in Free St. Luke's, Edinburgh.

Sphere 1: The Mission to the Jews

If we might put it this way, Moody Stuart was involved in the Mission for the Conversion of the Jews before it actually came into existence. It was he who received a substantial financial gift towards such an endeavour in 1838 from

⁷ K. Moody Stuart, *Alexander Moody Stuart*, p. 66.

⁸ *ibid.*, p. 68.

⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 68-71.

Hon. Mrs Smith of Dunesk, who was under the impression the Church of Scotland already had such a mission. When Moody Stuart thanked the lady but informed her that no such endeavour had even been proposed or laid before the Church courts, she graciously left the money with him until it should be. Not long afterwards, the Committee for the Conversion of the Jews was formed.¹⁰

It was Moody Stuart who was then consulted by Robert Candlish as to the suitability of including Robert Murray M'Cheyne, the youthful but physically failing minister of St Peter's Church in Dundee who had been ordered to take a rest from his ministerial burdens, to accompany three others in visiting Palestine with a view to establishing a mission to the Jews.¹¹

Palestine, as it turned out, was not the first place in which the work was to begin. The deputies had visited the very large Jewish community in Pesth (now part of Budapest), Hungary, on their return journey from the Holy Land, and the Committee set about making this the location of its first efforts in the evangelism of the Jews. Post-Disruption, it was the Free Church who continued the Budapest mission; Moody Stuart was made convener of the Committee in 1847 – a position he held (with some occasional breaks) for more than forty years.¹²

A number of Jews were converted through the ministry in Budapest, perhaps most notably the family of Dr Israel Saphir; Israel's son Adolph went on to become an influential minister and writer. Many thousands of children received education and medical care through the wider work of the Mission which Moody Stuart's Committee oversaw. The work of the Committee also expanded to Breslau, Constantinople, Amsterdam, and eventually to Palestine itself – when the Sea of Galilee Mission at Tiberias and Safad was begun in 1885. This was again in some measure due to Moody Stuart's connection with Mrs Smith of Dunesk; she had once again left money for a mission that did not yet exist, leaving in her will a sum of £500 towards establishing a Mission to the Jews in their own land. Twelve years after her death in 1873, the medical mission stations in Galilee were founded.¹³

It was this prominent, sustained contribution that prompted Walker to say, despite the other illustrious names associated with the Mission: 'More than anyone else the enterprise is associated with him. His yearly addresses at the Assembly were looked forward to with extraordinary interest, and were always listened to with marked attention.'¹⁴ Moody Stuart's annual slot was such a feature that it became referred to as 'the Jewish evening of the General Assembly'.¹⁵ His informative speeches were also impassioned, and the sections of them gathered in his Biography, as well as the chapter he wrote in *The Sea of Galilee Mission of the Free Church of Scotland*, reveal a

¹⁰ David MacDougall, *In Search of Israel: A Chronicle of the Jewish Missions of the Church of Scotland* (London: T. Nelson & Sons, 1941), p. 22.

¹¹ A. Moody Stuart, 'The Origin of the Mission', in James Wells and James Hood Wilson, *The Sea of Galilee Mission of the Free Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh: T. Nelson and Sons, 1895), p. 15.

¹² K. Moody Stuart, *Alexander Moody Stuart*, p. 148.

¹³ MacDougall, *In Search of Israel*, p. 22.

¹⁴ Walker, *Chapters from the History of the Free Church of Scotland*, p. 178.

¹⁵ K. Moody Stuart, *Alexander Moody Stuart*, p. 148.

man deeply attached to the Jewish people and one determined to extinguish anti-Semitic attitudes among Christians in Scotland and further afield. His colleague and successor at Free St. Luke's, Rev. J.G. Cunningham, described the Mission as 'a cause which has for a whole generation owed a great measure of its success to the unshaken confidence in the promises of God, and the burning enthusiasm for Israel's welfare, which have given eloquence and power to the appeals made from year to year by Dr Moody Stuart on its behalf.'¹⁶ The considerable Scottish commitment to Jewish Mission in the nineteenth century is relatively well-documented; Alexander Moody Stuart's major role in that effort is perhaps less well-known.

Sphere 2: Hungary and 'The Land of Huss'

It was natural that, with the Free Church focusing much of its missionary activity in Budapest, efforts would be made to establish relations with the indigenous Reformed Church in Hungary. Whilst outward orthodoxy may have been present in Hungary, vital religion seemed at a low ebb, prompting Moody Stuart's close friend and colleague in the work John 'Rabbi' Duncan (who was a member of Free St. Luke's) to say, 'they would die for their Calvinism – I wish I could add that they will live it.'¹⁷ In the wake of the Hungarian nationalists' attempt at revolution in 1848 and the subsequent war of independence, the Free Church's missionaries were expelled from Hungary in 1852 amidst claims from the Austrian authorities that they had been involved in political interference. Moody Stuart led a large Scottish delegation, including representatives of the Protestant Alliance and the Scottish Reformation Society, to meet with the Foreign Secretary Lord Granville to urge the government to protest at what he perceived to be a veiled attempt to suppress Protestants in Hungary.¹⁸

Further, relations between the Free Church and the Reformed Hungarians had become strained during the 1850s and early '60s; by 1862 political, personal, and theological issues had created a tension which prompted Moody Stuart and Duncan to travel personally to Budapest in order to resolve it.¹⁹ He and Duncan used the visit as an opportunity to travel to Debrecen Reformed College in Eastern Hungary, and conceived of a way both to promote friendlier relations between the two Churches, but also to instil in the next generation of Hungarian and Bohemian Church leaders and theologians a more vibrant evangelical faith. This took the shape of a bursary scheme allowing two students from Hungary and two from Bohemia to study for three years at the Free Church's colleges in Scotland. It was Moody Stuart himself who proposed the scheme at the General Assembly in 1863, and it

¹⁶ J.G. Cunningham, 'Alexander Moody Stuart', in *Disruption Worthies: A Memorial of 1843. With an Historical Sketch of the Free Church of Scotland from 1843 down to the Present Time*, ed. James B. Gillies (Edinburgh: Thomas C. Jack, 1881), pp. 463-472 (p. 470).

¹⁷ K. Moody Stuart, *Alexander Moody Stuart*, p. 166.

¹⁸ John S. Ross, *Time for Favour: Scottish Missions to the Jews, 1838-1852* (Stoke-on-Trent: Tentmaker Publications, 2011), pp. 255-56.

¹⁹ Abraham Kovács and Richárd Hörcsik, 'A Transplanted Scottish Presbyterian Culture; the Peregrination to New College, Edinburgh and the Impact of Free Kirk Evangelicalism on Debrecen Reformed College in Hungary', *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, Vol. 44 (2015), pp. 103-131 (p. 106).

was met with enthusiastic approval.²⁰ At least some of that enthusiasm came from supporters of Jewish missions, who hoped that evangelical renewal in these churches would lead to a greater interest in the evangelisation of the Jews in their own lands. The first to take up the bursaries were students from Bohemia and, after an initially slow start, the Hungarians also began to send students.

The scheme proved instrumental in training a number of Hungarian students who had a considerable impact on the spiritual life of their native land. Two of the earliest scholars returned from Scotland to become influential professors at Debrecen, and it has been argued that the cumulative effect of the programme was a religious awakening, first in Debrecen and subsequently in Budapest.²¹ The Hungarian Reformed Church in this period was the largest Presbyterian Church outside of the United States, with approximately 2000 congregations and 2,000,000 adherents.²²

During a trip to Bohemia – a journey he described in his work *A Visit to the Land of Huss* (1870) – Moody Stuart visited the town of Kuttenberg (now Kutná Hora in the Czech Republic), the site of a great atrocity against the followers of the early reformer Jan Huss. In the years 1419-20, it is estimated that some 1,500 Hussites were murdered under the reign of Sigismund through torture, beheading, and especially being cast down the shafts of the silver mines for which the town was famous. A bounty system had even been in operation to incentivize the killing.²³ Moody Stuart was so moved by the account of the Kuttenberg martyrs that he determined to establish a Reformed church in the town: ‘by the grace of God I resolved before I died to see, in that town of 16,000 souls, a church of living men once more on that face of the earth above that great congregation sleeping in Jesus.’²⁴ During the same visit, Moody Stuart addressed a large gathering of pastors from across Bohemia in a Prague hotel, and spoke in a number of other locations across the country. On his return to Scotland he was instrumental in raising funds for building the Martyrs’ Church in Kuttenberg. Inside the building, a memorial tablet was erected testifying to the measure in which Moody Stuart’s contribution to evangelical renewal in their land was esteemed: ‘To the memory of Alexander Moody Stuart, D.D, of Edinburgh, a distinguished minister of the Word of God, truest friend of our country and our Church.’²⁵

Kutná Hora today is a major tourist attraction for the grotesque spectacle of the Sedlec Ossuary, a Roman Catholic chapel adorned with skeletons, bones and skulls, some of which date from the persecution of the Hussites. The church which Moody Stuart helped establish in the centre of the town still stands and houses a congregation of the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren, the main Protestant denomination in that country.

²⁰ *ibid.*, p. 107.

²¹ *ibid.*, p. 110.

²² K. Moody Stuart, *Alexander Moody Stuart*, p. 23.

²³ Ota Halama, ‘The Martyrs of Kutná Hora, 1419-1420’, *The Bohemian Reformation and Religious Practice*, Vol. 5:1 (2002), pp. 139-146 (p. 139).

²⁴ K. Moody Stuart, *Alexander Moody Stuart*, p. 173.

²⁵ Adam Philip, *The Evangelical Movement: Dr. Moody Stuart, the Bonars, McCheyne* (Edinburgh: W.F. Henderson, 1935), p. 13.

Sphere 3: The Union Controversy

Having emerged from a ‘Ten Years’ Conflict’ in 1843, the Free Church of Scotland was troubled by another decade-long controversy between 1863 and 1873, as attempts were made to make conditions more favourable for a union between the Free Church and the United Presbyterian Church (UPC) of Scotland. A major concern among many in the Free Church was that the denomination might have to alter or relax its doctrinal commitments, as expressed both in the Westminster Confession of Faith and in the constitutional statements made at the Disruption. Moody Stuart stood with those firmly opposed to any union that would necessitate doctrinal compromise.

It has been suggested that A. Moody Stuart was part of a ‘middle party’, also composed of his friends the Bonars, who were less concerned with the doctrinal stance of the Free Church than they were about the possibility of a split within the denomination, and who sided with the more hard-line anti-Unionist party, represented by the redoubtable Dr James Begg, largely for this reason.²⁶ This argument was advanced by J.R. Fleming in his 1929 volume *The Church in Scotland, 1843-1874* and, citing this, James Campbell also asserts that ‘whatever might be their views on establishments and unions, they [the Bonars and Moody Stuart] opposed the plan for union with the United Presbyterians because they were unwilling to divide the Free Church.’²⁷

In the case of Moody Stuart at least, this view is wide of the mark. Rather, he opposed the union on as firm a commitment to the Establishment Principle (one of the primary areas of disagreement between the Free Church and the voluntarist UPC) as anyone else seems to have done. Moody Stuart exhaustively planned and forcefully delivered a lengthy address to the Presbytery of Edinburgh in 1868.²⁸ His point was that to concede on Establishment was to concede on the Confession – something to which he was utterly averse.²⁹ He followed this up two years later with another address to the Edinburgh Presbytery entitled ‘The Union Overture: is it wise, or right?’, again showing that his overriding motivation in speaking out was from principle, not merely out of concern that the union could split the Church.

Whilst Moody Stuart was undoubtedly one of many anti-Unionists, he featured prominently in that opposition, and made a number of important contributions to this end, including a motion and speech urging the end to union negotiations at the General Assembly in 1870.³⁰ As it was, the Union Overture did indeed fail, only to rear its head again towards the end of the century, by which time Moody Stuart was well advanced in years and unable to take an active part in the debate.

²⁶ James W. Campbell, *Trembling for the Ark of God: James Begg and the Free Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh: Scottish Reformation Society, 2011), p. 14.

²⁷ *ibid.*

²⁸ A. Moody Stuart, ‘*Is the Establishment of Religion Outside of the Confession? a speech delivered in the Free Presbytery of Edinburgh, on the 25th November 1868*’ (Edinburgh, 1868).

²⁹ Kenneth R. Ross, *Church and Creed in Scotland: The Free Church Case 1900-1904 and Its Origins* (Edinburgh: Rutherford House, 1988), pp. 67-68.

³⁰ Walker, *Chapters from the History of the Free Church of Scotland*, pp. 245-46.

Sphere 4: The Critic of Higher Criticism

When the youthful Professor of Hebrew at the Free Church College in Aberdeen, William Robertson Smith, began publishing articles reflective of the new 'Higher Criticism' which questioned conventional views of the Old Testament's reliability and authorship, Alexander Moody Stuart was perhaps an unlikely figure to come to the fore in opposing them. He was advancing in years, did not possess a background as a professor, and had not engaged to any significant degree in any such questions before. However, Macleod puts it well when he says that of all the Free Church conservatives, Moody Stewart 'showed his quality as a student of the questions in debate as fully as any that took part in the discussion'.³¹ Stewart and Cameron concur in saying he was 'one of the few who seriously grappled with the questions of criticism raised by the Robertson Smith case'.³² It was the extent of Moody Stuart's published work during the controversy – 'the fruits of his mature thinking and scholarly research'³³ – that demonstrated both his command of the Biblical material under review and his ability to engage with and refute the views of the new criticism. Common to all the works was a note of grave warning as to the spiritual and pastoral consequences of yielding to the new views of the critics. In *Our Old Bible: Moses on the Plains of Moab* (1879), Moody Stuart defended Mosaic authorship of the Book of Deuteronomy:

That a book so devoutly used and so greatly honoured by our Lord Himself, is now held by men of note amongst us not to be in the words of Moses, in whose name it is given, is the darkest cloud that has brooded over the land in our day, and urgently calls for every light which can be held out to guide the minds of many who are bewildered in its mist.³⁴

Robertson Smith had voiced the critical view that denied Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch and posited instead multiple sources (following Wellhausen). Moody Stuart refuted this assertion in the work *Israel's Lawgiver* (1882). Concluding the work, he also presciently stated what casting doubt on the authenticity of the Old Testament would lead to – similar attacks on the New Testament:

The destructive critical process is avowedly as applicable to the New Testament as to the Old; to Christ and the apostles as to Moses and the prophets. This is the Bible of the new criticism; and, however undesignedly, this must be and is the Bible that is now pressed on the people of Scotland.³⁵

Robertson Smith's sceptical appraisal of the Davidic titles of several Psalms also provoked a refutation from Moody Stuart's pen, *The Fifty-first Psalm and the Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Moody Stuart compiled most of his earlier anti-Higher Critical works in a revised and expanded form in the work *The Bible*

³¹ Macleod, *Scottish Theology in Relation to Church History since the Reformation*, p. 292.

³² Alexander Stewart and John K. Cameron, *The Free Church of Scotland: The Crisis of 1900* (Edinburgh: Knox Press, 1989), p. 31.

³³ J.G. Cunningham, 'Alexander Moody Stuart', in *Disruption Worthies*, p. 470.

³⁴ A. Moody Stuart, *Our Old Bible: Moses on the Plains of Moab* (4th edn., Edinburgh: J. Maclaren, 1881), pp. 5-6.

³⁵ A. Moody Stuart, *Israel's Lawgiver: His Narrative True and His Laws Genuine* (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1882), p. 183.

True to Itself (1884). His engagement with Robertson Smith was not always well-calculated, and he had cause to apologise for an intemperate letter sent to the Professor at one point during the controversy.³⁶ However, Robertson Smith's attitude to Moody Stuart was dismissive – he characterised him as unqualified to engage in such scholarly and technical disputes.³⁷ As has already been pointed out, this withering intellectual disdain was not shared by others, and Ross sums up well in saying that throughout the case he produced 'learned and able speeches and pamphlets'.³⁸ His sustained defence in print of the conventional views on the books of the Old Testament's date, authorship, and reliability during the Robertson Smith controversy do not appear to have been rivalled by any of his conservative colleagues.

His skills in evangelical Biblical commentary were also evidenced in his work on the Song of Solomon, of which C.H. Spurgeon wrote: 'we do not know where to find a book of equal value in all respects. He has poetry in his soul and, beyond that, a heart like that of Rutherford, fired with love to the Altogether Lovely One. We thank him for this noble volume.'³⁹ In the same work, Spurgeon defers to Moody Stuart's opinion with regard to several other commentaries on the Song, further displaying the high regard in which his views were held by the minister of the Metropolitan Tabernacle.

Sphere 5: Preacher of the Gospel

The above were all areas of significant influence. Moody Stuart was Moderator of the General Assembly of the Free Church in 1875, the same year being honoured with the degree of Doctor of Divinity by the University of Edinburgh. Yet Moody Stuart was not primarily a missionary, a churchman, or a scholar: he was a prolific and popular preacher. The Union Overture and the Robertson Smith case were, ultimately, distractions to which he nonetheless committed his considerable gifts and energies, from what he considered to be his chief calling: to preach the Word of God.⁴⁰ As many of the contemporary reflections on Moody Stuart's life conclude, it was his spiritual impact which, although more difficult to quantify historically, was deemed the most significant.

His ministry in Free St. Luke's was a hub of committed Christian activity in the centre of Scotland's capital for four decades. His preaching was subjective and searching, evangelical and experimental, and he had among his congregants John Duncan, and Robert Murray M'Cheyne's parents; the Duchess of Gordon, too, was a regular attender when she was in Edinburgh.⁴¹ Among those upon whom he made a profound impression was Alexander

³⁶ John Sutherland Black and George Chrystal, *The Life of William Robertson Smith* (London: A&C Black, 1912), p. 219.

³⁷ Black and Chrystal, pp. 218-19.

³⁸ K.R. Ross, 'Alexander Moody Stuart' in Nigel M. de S Cameron (ed.), *Dictionary of Scottish Church History & Theology* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 2002), p. 803.

³⁹ C.H. Spurgeon, *Commenting and Commentaries: Two Lectures addressed to the students of the Pastors' College, Metropolitan Tabernacle, together with a Catalogue of Biblical Commentaries and Expositions* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1876), p. 117.

⁴⁰ Macleod, *Scottish Theology in Relation to Church History since the Reformation*, p. 292.

⁴¹ Alexander Smellie, *Robert Murray McCheyne* (London: National Council of Evangelical Free Churches, 1913), p. 59.

Whyte, for a time Moody Stuart's missionary at Free St Luke's, a preacher who would himself rise to prominence as perhaps the most popular and influential in Edinburgh.⁴² St Luke's was popular with Highlanders, and it was remarked that Moody Stuart's spiritual emphases were more akin to those of John Kennedy of Dingwall than to his Lowland contemporaries.⁴³

Whilst that may be, Moody Stuart also demonstrated a willingness to invite those into his pulpit who were not precisely of his own theological convictions, but who shared a deep desire for evangelical revival and renewal.⁴⁴ He preached in Kilsyth during the revival of 1839, and the following year his lecture 'The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Revival of Religion' was included in a volume of *Lectures on Revival* by a number Church of Scotland ministers. Moody Stuart visited Ulster during the revival of 1859 and preached at Ferryden, Forfarshire the same year. In Ferryden, more moderate ministers had hoped that he would exert a calming influence amidst what they deemed to be excesses of enthusiasm; his preaching was, however, 'by no means calming'.⁴⁵ He was also a friend and supporter of the evangelist Brownlow North, and welcomed his being officially recognised by the Free Church Assembly so that he could preach in the ordinary services of the denomination.⁴⁶ Thirty-five years after his first lecture on the subject, his accumulated experience was given voice from the Moderator's Chair at the Free Church General Assembly in 1875 in an address entitled 'Counsels on Conducting Revivals'.

Whilst a number of Moody Stuart's sermons were preserved in printed form (for example the 1893 compilation *The Path of the Redeemed*), they of course do not convey a great deal of what took place when Moody Stuart preached. His voice was a weak one, and it was its failure in early years which had prompted his removal to Madeira in the early 1840s. Yet despite this he was more than able to hold the attention of his hearers and the spiritual effects of his ministrations are well attested. Of Moody Stuart's preaching, Whyte said:

It was spiritual, if ever preaching was. It was scholarly of the best kind. It was very refined: there is no other word I can think of for it. It was original, with all his reading. It was of an exquisite spirituality, in Edwards' sense of spirituality. And it was steeped through and through with a Shepard-like and a Samuel Rutherford-like sensibility to sin, and an unceasing suffering, like all saintly men, from sin.⁴⁷

It was in 'case divinity', matters of Christian experience, that Moody Stuart excelled. His friend John Duncan, who could often be seen weeping during the sermon at St. Luke's, gave the pithiest of appraisals: 'In soul analysis I would say he is first, and in other things fair; and a man who is first in one thing and fair in others is no common man.'⁴⁸

⁴² K. Moody Stuart, *Alexander Moody Stuart*, p. 258.

⁴³ Ross, *Church and Creed in Scotland*, p. 238. Here he cites Moody Stuart's biography, p. 70.

⁴⁴ Bebbington, 'A Clash of Cultures: Revival in Forfarshire, Scotland, 1859', p. 177.

⁴⁵ Bebbington, 'A Clash of Cultures: Revival in Forfarshire, Scotland, 1859', p. 188.

⁴⁶ K. Moody Stuart, *Alexander Moody Stuart*, p. 136.

⁴⁷ K. Moody Stuart, *Alexander Moody Stuart*, p. 258.

⁴⁸ John M. Brentnall (ed.), *Just a Talker: The Sayings of John ('Rabbi) Duncan* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1997), p. 180.

4. Immediate Legacy

Moody Stuart died just before the second Union Overture reached its climax with the creation of the United Free Church in 1900, and he had been effectively laid aside from engaging in the debates of the 1890s. His influence, however, was still being exerted indirectly. His son Kenneth Moody Stuart, Free Church minister in Moffat, strenuously opposed the introduction of the Declaratory Act in 1892, which relaxed the Church's commitment to the Confession of Faith in order to pave the way for union with the UPC, saying 'it is an Act unworthy of the past history, the present position and the public testimony of the Free Church of Scotland, and fraught with the greatest danger to her spiritual prosperity.'⁴⁹

When those who had chosen to remain in the denomination but who continued to resist union after the passing of the Declaratory Act – the party known as the 'Constitutionalists' – took their fight to the Law Courts in the wake of the formation of the United Free Church in 1900, the man under whose name the case was taken forward was that of C.A. Bannatyne, minister in the Lanarkshire village of Coulter, near Biggar. The case *Bannatyne v. Overtoun* was eventually decided in favour of the Constitutionalists by the House of Lords in 1904. In his *Annals of the Free Church of Scotland, 1900-1986*, Professor G.N.M. Collins points out that 'Bannatyne had been assistant for a time to Dr Alexander Moody Stuart in Free St Luke's Church, Edinburgh – an association which influenced him greatly in the Free Church crisis at the turn of the century, for Moody Stuart had been a staunch upholder of the Constitution of the Free Church of Scotland in an age of debilitating changes in doctrinal testimony.'⁵⁰ Here we see an important connection between Moody Stuart's influence on the Church in his lifetime and its immediate aftermath.

5. Conclusion: 'No Common Man'

Part of the problem regarding Moody Stuart's absence from the later histories may lie in his being hard to categorise. He cannot easily be 'lumped in' with other circles with whom he may have had much in common – the conservatives led by James Begg, the more mainstream evangelicals like the Bonars (although this is the group he is most usually associated with), or the great exegetes and theologians such as George Smeaton, Hugh Martin, or Patrick Fairbairn. Yet, we have seen that he was both active and prominent in all their spheres, and more besides. We can thus conclude that Alexander Moody Stuart's contribution to the life of the Free Church and its endeavours at home and abroad until the end of that century was considerably more impactful and extensive than has perhaps been generally appreciated, and we hope this brief overview will in some small measure begin to redress the imbalance.

⁴⁹ Kenneth Moody Stuart, *Letter to a Friend Regarding the Free Church Declaratory Act* (Moffat: Robert Knight, 1893). This pamphlet was widely circulated.

⁵⁰ G.N.M. Collins, *Annals of the Free Church of Scotland, 1900-1986*, (Edinburgh, 1986), p. 7.