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THE RESILIENCE OF SCOTTISH EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY 1900-1950: THE CAREER OF DANIEL LAMONT (1870-1950)

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In his time, Daniel Lamont (d. 1950) was a well-known Scottish theological professor and Christian leader, with admirers within and beyond the Presbyterian tradition. Three quarters of a century later, he is all but forgotten. Thus, the question deserves to be asked, “why consider Lamont as an evangelical theologian, other than for antiquarian reasons?” The argument of this paper is that Lamont’s stance and career, shaped in the pre-1900 Free Church of Scotland, continued in the post-1900 United Free Church, and seen to its completion in the post-1929 reunited Church of Scotland, offers us an explanation of something which is otherwise an enigma. That ‘something’ is the hardiness of Scottish evangelicalism in the first half of the twentieth century, an era which by many accounts was one of theological confusion.

Brian Stanley, then-professor of World Christianity at New College, Edinburgh affirmed this hardiness in *The Global Diffusion of Evangelicalism: The Age of Billy Graham and John Stott* (IVP 2013). Comparing the relative state of evangelicalism in England to that of Scotland in 1950, (the time when both John Stott and Billy Graham were beginning to draw public attention at home and abroad), he judged that it was Scottish evangelicalism which stood in the stronger theological position. Does this comparison mean anything? In 1950 such a state of things meant something inasmuch as global evangelicalism still looked to the United Kingdom and to Scotland in a way not replicated today. Theology, biblical studies, world mission and Christian publishing for the English-speaking world were all more U.K.-centred in 1950 than they are today; in 1950 Britain still had an extensive global Empire, an Empire that was only beginning to recede.¹ In spite of England’s larger population, greater number of churches, and more numerous university faculties of theology, Stanley attributed Scotland’s out-sized role in mid-twentieth century

¹ The academic leadership shown in the early twentieth century is illustrated by the fact that graduate programs in theology and other disciplines were created in the various U.K. universities in response to appeals from colleges and universities across the then-Empire. See Hugh Watt, ed. *New College, Edinburgh: A Centenary History* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1946), p. 110.

evangelicalism to “the combined influence of a dominant Reformed tradition and an unrivalled system of public education.” Stanley’s judgment was extensively anticipated by Alister McGrath in his 2006 biography of T.F. Torrance.²

For early twenty-first century Christians interested in the history and welfare of the Scottish churches, this favourable interpretation of Christianity in Scotland circa 1950 runs counter to an established narrative. So great has been the shift away from historic Christian conviction across twentieth century Scotland, that it has been easy for some writers to suggest that the fatal wound had already been inflicted, so far as the maintenance of evangelical conviction is concerned, in the turmoil which preceded and followed the formation of the United Free Church of Scotland in 1900.³ As is well known, only a small minority of ministers and churches declined to enter this merger, the path towards which was prepared by relaxed subscription to the Westminster Confession and Catechisms in the two churches uniting. Especially for confessional evangelicals who continue to uphold those standards, Stanley’s assessment of mid-century Scottish theology seems to have about it an air of unreality. Was it not the case that from 1900 onward the relationship of most branches of Scottish Presbyterianism to the Westminster Confession and Catechisms had been deliberately made vague? Did not a kind of theological anomie follow in consequence?⁴ And did not the subsequent union of 1929, which brought together the vast majority of the United Free Church and the Church of Scotland employ terms of a studied ambiguity as regards the

² Brian Stanley, *The Global Diffusion of Evangelicalism: The Age of John Stott and Billy Graham* (Downers Grove, Inter-Varsity, 2013), 78. Alister McGrath had reached virtually the same conclusion in his *T.F. Torrance: An Intellectual Biography* (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 23. Describing the situation when, in the mid-1930’s, Torrance undertook theological study in Edinburgh, he described the Scottish universities in the inter-war period as “the virtually undisputed masters of British theology, with Edinburgh being the jewel in the crown.”

³ See this emphasis, for instance, in the readable volume of Iain H. Murray, *A Scottish Christian Heritage* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2006), chap. 11 and John W. Keddie, *Preserving a Reformed Heritage: Aspects of the History of the Free Church of Scotland in the 20th Century* (Kirkhill: Scottish Reformed Heritage Publications, 2017), p. 39. A much more judicious appraisal of the landscape had been provided by Norman L. Walker, *Chapters in the History of the Free Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, 1895), chap. XIX.

⁴ The United Presbyterian Church in 1879 and the Free Church of Scotland in 1892 had modified the terms of their subscription to the Westminster Confession and Catechisms.

doctrines of the Confession?⁵ How can this flow of events have lent itself to evangelical resilience?

While these concerns about theological integrity were warranted by the theological trends admittedly visible in both 1900 and 1929, they do not, when taken by themselves, supply an adequate understanding of the course taken by theology in Scotland during the first half of the twentieth century. It is the contention of this paper that there remained a vigorous evangelical theology not only in the ongoing Free Church of Scotland (the small party which declined to enter church union in 1900), but also in the United Free Church of Scotland and the post-1929 union of that body with the Church of Scotland. This evangelical stance still remained at mid-twentieth century in spite of the admittedly ambiguous relationship to historic doctrinal standards which had been adopted a half-century earlier. In making this assertion, it is important to acknowledge that evangelical theology was by no means the only, or the dominant emphasis observable in the Scottish churches of this period. This paper maintains only that there was an evangelicalism with ongoing trans-denominational influence in this period. Our methodology will entail first a survey of general theological trends observable in that half-century and second, a consideration of Daniel Lamont's own notable evangelical theological stance in that same period.

GENERAL TRENDS IN THE 1900-1950 PERIOD

The United Free Church of Scotland was a church known for its keen missionary interest, a commitment reflected pre-1900 in both of the churches which combined in that year.⁶ The most famous UFC missionary of the early part of the century was Mary Slessor of Calabar (1848-1915), while the missionary statesman of the denomination was David S. Cairns (1862-1947), who played a major role in the Edinburgh Missionary Convention of 1910 in his capacity of professor of theology and apologetics at the Aberdeen college of the United Free Church.⁷

⁵ J. H. S. Burleigh, *A Church History of Scotland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960), pp. 384,385.

⁶ Walker, *Chapters in the History*, XIX, drew attention to the impressive number of medical missionaries sent out from Scotland, relative to the U.K. as a whole.

⁷ Brian Stanley, *The World Missionary Conference:1910* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans: 2009), pp. 245-247, associates Cairns with the advancing of the idea that the major religions of the world could find their proper fulfilment in the Christian message. Cairns' outlook might be termed 'liberal evangelical'.

While the United Free Church has been fairly characterized as “broadly evangelical” with an ethos of “liberal evangelicalism” on account of its accommodating attitude to biblical higher criticism and German theology⁸ it remains true that it contained numerous theologians and ministers known for their clear evangelicalism. Two representatives of the UFC, James Orr and Thomas Whitelaw, had contributed to the American project of 1909, *the Fundamentals*.⁹ And there were numerous scholars and preachers who both at the time and since have been considered to be exemplary preachers of the gospel. The Glasgow church historian, T.M. Lindsay (1843-1914) left memorable works such as *The Church and the Ministry in the Early Centuries* (1902) and the still-valuable *History of the Reformation* (2 vols. 1906-7). James Denney (1856-1917), successively professor of theology, New Testament, and principal of the Glasgow Free Church College, is still remembered for his *The Death of Christ* (1902, repr. 1951). Alexander Whyte (1836-1921) was a famous Edinburgh preacher, author (Bible Characters, Bunyan Characters, Commentary on the Shorter Catechism) and eventual principal of New College. James Stalker (1848-1927), professor of Church History in the Aberdeen College of the United Free Church, had a wide reputation as a preacher, producing noteworthy expositions on *Imago Dei: The Example of Jesus Christ* (1890), *The Trial and Death of Jesus Christ* (1894), and *The Atonement* (1908). John MacPherson (1847-1902), left a commentary on the Westminster Confession (1881), a published lecture series, *The Doctrine of the Church in Modern Theology* (1903), and a *Christian Dogmatics* (1898).

The United Free Church moderator of 1911-12, James Wells (1838-1924) gave a rousing and most welcomed address at the 1912 centenary

⁸ N.R. Needham, “United Free Church” in the Nigel M. Cameron, ed. *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), p. 838. A.C. Cheyne did not hesitate to term the United Free Church as theologically liberal, in describing that church as providing an ecclesiastical home for future theologians, John and Donald M. Baillie. See Cheyne’s essay, “The Baillie Brothers” in David Fergusson, ed. *Christ, Church, and Society: Essays on John Baillie and Donald M. Baillie*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992), p. 10.

⁹ It is interesting to note that UFC chronicler, George M. Reith, spoke of Orr as “a sturdy, if somewhat conservative theologian” after his passing. *Reminiscences of the United Free Church General Assemblies: 1900-1929* (Edinburgh: Moray House, 1934), p. 153. The contributions of Orr and Whitelaw to the *Fundamentals* is analysed (with others) in Geoffrey Treloar, “The British Contribution to *The Fundamentals*”, in David Bebbington and David Ceri Jones, eds. *Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism in the United Kingdom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), chap. 2.

of Princeton Theological Seminary.¹⁰ Of the same generation was W.M. Clow (1853-1930), a notable evangelical preacher and eventual Principal and Professor of Ethics and Practical Theology at the Glasgow Free Church College; Clow took a deep interest in the challenges of urban ministry and social questions, an interest reflected in books such as *Christ and the Social Order* (1913), *The Quest for Industrial Peace* (1921) and articles published in the *Princeton Theological Review*.¹¹ One of the few Scottish ministers to have been educated at Princeton Theological Seminary in the era of the Hodges, Charles A. Salmond (1853-1932), left his own written appreciation of late 19th century Princeton in his *Princetoniana* (1888); like the others named above, Salmond had thrown in his lot with the United Free Church in 1900. The compiler of biblical and theological dictionaries and founder of the *Expository Times*, James Hastings (1852-1922), was of this same generation and outlook. A notable upholder of the centrality of Jesus Christ in the inter-war era was Patrick Carnegie Simpson (1865-1947), author of *The Fact of Christ* (1901) and Chalmers lectures published as *The Evangelical Church Catholic* (1935). Simpson was a New College graduate who went on to become Professor of Church History at Westminster College, Cambridge and biographer of Robert Rainy, late principal of New College). Another church historian of long-standing was Hugh Watt (1879-1968), professor at New College, Edinburgh (1919-1950). His interests in the Covenanting period and the preceding Reformation era found expression in *Recalling the Scottish Covenants* (1946) and *John Knox in Controversy* (1950).¹² An at-least liberal evangelical orientation was continued into a younger generation, which eventually furnished the Scottish Church with the evangelist D.P. Thomson (1896-1974) and preacher-theologians such as James S. Stewart (1896-1990), Thomas Torrance (1913-2007), and A.C. Cheyne (1924-2006). As a young man and young minister, a similar outlook was exhibited by William Barclay (1907-1978) who admittedly later, during his academic career, adopted clearly heterodox views.¹³ All this is to speak of the United Free Church stream.

¹⁰ David B. Calhoun, *Princeton Seminary: the Majestic Testimony* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1996), p. 276, drawing on the observations of J. Gresham Machen provided in Ned B. Stonehouse, *J. Gresham Machen: A Biographical Memoir* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954), pp. 183-184.

¹¹ Clow published four articles in the *Princeton Theological Review*: "Elements of the Industrial Strife" 19.3 (1921), "Marxian Socialism" 19.4 (1921), "The Justification of Capitalism" 20.4 (1920) and "The Charge Against Capitalism" 21.1 (1923).

¹² Portions of these works appeared earlier in the *Evangelical Quarterly*.

¹³ Clive Rawlins, *William Barclay: the Authorized Biography* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1984). J. D. Douglas, "Barclay, William" in the Nigel M. Cam-

The Church of Scotland prior to the reunion of 1929 did not have the same extensive associations with evangelical theology which had been such a prominent feature of the United Free Church heritage. Its world missionary force was very much smaller and its role in the 1910 Edinburgh Missionary Conference was not so evident as that of the United Free Church. While some of its ministers had openly identified with the Keswick movement and sought to advance the practical holiness of their parishioners through conferences and devotional magazines, these emphases were far from characteristic.¹⁴ Fewer of its theological scholars were looked to as clear defenders of the evangelical position. And yet there were exceptions to this general rule. A.C. Charteris, Edinburgh University professor of Biblical Criticism from 1868-1898 had been a steady defender of the integrity of the biblical record and a friend to foreign missionary effort.¹⁵ G.D. Henderson, church historian at Aberdeen University between 1924 and 1957 though clearly not a conservative evangelical, was regularly ready to make common cause with others of a broadly evangelical conviction.¹⁶ His colleague from 1940 onward, the New Testament scholar, A.M. Hunter (1906-1991) took generally conservative positions.¹⁷ The professor of Christian Dogmatics, G. T. Thomson (1887-1958), initially at Aberdeen before relocating to Edinburgh in 1936, was known for his staunch defence of Protestant orthodoxy and was supportive of evangelical causes. He co-authored the *Romans* commentary in the *New Bible*

eron, ed. *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), p. 63. A pointed assessment of Barclay is provided by Robert P. Carroll, "Hebrew, Heresy and Hot Air: Biblical Studies in Glasgow Since 1900" in Iain H. P. Hazlett, *Traditions of Theology in Glasgow: 1450-1990* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1993), pp. 94-97.

¹⁴ Andrew M. Jones, *The Revival of Evangelicalism: Mission and Piety in the Victorian Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022)

¹⁵ N.R. Needham, "Charteris, Archibald Hamilton" in the Nigel M. Cameron, ed. *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), p. 167. The biography of missionary C.T. Studd records that Charteris chaired an Edinburgh student rally in which the Student Volunteer Movement appealed for student world evangelization. Norman Grubb, *C.T. Studd: Cricketer and Pioneer* (Valley Forge: Christian Literature Crusade, 1933), p. 48.

¹⁶ Henderson was a frequent contributor to the *Evangelical Quarterly* in the 1930's and 40's.

¹⁷ I.H. Marshall, "Hunter, Archibald Macbride" in the Nigel M. Cameron, ed. *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), pp. 417-418.

Commentary (1953).¹⁸ His colleague at Edinburgh, the church historian G. H. S. Burleigh (1894-1985), became the second editor of the *Evangelical Quarterly* and was a frequent contributor to the journal.¹⁹

Outside what could be called these ‘mainstream’ bodies, an evangelical theological position was being forthrightly maintained in the Free Church of Scotland (post-1900), by the Free Presbyterian Church (which had withdrawn from the Free Church in 1893 over concerns about doctrinal drift) and in the surviving remnants of still-older Presbyterian dissent: the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland and the Original Secession Church.²⁰ The Scottish Baptist and Congregationalist Unions contained broadly evangelical elements, while being doctrinally diverse. Each maintained a theological college.²¹

With a variety of assumptions about the post-1900 Scottish churches in relation to the cause of evangelicalism now freshly examined, we may now focus on the career and significance of one who in extensive pastoral ministry (1900-1927), a New College, Edinburgh academic chair entailing Ethics, Apologetics and Practical Theology (1927-1945) and as moderator of the Church of Scotland General Assembly (1936) was one of the outstanding evangelical leaders of his time, within and beyond the Church of Scotland. The individual was Daniel Lamont (1870-1950).

DANIEL LAMONT AS MINISTER, AS PROFESSOR AND EVANGELICAL LEADER

When Professor Daniel Lamont passed from this life in May, 1950, a significant chapter closed in the history of evangelical theology in Scotland. Born on the Isle of Bute in 1870, young Lamont was raised in the Fin-

¹⁸ D. F. Wright, “Thomson, G.T.” in the Nigel M. Cameron, ed. *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), p. 821. Thomson co-authored the Romans commentary in the 1953 *New Bible Commentary* (IVP).

¹⁹ A.C. Cheyne, “Burleigh, J. H. S.” in Nigel M. Cameron, ed. *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), p. 111.

²⁰ The continuing Reformed Presbyterian Church (existing also in Ulster) had declined to be absorbed into the post-1690 restored Church of Scotland. The dwindling Original Secession Church was absorbed into the Church of Scotland in 1956. On both, see the relevant articles in the *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology*.

²¹ J. C. G Binfield, “Congregational Union of Scotland”, in the *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology*, p. 206; D. B. Murray, “Baptist Union of Scotland”, in the *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology*, pp. 59-60.

nieston area of Glasgow, where Andrew Bonar (1810-1892) was the family minister. Young Lamont seemed destined for a career as a mathematician; it was only after labouring as assistant to the professor of mathematics at the University of Glasgow for four years, that he, feeling called to the ministry, left mathematics and enrolled in the Free Church College, Glasgow in 1896. And what a time to enrol! T.M. Lindsay, A.B. Bruce, James Denney, and George Adam Smith were his distinguished and sometimes controversial teachers.²² His theological course was just concluding in the year (1900) when the union between his own Free Church of Scotland and the United Presbyterian Church was being consummated. Following the example of his Glasgow professors, he entered the united body.

A star pupil in theology as he had already been in mathematics, Lamont graduated first in his class at the Glasgow Free Church College. In addition to the college diploma, Lamont also secured the Glasgow University B.D. by examination. Professor James Denney (professor in the Free Church College from 1897-1917) pronounced Lamont to be the best all-round man to have passed through his theology classes.²³ After a succession of four-year pastorates at Kilmarnock and Newington, Lamont was called back to Glasgow in 1909. At that occasion, Denney honoured Lamont by providing the formal introduction of the minister-designate at his induction at Hillhead in Glasgow's West End.²⁴

There were early signs that an academic career could be in Lamont's future. From his 1909 return to Glasgow, he began to serve as his college's external examiner in Systematic Theology; he later performed similar service as external examiner for Glasgow University's B.D. degree. At the passing of James Orr in 1913, Lamont was among those nominated to fill Orr's theology chair. Though not selected, he nevertheless consented to teach the late Orr's classes for one academic year – while still serving in his pastorate. In the following year, he was nominated for a position in New Testament and Historical Theology in the Presbyterian Theological

²² Both A.B. Bruce and George Adam Smith were made to defend themselves against charges of heresy in the pre-1900 Free Church of Scotland.

²³ "Memoir", 55. Denney's initial role in the Glasgow college of the Free Church was professor of theology. After the union of 1900, the theology post devolved to James Orr (coming to Glasgow from the Edinburgh Divinity Hall of the former United Presbyterian Church). Denney spent the balance of his career in New Testament.

²⁴ These biographical details are furnished in a memoir of Lamont composed by the one who succeeded him as minister in Helensburgh, George Logan, and appended to a volume of popular articles composed by Lamont for the evangelical magazine, *The Life of Faith*. The volume was published as *Studies in the Johannine Writings* (London: James Clarke, 1956).

Hall in Sydney, Australia.²⁵ Again, he was passed over. He was nominated a second time for the Glasgow theology post five years later; again; once more he was not successful.²⁶ The implication was that Lamont was at a disadvantage as a nominee, never having ventured into print. In that same year, 1919, he went to a new pastorate at Helensburgh, where he remained until 1927. Yet, in that year there came both the award of a Glasgow D.D. (*honoris causa*) and an election by the General Assembly to be the New College, Edinburgh professor of Apologetics, Christian Ethics and Practical Training. In gaining the post in 1927, Lamont was preferred over the younger Donald M. Baillie (later an important theologian in his own right at the University of St. Andrews).²⁷ Lamont, a lifelong bachelor, remained in the Edinburgh post until his retirement in 1945.²⁸

What, beside his early demonstration of academic prowess (especially in theology) at Glasgow had at last fitted Lamont for this academic appointment? He had long been known as an exemplary preacher; he had done wartime service as a military chaplain in France. We have noted that in the first two decades of his ministry, he had as yet published no theological work.²⁹ What do we know about Lamont's theological trajectory?

LAMONT'S THEOLOGICAL TRAJECTORY

It is clear that Lamont was raised in an evangelical family under the ministry of the renowned Andrew Bonar (1810-1892) and that he determined to follow Christ from the age of seven.³⁰ With his father, Lamont was actively involved in the distribution of Christian tracts in poor neighbourhoods of his city. The Glasgow Free Church College in which he enrolled in 1896, was something of a hotbed, attracting attention for sometimes dubious reasons. The principal and resident church historian, T. M. Lindsay (1843-1914) in addition to being an authority on the Continental Refor-

²⁵ Stuart Bonnington, "The Religion About Jesus or the Religion of Jesus: the Theological Formation of Rev. Dr. Samuel Angus (1881-1943), dissertation. Australian College of Theology, 2023, p. 172.

²⁶ Both nominations, as well as his eventual selection to be the professor of Ethics, Apologetics and Practical Theology in New College, Edinburgh are recorded in the *Memoir* as well as George M. Reith, *Reminiscences of the United Free Church General Assembly 1900-1929* (Edinburgh: The Moray Press, 1934), pp. 154, 211, 304.

²⁷ Reith, *Reminiscences*, p. 304.

²⁸ "Memoir", p. 16

²⁹ This significant fact is noted in the "Memoir", p. 26. His unmarried sister long served as his housekeeper.

³⁰ "Memoir", p. 12.

mation, and a friend of religious revival, had recently been outspoken in his denunciation of the view that the Bible was without error; this was a view which he mistakenly claimed to have originated in Princeton, New Jersey.³¹ The professor of New Testament and Apologetics, A.B. Bruce (1831-99) had at an earlier stage of his career written the classic study of Jesus and his disciples, *The Training of the Twelve* (1871). But by the 1880's he defended the critical views of the Aberdeen Old Testament scholar, W. Robertson Smith (1846-1894); for himself he would not affirm more than a general reliability of the four Gospels. He faced a General Assembly inquiry into his own views in 1890, yet no formal charges were made against him. It was in Bruce's teaching of Apologetics that he made the greatest impression on his student, Lamont.

Old Testament theologian, George Adam Smith (1856-1942) made a deep impression on, and was a great encourager of young Lamont. Such was Lamont's prowess in Hebrew, the professor made Lamont his assistant for one academic year. But like A.B. Bruce, Smith's acceptance and employment of the higher critical method brought him under the scrutiny of the General Assembly. He had just released his Yale lectures on preaching, *Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament* (1901) which demonstrated how much he had conceded to modern criticism.³² As in Bruce's case, matters went no further than an Assembly inquiry.

In theology, Lamont was the pupil of James Denney (1856-1917) who filled that chair 1897-1900 and subsequently the chair of New Testament. Sharing the liberal evangelical outlook of his colleagues, Denney could not, without qualification, be considered a theological conservative – a designation that did apply to his successor in theology, James Orr (1844-1913).³³ Orr, who joined the faculty of the Glasgow college in consequence of the United Presbyterian-Free Church union of 1900, was never Lamont's mentor. The stamp of Denney was definitely left on Lamont and their mutual admiration was easily observable. It was as the former pro-

³¹ Lindsay had followed closely the doctrinal conflict in which Union Seminary, New York, professor, Charles Briggs, had been involved in the years 1892-1893.

³² The career of George Adam Smith is explored in Iain D. Campbell, *Fixing the Indemnity: The Life and Work of George Adam Smith* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2004).

³³ The theological profile and contribution of Denney have been assessed by John Randolph Taylor, *God Loves Like That: The Life and Theology of James Denney* (London: SCM Press, 1962) and by I. Howard Marshall in the Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, ed. *Creative Minds in Contemporary Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966), chap. 7.

tégé of Denney, the theologian, that Lamont would be repeatedly nominated for academic chairs in 1913, 1914, 1919 and 1927.

It is worth stressing that the Glasgow college of the Free Church was a fair representation of the theological complexion of the freshly-united denomination, which also had divinity colleges at Edinburgh and Aberdeen. The roots of them all lay in confessional evangelicalism; the direction taken by all by the 1880's was one of accommodation to the new critical methods. Some students, who were self-consciously conservative in theology recoiled at things they heard in the classroom.³⁴ In some cases, the Belfast theological faculty of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland was preferred over these Scottish colleges because of the Belfast college's conscious resistance to the higher critical approach.³⁵ In the case of Daniel Lamont, theological graduate of 1900, we see a combination of fervent evangelical upbringing and piety wedded to this rising liberal evangelical theological outlook. The outlook has been called 'Christocentric', because it certainly put Christ and the need for a personal response to Him, at the forefront. It was also 'crucicentric', in that it clearly emphasized the indispensability of trust in Christ's atoning sacrifice at the cross. But the embrace of historical criticism produced a qualified confidence in Scripture (especially the Old Testament) as it was subjected to an often-naturalistic critical approach; the historic creeds of the Church – from Patristic to Reformation times—were subjected to the same historical evaluation. We will see these tendencies at work as we give attention to Lamont's major writings in the order in which they were composed.

LAMONT'S EMERGENCE AS A THEOLOGICAL WRITER

Lamont clearly had well-placed friends who hoped to see him move into academic life. One of these was his former fellow-student, John McFadyen (1870-1933), now professor of Hebrew and Old Testament in their Glasgow alma mater.³⁶ McFadyen seems to have been the catalyst for securing for Lamont an invitation to give a lecture series (the A.B. Bruce lectureship) in the Glasgow UFC college. The lectures, published as *The Creative Work of Jesus* (1924) will have been written and delivered in exactly the same months as he was composing *The Church and the Creeds* (discussed below). Lamont, still a full-time minister at Helensburgh, was evidently

³⁴ G.N.M. Collins, *Donald Maclean D.D.* (Edinburgh: Lindsay, 1944), pp. 21-25.

³⁵ G. N. M. Collins, *John Macleod, D.D.* (Edinburgh: Free Church of Scotland, 1951), p. 47.

³⁶ G.W. Anderson, "McFadyen, John Edgar" in the Nigel M. Cameron, ed. *Scottish Dictionary of Church History and Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), p. 513.

burning the midnight oil. This lecture series aimed “to restate the organic connection between Christian experience and...the death and resurrection of our Lord, regarded as a single, indissoluble, historical fact.” This aim is pregnant with meaning, for as he goes on to say:

The God upon whom our minds ultimately rest is One who is experienced by us. He has chosen to be revealed in Jesus, of whom we must have an adequate experience if we are to have an adequate experience of God. Christian theology can be deduced from experience in the same sense in which the contents of salvation can be deduced from faith... As faith implies its appropriate object, experience implies its appropriate source.³⁷

Here Lamont is “paying his dues” to the theological trend of his day, reflected in titles such as *The Christian Experience of Forgiveness* (H.R. MacIntosh) and *The Christian Experience of the Holy Spirit* (H. Wheeler Robinson).³⁸ Events and facts of the Gospel are not denied or belittled, but the role of the hearer of the gospel as interpreter and validator of these truths is exaggerated.

Yet this is not simply theological “haze”. Lamont held that “the validity of Christian experience obviously depends upon the trustworthiness of the New Testament record concerning Jesus.” “In the earthly life of Jesus of Nazareth God gave the one perfect revelation of Himself that He has given to men.” “The death of Christ is the central theme of this book.” “The resurrection of Jesus was the standard and measure of God’s redemptive power.” “The Christian hope for the life which is to come, as well as for that which now is, is built upon the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.” “The Holy Spirit as known in Christian experience does the actual work of Christ in human lives. He ministers Christ to us and in so doing, He brings us to God.”³⁹ Lamont’s point is that robust Christian experience is the product of an encounter with these realities.

McFadyen was also editor of a series of semi-popular theological volumes, “The Living Church”; he invited Lamont to contribute a volume on the sensitive subject of *The Church and the Creeds*, a book released in 1925. The subject was timely, as by this point, the United Free Church had already commenced negotiations with the Church of Scotland that would result in a reunion of churches in 1929. This was a subject area in which Lamont – who had done theological teaching and examining—was quite at home. It would seem that it was while in the process of producing this

³⁷ *The Creative Work of Jesus* (London: James Clarke, 1924), p. 15.

³⁸ (London: Nisbet, 1927), (London: Nisbet, 1928). Volumes in a sizeable series entitled “The Library of Constructive Theology.

³⁹ *Creative Work*, pp. 44, 47, 59, 65, 67, 117

volume, that Lamont digressed to produce what seems to have been his first published theological writing, a short essay for the *Expository Times* in May, 1923, "The Role of Systematic Theology in Preaching." The notes sounded by Lamont were reassuring:

The Church has suffered from many false assumptions and none more than this: that when a man has given his heart to Christ, his inward spiritual task has been completed. Life only begins for him at that turning-point and since life and growth cannot be dissociated, he must grow. The process of becoming a full-grown Christian man implies a growth in the truth, as the truth is in Jesus... Healthy growth in the Christian life presupposes growth in Christian knowledge. That fact provides the basal justification for doctrinal preaching.⁴⁰

When, however *The Church and the Creeds* came from the press in 1925, an evangelical reader might have been frequently taken aback at Lamont's approach. This, while not irreverent or dismissive (he begins by affirming that it has been essential that the church formulate its faith to mark itself off from an unbelieving world) is still one that regularly emphasizes the limitations and historical situatedness of these documents. He employs a kind of higher critical method in viewing the creeds, a method required by the historical distance that separates us from the time of their composition. Accordingly, the 'Old Roman Creed' (circa 150 A.D.) is faulted for emphasizing the miraculous conception of Jesus; Lamont fully allows that this detail is recorded in two gospels, but presses the point that the Apostles did not give the miraculous conception any role in their public proclamation as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles.⁴¹ By his reasoning, their reticence should have kept this detail (the reality of which he does not deny) out of a public creed. He faults the later creed, which we know as the Apostles, for its inclusion of the phrase "He descended into Hell" when the intended thought was in fact that Christ "continued under the power of death for a time". The phrase "the communion of saints" he takes to be a late addition to the creed, reflective of the growing practice of praying to the saints.⁴² The creed of Nicea's value is compromised, Lamont believed, by the political manoeuvring of the emperor, acting through the sole western bishop present, Hosius; the unity imposed by this predominantly Eastern council was illusory and, as is well known, required that the issue of the relation of Christ to the Father would need to be revisited.

⁴⁰ "The Place of Systematic Theology in Preaching" *Expository Times* 34.8 (May 1923): 359-360.

⁴¹ *The Church and the Creeds* (London: James Clarke, 1925), p. 27.

⁴² *The Creeds and the Churches*, pp. 32-33.

He stresses that the Nicene formula was the first “framed of set purpose to be a test of orthodoxy”.⁴³

The creed of Chalcedon similarly “is not immune to criticism...The idea of two absolutely distinct natures in One Person is neither capable of being entertained by the human mind nor true to the Jesus of history”.⁴⁴ The thoughtful reader will have found numerous reasons to feel unsettled by Lamont’s approach.

Turning to the Westminster Confession of Faith, he took the view that this constituted “the most logical and uncompromising of all the credal statements of distinctly Reformed thought.” He appears to mis-characterize the Confession’s teaching about the Bible by attributing to it the view that “Scripture is authoritative only as it is borne home to man by the testimony of the Holy Spirit”.⁴⁵ He argued that the framers of the Confession made it “complicit in a view of the Bible which is not the Bible’s view of itself.” “They were Aristotelian scholastics.” An infallible Bible was substituted for an infallible Church. The “Westminster doctrine of Scripture...is not scriptural enough.” The Confession’s doctrine of election and predestination follows “remorseless logic” and a “paralyzing fatalism”.⁴⁶ Lamont was here simply echoing many of the stock-in-trade criticisms of the Westminster Confession circulating as the nineteenth century gave way to the twentieth.

For all that, Lamont – who has been largely echoing the perspective of his late mentor, James Denney (d. 1917)⁴⁷—insisted that creeds remain necessary. In a carefully-worded endorsement, he maintained “the Church has both the right and the duty to express the revealed truths of the faith in the thought-forms of each age.” The best attitude is that of “enlightened freedom towards the creeds.” “Creeds ought continually to be revised.”⁴⁸ He closed out the volume by offering a simple creed assembled from what he considered to be the best elements of the various earlier statements he had surveyed. The Old Roman Creed was reflected most of all.⁴⁹ No one could call such a stance repressive or retrograde. The question was more that of whether, by retreating to the earliest possible standard, he

⁴³ *The Creeds*, p. 44.

⁴⁴ *The Creeds*, p. 58

⁴⁵ WCF I. iv grounds the authority of Scripture in its divine origin. A human’s appreciation of this authority comes by the attendant operation of the Spirit.

⁴⁶ *The Creeds*, pp. 81-82, 84, 85, 88, 93.

⁴⁷ See, for instance, the statements on Divine Inspiration in James Denney’s *Studies in Theology* (1897), Lecture IX, “Holy Scripture”.

⁴⁸ *The Creeds*, pp. 133, 152, 155.

⁴⁹ Chapter III “A Creed for Christendom”.

had adequately taken into account positive advances made in the history of dogma across the Christian centuries.⁵⁰

It bears remembering that these are the sentiments not of some “young buck” fresh from postgraduate study, but of a veteran minister in his mid-50’s attempting to do theological writing for the first time. He clearly has not neglected his theological reading in a quarter-century of pastoral ministry. We are in fact hearing the voice of one who identified with a liberal evangelicalism. A comparison of *The Church and the Creeds* with its twin finds *The Creative Work of Jesus* to be the more constructive and less speculative of the two volumes.

By 1925, Lamont now had the publications, for lack of which, his earlier repeated nominations to theological chairs had faltered. With a Glasgow D.D. newly-awarded, he was now the successful nominee for the New College, Edinburgh chair in Ethics, Apologetics and Practical Theology, the role in which he served out his career.⁵¹ In that career, extending from 1927 until 1945, he made his mark most of all through the 1934 release of *Christ and the World of Thought*.⁵²

This volume was, in reality, a work of Apologetics, i.e. an attempt to show the relevance of a robust Christian faith to the whole range of human learning and exploration. Somewhat in the vein of his former teacher, Alexander Balmain Bruce’s *Apologetics* (1882) and James Orr’s *Christian View of God and the World* (1893), Lamont’s work was intended to show Christianity’s rightful place in a world of learning which was increasingly operating from agnostic and secular assumptions. Lamont’s book showed a strong concern with epistemology, the question of how humans know anything and with how they find certainty.

His assessment of the then-current intellectual climate was very bleak; he believed that the inter-war years showed a revolution in thought. “The world of today oscillates between moral indifference on the one hand and moral fanaticism on the other.” “There are more people in the world who are proud of their moral laxity than ever there were.” Formerly, “an atheist was generally held to be an abnormality and a public danger. Now he

⁵⁰ Surely Lamont will have been familiar with the arguments of Principal Robert Rainy, set out in his *Delivery and Development of Christian Doctrine* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1874) and James Orr, in his *The Progress of Dogma* (London: James Clarke, 1901)

⁵¹ Reith, *Reminiscences of the United Free Church General Assembly (1900-1929)*, (Edinburgh: Moray Press, 1934), p. 304, indicates that additional nominees were Donald M. Baillie and R.H. Strachan, both of whom went on to important academic careers. Baillie subsequently joined the faculty of St. Mary’s College, St. Andrews.

⁵² (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1934)

has emerged into respectability...⁵³ How did Lamont, at age 64, propose to tackle this situation? By recommending a recovery of the lost transcendence of God – a loss which he traced back to Schleiermacher. “For our knowledge of God, we are inexorably cast upon the initiative of God himself.”⁵⁴

In the realm of psychology, it was necessary to recover the concept of the human soul: “civilization no longer has any guiding and sustaining principle to lead it to confident action and give it repose of soul.” In the turbulent 1930’s, he saw the rise of Hitlerism as a symptom of this vacuum: “Anything is better than chaos.”⁵⁵ Demonstrating his strong background in mathematics (a field he had left in 1896 to take up theological study) he devoted a chapter to the question of time; this he understood to have undergone a complete revolution of thought in the preceding half-century on account of the relating of time to space.⁵⁶

With considerable nimbleness, he showed both the utter dependency of modern man on divine revelation *and* that genuine revelation is recorded in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments in a way not true of the scriptures of other faiths.⁵⁷ The same uniqueness was boldly claimed by Lamont for Jesus Christ who is both described in the apostolic record and actively revealing himself to those who hear the Christian message.⁵⁸ The reception given to this most substantive of Lamont’s writings was positive, but mixed.⁵⁹

Christ and the World of Thought can be looked on as marking a kind of a re-orientation for Lamont. Though broadly orthodox, his transition in 1927 into Scotland’s largest theological college which soon (post-1929) began the process of integration into the existing University of Edinburgh Faculty of Divinity meant that he now directly encountered the unsettling intellectual trends of the era as represented within the general university community as well as within the theological faculty. There, there

⁵³ *Christ and the World of Thought*, pp. 7, 9.

⁵⁴ *Christ and the World of Thought*, p. 11.

⁵⁵ *Christ and the World of Thought*, p. 27

⁵⁶ McGrath, T. F. *Torrance*, p. 34, names Lamont as one of two key professors at New College contributing to his subject’s theological formation. Lamont is credited with stimulating Torrance to consider the relationship between theology and science.

⁵⁷ *Christ and the World of Thought*, chapter X.

⁵⁸ *Christ and the World of Thought*, chapter XI.

⁵⁹ The Christian philosopher at University College, Hull, G.C. Steward, praised some portions of the book, but found others unconvincing. Review in *Evangelical Quarterly* 7.2 (1935), 208-212. The book was re-issued in a more popular form as *The Anchorage of Life* (London: IVF, 1940)

were clashes of theological opinion.⁶⁰ The writing Lamont produced in this period began to display his more earnest side; there were published articles such as “Tests in the Final Judgment”, “The Believer’s Destiny” and the especially sobering “Evangelism in the Modern World.”⁶¹ This latter essay called for the re-evangelization of the Scottish church! He was made moderator of the now-united Church of Scotland in 1936.⁶² By 1938, his mid-1920’s objections to certain elements of Calvinism notwithstanding, he accepted the honorary presidency of the important Fourth International Calvinistic Congress which met at New College, Edinburgh in July of that year.⁶³ Preparations for this Congress showed Lamont working in close collaboration with faculty members at the neighbouring Free Church of Scotland College.

It was in this same period of his career that Lamont began a close association with the Inter-Varsity Fellowship which would continue into his retirement years. He was among those Christian academics and leaders who addressed a large international student gathering at Cambridge in July, 1939 which set the stage for the post-war creation of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students. His subject in that conference was that of his book of 1934, “Christ and the World of Thought.”⁶⁴ In the year of his retirement (1945) he served as the honorary president of the IVF within the United Kingdom, and gave a memorable presidential address which was published as *God’s Word and Man’s Response*. The address was an appeal for the primacy of divine revelation in a distracted world.⁶⁵

During this same period, Lamont was also among a group of Scots collaborating with the Biblical Research Committee of the Inter Var-

⁶⁰ Interesting light is shed on the spectrum of theological opinion within the 1930’s united Faculty of Divinity in the life of T.F. Torrance. Alister, McGrath, *Thomas F. Torrance: An Intellectual Biography* (London: T&T Clark, 1999), p. 29-38. The biographer singles out Lamont and the theologian, H.R. MacIntosh as two faculty members who especially influenced Torrance.

⁶¹ Published in the *Evangelical Quarterly* 7.4 (1935), 337-50; 9.1 (1937), 1-2; and 15.3 (1942), 206-215. In this same period, he supplied an essay to the recently-established *Australian Reformed Theological Review*, “The Church as the Body of Christ” 4.1 (1945), 3-11.

⁶² In 1938, Lamont delivered an address at the graduation ceremony of Princeton Theological Seminary. See *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* XXXII.1, 8-13.

⁶³ *Proceedings of the Calvinistic Congress at Edinburgh, 1938* (Edinburgh: 1938), p. 1.

⁶⁴ Lamont’s address, “Christ and the World of Thought” was printed, with others in the conference volume, *Christ our Freedom* (London: Inter Varsity Press, 1939)

⁶⁵ London, Inter Varsity Press, 1945.

sity Fellowship in the launch of the residential research library, Tyndale House, at Cambridge and in the preparation for the post-war publication of various reference works including the *New Bible Commentary* (1953).⁶⁶ For the latter, Lamont provided the introductory article on “Revelation and Inspiration”. In this, as in so many of Lamont’s writings, the imprint of his teacher, James Denney, can be recognized.⁶⁷

ASSESSMENT

This paper began with the dual acknowledgement that treatments of the history of Scottish evangelicalism, provided from a certain confessional perspective, have been quite uniformly glum in treating the period 1900-1950. On this reading, the circle of the faithful had been drastically reduced. On the other hand, two modern writers have drawn attention to the general strength and stability of Scottish theology in this same era, such that Scotland’s position was in a certain sense superior to that of the larger nation to the south.

The theological trajectory followed by Donald Lamont during that half-century illustrates a much more complex story than does any of these narratives, taken singly. Lamont, though raised in a strictly confessional pre-1900 Free Church of Scotland setting, was among the very large throng who in 1900 trusted that the evangelical future was secure enough without strict confessional safeguards. He seems to have carried out a broadly evangelical ministry in a way consistent with those assumptions for at least a quarter century. The higher critical methods employed in biblical and theological study carried some admitted risks, but one did not want to fall into obscurantism. But whether it was the stock market crash of 1929 or the growing militaristic threat observable in 1930’s Germany or the growing sense that irreparable harm had been

⁶⁶ T.A. Noble, *Tyndale House and Fellowship: The First Sixty Years* (Leicester: IVP, 2006), pp. 32, 40, 45, 72. Among the Scots associated with the I.V.F. Biblical Research Committee beyond Lamont were his New College colleagues, G.T. Thomson, and Norman Porteous as well as Donald Maclean of the adjacent Free Church of Scotland College. The out-sized role played in evangelical theological developments in the inter-war period by the diminutive Free Church of Scotland College, Edinburgh is highlighted in Kenneth J. Stewart, “In the Vanguard of the 1930’s Reformed Resurgence: Edinburgh’s Free Church College 1925-1945”, *Evangelical Quarterly*, 95.1 (2024), 1-19.

⁶⁷ In a second printing of the *Commentary*, a more consistently conservative essay authored by the young J.I. Packer was substituted. See Kenneth J. Stewart, “J.I. Packer as a New Warfield: a Chapter in the Post-1930 Revival of Reformed Theology”, *Themelios* 47.3 (2022), 513-25 (520)

done to the global cause of the gospel by the world conflict of 1914-1918, Donald Lamont (and many others like him) entered the 1930's in a chastened frame of mind. They realized as they had not realized earlier that new efforts were needed to conserve the Christian faith, to uphold the Scriptures as authoritative, and to advance the proclamation of the gospel by making common cause with others who shared their supernaturalist convictions. Increasingly alliances were made across denominational boundaries in the interests of perpetuating the evangelical faith.⁶⁸

These efforts did not involve any strict return to the confessional documents whose role had been diminished in the church unions of 1900 and 1929. But it certainly entailed a taking up of the doctrines of the Reformation with fresh vigour. That was the intended posture of the newly-founded *Evangelical Quarterly* (launched 1929). That underlay the conducting of the four 1930's International Calvinistic Congresses held at London, Amsterdam, Geneva and Edinburgh. And it most certainly entailed a deepening involvement in the pan-evangelical efforts like that of the Inter-Varsity movement, a movement which was rooted in a brief but sturdy statement of faith. It is significant that the aged Lamont's final writings were produced for the popular magazine associated with the Keswick movement, *The Life of Faith*.⁶⁹ In Daniel Lamont, we see represented the more elastic 'shape' in which a wider evangelicalism survived and thrived in Scotland in the 1900-1950 period.

⁶⁸ Illustrations of these trans-denominational initiatives are not hard to locate. The young F.F. Bruce, in a term-limited appointment, lecturing in Greek in the University of Edinburgh, recalled attending two gatherings in the city in the 1936-1937 period. The Church of Scotland General Assembly Hall was the scene of a 1936 commemoration of the martyrdom of Bible translator, William Tyndale. The lecture was given by Daniel Lamont. In the same venue, a year later, meetings were held to commemorate the Edinburgh evangelistic ministry of the American evangelist, D.L. Moody (1837-1899). The guest speaker was Harry Ironsides, pastor of the Moody Church, Chicago. See Bruce's *In Retrospect: Remembrance of Things Past* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), p. 101,102.

⁶⁹ The already-cited "Memoir" of Lamont was circulated in a volume of his collected devotional writings (*The Johannine Writings*) originally produced for the *Life of Faith* (London: James Clarke, 1955).