

MEMOIR
OF THE
REV. DONALD MACDONALD
SHIELDAIG, ROSS-SHIRE.

BY THE
Rev. DONALD MACFARLANE

[Extracted from Memoir and Remains
Of Rev. Donald Macdonald,
Chapters 1 - 6.]

PREFACE

THIS volume is issued with a view to perpetuate the worthy memory of the late godly minister of the Free Presbyterian Church at Shieldaig, Ross-shire. It is hoped that the perusal of it may be the means of stimulating the Lord's people to greater devotedness to their Lord and Master, and that it may be also blessed by the Holy Spirit to the bringing of precious souls, who are still wandering on the hills of sin and vanity, to Jesus Christ, the Saviour of "that which was lost."

Apart from the fact that the removal of Mr. Macdonald was the first breach made by death in the ministry of our Church, his eminent piety and usefulness in the Lord's vineyard called for some tribute in book form to his memory. I have ventured to undertake this work, very specially as I had the privilege of Mr Macdonald's intimate acquaintance longer than any of my brethren - an acquaintance extending over the long period of fifty years.

I was very closely associated with him, and derived much spiritual benefit from his company and fellowship. The writing of the memoir has revived in my mind former associations of joy and sorrow, and has made me "remember the days of old" and the doings of the Lord which were wondrous in our eyes.

Owing to pastoral work in my own congregation, and frequent preaching in other parts of the Church, I regret that I have not been able to devote as much time to the preparation of this book as a work of the kind would require. I desire, however, to express my indebtedness to the Rev. James S. Sinclair and the Rev. Neil Cameron, Glasgow, for assistance heartily rendered in connection with its preparation, especially in collecting and arranging Mr Macdonald's sermons. That the volume ay be attended with a blessing to his fellow-sinners, after he is no more in the world, is the earnest prayer of the author.

DONALD MACFARLANE.

F.P. MANSE, DINGWALL.

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CHAPTER I.

Birth - Early Religious Condition of North Uist - Conversion.

DONALD MACDONALD was born at Langash, parish of North Uist, in the year 1825. His father was tenant of the farm of Langash, which now forms a part of the deer forest of the estate of Sir Arthur Campbell, Orde, the present proprietor of North Uist. At a short distance from the house in which he was born there is a mound on the top of which is still to be seen a memorial of the Druidic system of religion in the shape of a "stone circle," where the Druids performed their religious ceremonies. Previous to the introduction of Christianity, this was the only form of religion known in the Highlands. A brighter day awaited the subject of our sketch. When he was born, Druidism was a thing of the past; its history only and fragments of its rude temples remained to inform more favoured generations of an age of dark heathenism when their fore-fathers worshipped the sun, moon, and stars, instead of the one living and true God.

It was by the light of the Gospel this darkness vanished away from our land. That light, which began its course at Jerusalem as its centre, took a long time in transit before it reached the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. So far as we can ascertain from history, it was in the sixth century of the Christian era it reached the Highlands. It was conveyed to those pagan districts of our country by Columba or some of his missionaries. The theological college which they set up at Iona was the great centre from which proceeded the evangelisation of the Highlands from the Grampians northward. That some of those evangelical pioneers visited Uist, and preached the Gospel there, may be gathered from localities and things with which the name of Columba, or Columcille, is associated. At Rarnish, on the east side of Benbecula, there is a hillock which is called "Cnoc Cholumchille"-- Columcille's hillock -- also a well called "Tobar Cholumchille" -- Columcille's well. The hillock was probably the place where they pitched their tent during their residence in this district, and from the well they supplied themselves with water. By these memorials of the Iona missionaries we are able to trace their footprints in Uist; and from what we know of the doctrines they preached -- specimens of which are still extant -- it is evident that they were the doctrines of the Gospel contained in the Word of God. The people renounced the superstition of the Druids, and embraced Christianity; and we may reasonably suppose that the Gospel preached was

made effectual unto salvation to not a few of them. Wherever the Gospel comes, it is blessed to some.

But the black cloud which eclipsed the light of the Gospel throughout the whole of Europe during the long period of the Middle Ages cast its dark shade over Uist, marring the good work done by the missionaries of Iona, who were, by the way, not Papists but the early representatives of a Scriptural Presbyterianism. The people were then once more shrouded in darkness -- darkness more deceptive than Druidism, inasmuch as it professed to be *Christian*. Its light was darkness, and how great was that darkness! But as the sun shines forth through the clouds with more brilliancy after a period of darkness, casting its reviving beams far and wide, to gladden the heart of man, and to cause the earth to yield its fruit in its season, so the light of the Gospel broke forth again more brightly, and was diffused more widely at the time of the Reformation. For want of a written record we are not able to say at what date after the Reformation the Gospel was brought again to North Uist, but we know that in consequence of the establishment of Presbyterianism in Scotland at the Reformation, there was soon after that event an Established Church set up in the parish. Its ministry, however, was not for generations of the kind that was calculated to benefit perishing sinners, inasmuch as it proceeded on the assumption that men could get to heaven on the terms of the covenant of works. This did not arise from the creed of the Church, which was perfectly orthodox, but rather from the kind of men who occupied the office of the ministry. How a minister with an open Bible before him in the pulpit, and the Confession of Faith in his library, could preach the covenant of works as Gospel, is a problem which will appear to intelligent men difficult of solution. But the Bible itself comes to our help and solves the problem: "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." This explains the matter. The spiritual instructors of the people were, as many still are, "blind leaders of the blind." But the Lord had mercy in store for North Uist, and in due time a change for the better took place.

Early in the nineteenth century a remarkable lay preacher was sent of God to the parish. This man was the well-known itinerant evangelist -- Finlay Munro -- whose labours were owned of the Lord in the conversion of sinners in many parts of the Highlands. The object of his mission to this part of the vineyard was to speak, as his custom was, to immortal souls from the Word of God, concerning the things which belonged to their everlasting peace. He

commenced his work without delay. Crowds of people gathered from time to time to hear him; the Holy Spirit accompanied the Word preached with saving efficacy; sinners were convinced and converted; and before he concluded his evangelistic mission, “the wilderness and solitary place were made glad, the desert rejoiced and blossomed as the rose, the parched ground became a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water.” North Uist now assumed quite a different aspect from that which it bore so long under a dead ministry. As the result of Finlay Munro's labours many excellent Christians were raised up in the parish, who adorned the doctrines of the Gospel by a holy walk and conversation, and who were made instruments of good to others. The people in general also came to see that there was more in religion than they had long been accustomed to learn from the pulpit. They therefore, with few exceptions, turned their back on the parish church (though not on the Church of Scotland), and followed the means of grace at the meetings conducted by men taught of God. There was a disruption in North Uist at this early period, and there was good reason for it.

After Finlay Munro had left the island to prosecute his good work elsewhere, some of his converts took charge of the meetings. Among these may be mentioned John Macdonald. “Iain Macraonaild” –and John Maclean, both of whom were after the Disruption catechists in connection with the Free Church. These two were men of great Christian intelligence and eminent piety; and they commanded the respect and confidence of the people as competent to instruct them in “the things of God.” The Gaelic School Society contributed largely to the progress of the good work begun. They opened schools in various districts of the parish, and employed pious and able men as teachers. These good men not only taught the young to read the Bible, but also, addressed meetings on Sabbath, and took part at prayer meetings on week days. Such was the religious condition of his native parish when Mr. Macdonald was born. He was surrounded with Gospel privileges, and associated with a large band of excellent Christian men and women. This by the Divine blessing, contributed to the eminent position he held in the church in after-life as a witness for Christ.

Having made this digression, which we deemed it necessary to make, let us return to the proper subject of our narrative. His mother died when he was eleven years of age, and his father died eighteen months thereafter. He was thus at an early age deprived of both his parents, but “the Lord will take him up.” When his eldest sister -- Mrs. Macdougall, Horisary – married, about six

months after her father's demise, she took the five younger members of the family from Langash to Horisary and attended to their upbringing and comfort with all the affectionate care that a sister's heart can prompt in the absence of a departed mother. Her kind husband -- Mr. Donald Macdougall -- supplied the place of a father to the orphans, so far as that could be done. As a boy, Mr. Macdonald, we are told, was notable for his modesty and truthfulness, and for the circumstance that he never took part in the games and amusements in which other boys indulged. For this he was nicknamed "The Maiden."

He received his early education in the Baleshare School and the parish school at Tigharry. He and other two of the family attended the former school, which was nearer Langash, before their parents died, and the latter school after their death. When the children were transferred to Horisary they attended the Tigharry School, and as the distance from Horisary to this school was too long for them to walk -- Mr. Macdougall kindly and considerately bought a house at Knockintorran, where they put up till Mr. Macdonald finished his early education in Uist at the age of eighteen years. One of their sisters -- Jessie, who also attended school -- acted as housekeeper to her two brothers, Donald and Allan.

HIS CONVERSION

Although Mr. Macdonald was remarkable for modesty and good behaviour from his childhood, yet it does not appear from the information we have received that he was brought under the teaching of the Holy Spirit till he was eighteen years of age: At that period of his life the Rev. Alexander McIntyre, Strontian, Argyllshire, visited North Uist, and preached there for some time, the place of gathering being "Craig-Haustin," where the communion has been held since the Disruption, and where "the men" had often conducted their meetings prior to that memorable event. When Mr. McIntyre preached his first sermon there Mr. Macdonald was among his audience. Before the preacher was half way through his sermon a number of young men -- Mr. Macdonald among the rest -- rose to go away. Mr. McIntyre called aloud after them to remain till the Lord's service was concluded. The only one of them who obeyed the minister was Mr. Macdonald, and before the sermon was finished the arrow of conviction entered deeply into his soul. From that moment he was a regular and attentive hearer of Mr. McIntyre all the time that eminent preacher was in Uist. Under the powerful preaching of that minister he would be some times so much overwhelmed with a sense of his lost condition that he

could not walk home from the place of worship. His friends had often to carry him home. At other times he would, it is said, not only walk, but leap with joy after hearing Mr. McIntyre. He was in this condition for two and a half years -- sometimes cast down under the preaching of the law, other times under the preaching -- but he came even into deeper waters before he obtained the full liberty that is in Christ.

Mr. McIntyre proceeded southward on his preaching tour, and made Benbecula his headquarters for a long time; and we might suppose Mr. Macdonald saying inwardly in regard to his preachings what a good woman said audibly in regard to Dr Macdonald's; when she heard Dr. Macdonald mention several places in which he purposed to preach during the week, she rose up in the congregation at the intimation of each place, and said in an audible voice, "I will be there too." He was one of Mr. McIntyre's hearers at Benbecula every Sabbath he preached there. He would, in the company of others who thirsted for the water of life, walk all the way from Horisary to Benbecula, a distance of some twelve miles, including a ford of three miles in breadth, on Sabbath morning, and arrive at the place of worship before the service commenced, and then return home at night. The long travelling distances were considered of no account in comparison with the salvation of the immortal soul, which at that time hung in the balance. Many an interesting account he used to give of those occasions: the powerful preaching of Mr. McIntyre, the large concourse of people that went to hear him, the long distances some had to travel, and the great awakenings which took place under his preaching. He said that Mr. McIntyre was the most awful preacher of the law he ever heard, and that the strongest men in the congregation would fall down helpless on the ground under the spell of his utterances as he proclaimed the terrors of the law as from Mount Sinai. Though some who were terribly moved under the preaching of the Word fell away to their former indifference, yet there were others "of whom we are persuaded better things, and things that accompany salvation." The mason breaks to pieces many a stone before he gets one to put in the building, and sometimes those that are never put in it may make more noise under the stroke of the hammer than the stones that find a permanent place therein. So it is spiritually. But there is not the least doubt but Mr. McIntyre's labours in Uist were blessed to not a few. To mention two from among several others to whom his preaching was blessed, the subject of this memoir was one, and Mr. Morrison, Sollas, North Uist, was another -- the former afterwards a worthy minister in the Church of

Christ, the latter a worthy elder in the same. Both these godly men traced their conversion to Mr. McIntyre as the instrument in the hand of God, and often expressed their admiration of the great preacher. Notwithstanding Mr. Macdonald's diligent attendance on the means of grace, he was, at the time of our narrative, like Noah's dove, flying about without finding a resting place for his weary feet. He is still asking the important question: "what must I do to be saved?"

He was for the long space of six years, more or less, under law work before he attained to a satisfactory evidence of his interest in Christ. During that long period his mental agony was at times, as he himself said, "Indescribable." The doctrine of election caused him much perplexity. He was daily crying to God for mercy, and, as he was not getting the relief he so much needed, and so often and earnestly prayed for, he came to the conclusion that he was not of the number of those whom the Lord purposed to save. This brought him to the verge of despair, and occasioned him to cherish hard thoughts of God -- thoughts which he often afterwards described as "bordering on blasphemy." The carnal mind naturally rebels against the sovereignty of God in salvation and under conviction of sin, Satan is sure to suggest to the self-condemned sinner that he is not of the number of those that are to be saved. Mr. Macdonald discovered afterwards that his perplexity relative to election was chiefly caused by the devices of this great enemy. In the following stanza of one of his Gaelic poems he describes his experience on this occasion:-

"Sa chath dhoirnich s'n robh mi,
Dheirich Satan ann a stri
'S dhinnis e le briathraibh tla,
Nach robh nu 'n cumhnant nan gras."

At this stage of his spiritual experience he also met with discouragement from men -- even from good men. In his despondent state of mind he disclosed his case to one of the good men in the neighbourhood, with the result that his misery was aggravated rather than alleviated by the way he spoke to him. To this interview he refers in another stanza of the same poem. It is as follows:-

"Sann thubhairt luchd aidaich' rium,
Nach deanadh cealgaireachd chuis,
'S na leanain romham mar bha,
Gu'm bithinn 'an ifrinn gu'n dail."

There was a tendency among some old Christians at that time to speak to anxious inquirers in a manner calculated to drive the arrow of conviction deeper into their souls rather than to minister comfort to them in their distress. This did not arise from want of sympathy with those in soul trouble, nor from want of an earnest desire to do them good, but from fear lest they should, by expressing a favourable opinion of their case at an early stage, be the means of putting a pillow under their head which might ultimately prove ruinous to their souls. This mode of dealing with sinners brought under soul concern may be a wise one, but it should not be carried too far. There were, however, other good men in North Uist who dealt more tenderly with him, and took a fatherly interest in him. Good men are helpful, but "salvation is of the Lord".

The time to favour Zion, yea, these time," has come at last. Mr. Macdonald is brought from Mount Sinai, at which he stood so long trembling, to Mount Zion, to behold the beauty of Christ, His all-sufficiency, suitableness, and ability to save to the uttermost them that come to God by Him. He is enabled to receive Him, as he is freely offered in the Gospel, and to rest on Him alone for salvation; and the "peace of God, which passeth all understanding," is communicated by the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, to his troubled soul. He feels the great change; the wonderful manifestation of God in Christ to his soul is so evident that he cannot, dare not, for the moment doubt the reality of it. His joy is great; his cup is running over! As his tribulations abounded before, his consolations abound now. He is brought up out of the horrible pit, out of the miry clay, his feet are set upon the rock, Christ, and a new song is put in his mouth, even praise unto his God. He is now in a frame of soul to sing with the church "O Lord thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid; for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song: he also is become my salvation. No Christian was more entitled to sing this new song, and none could sing it more sincerely than Mr. Macdonald.

This happy transition in his experience took place, as he himself told the writer, in the year 1849. He was brought under concern about his soul in the year 1843 -- the year of the Disruption -- and was thus, as already related, six years under law work before he entered into the liberty wherewith Christ makes His people free. At that time -- the time of his liberty -- the Lord manifested Himself to him so clearly through the revelation He has been pleased to give of himself in the Gospel, that he had no doubt of his interest in Christ. It is

possible, however, that he may have been a real believer in Christ for a considerable time before that fullness of evidence was vouchsafed to him. Faith is one thing; the assurance of it is another. The favour of assurance was richly bestowed on Mr. Macdonald. The Bridegroom was then present with him, and therefore he could not fast; the Sun of righteousness was shining in, upon, and around him, and therefore he could not doubt. The language of his faith was, "My Beloved is mine, and I am his." Few Christians enjoyed more of the Lord at this stage than he did. Referring afterwards to his happy experience at this period he gave vent to his feelings in the following stanza of one of his spiritual poems: -

"Nuair thainig thu d'om ionnsuidh 'n otiseach,
Bha do chomhradh cho toilaicht',
'S nach b'urrain mise bhi sona,
Gttn chochomun siorruidh riut."

The question with him now is not "What must I do to be saved?" but "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits unto me?" He consecrated himself to the Lord; he was led to decide on serving Him in the ministry of the Gospel. The love of Christ constrained him; his motto henceforth is, "For me to live is Christ."

Hear, Lord, have mercy; help me, Lord:
Thou turned hast my sadness
To dancing; yea, my sackcloth loos'd
And girded me with gladness;
That sing thy praise my glory may,
And never silent be,
O Lord my God, for evermore
I will give thanks to thee" (Ps xxx, 11, 12)

CHAPTER II.

Labours as a Schoolmaster and Missionary – Studies for the Ministry

In pursuance of his decision to study for the ministry, Mr. Macdonald entered the University of Edinburgh in the winter of 1849 – the year of his spiritual release. Many have entered the University with a view to the ministry without conversion, but he was converted before he entered it. He had undergone a prolonged and painful course of training in the knowledge of the holy law of God, and had also been initiated into the mysteries of the Gospel before he began his studies for the ministry. It would be well for the cause of Christ in the world if all aspirants for the sacred office were in such a blessed position when commencing their studies.

Though we have mentioned that Mr. Macdonald began his studies at College, we shall take up consideration of him, first, as a schoolmaster and a missionary, and then resume consideration of him as a student before we close the chapter. Our purpose in adopting this method is to avoid, as far as possible, intermixing events in his life, which, though intimately connected, may, for the sake of arrangement be narrated separately. During his college course, both in Arts and Divinity, he acted as a school-master and a missionary in the interval between sessions.

MR. MACDONALD AT UJSKEVA.

After he had finished his first session he was employed as a teacher of one of the schools of the "Ladies Society for the Religious Improvement of the Remote Highlands and Islands." That Christian Society – of which there were two branches, one in Edinburgh, the other in Glasgow -- planted schools in many necessitous districts in the Highlands. The Glasgow branch, with which Mr. Macdonald was connected, took up as its field of labour South Uist and the island of Benbecula; while the Edinburgh branch took as its sphere the island of Barra, North Uist, Harris, Lewis, the Isle of Skye, and several districts on the mainland. As part of the object of the Society was to help godly young men who studied for the ministry, students only were employed as teachers. They began their good work in the year 1850, and Mr. Macdonald was sent to Uiskeva, on the east side of Benbecula, where there was a goodly number of children, far away from any school, the nearest being about seven miles distant, without a road. The coming of a teacher to this remote district was

hailed by the inhabitants with joy and gratitude. It was a great boon, and a wonderful providence.

The school was begun without delay in one end of a dwelling-house until a proper schoolhouse was built. All the children of school age at Uiskeva and the neighbouring townships came to be taught, and even grown up lads and girls were among the pupils. The most of these were never at school before. There were, however, a few of them at school elsewhere, and these could read and write fairly. All the common branches of education taught in other schools were taught in the "Ladies' Schools," and in the case of advanced scholars who wished to prosecute their studies at College, the rudiments of the higher branches were also taught, such as Latin and Greek. But, as the object of the Society was chiefly to communicate religious instruction to the young, the Bible and Shorter Catechism had a prominent place in the schools. While Mr. Macdonald was competent to teach all the secular branches required in this school, he was eminently fitted to conduct the religious department, as he was himself taught of the Lord, and deeply anxious for the spiritual good of the young. He acted as a missionary as well as a school master. He began to conduct meetings on the Sabbath -- morning and evening -- and kept Sabbath school. All the Protestants in the district, old and young, came to hear him, and they soon discovered that the teacher providentially sent them was a true man of God and an "ambassador for Christ." He addressed the meeting in a sitting posture, thinking it would be presumptuous of him at that stage to stand. He was then in the heat of his "first love," and was most lively and full of unction in his addresses. It was in this place he composed most of his Gaelic poems, which he used to chant melodiously as he walked over the fields after school hours, competing as it were with the thrush that chirped its song merrily in the bush beside him. Speaking afterwards of his happy time at Uiskeva, he confessed that he never enjoyed more of the Lord than he did there, and that he loved the very ground and stones of the locality where the Lord was so rich in mercy to his soul.

At the beginning of winter he went south to attend College, and left the school in charge of a pious young man from Malaglet, North Uist -- Mr. John Morrison. This young man conducted meetings on Sabbath also, and his services were much appreciated by the people. He went afterwards to Canada, where he studied for the ministry, and was after license ordained as pastor of a congregation, an office he honourably filled till the time of his death.

When Mr. Macdonald returned from College, arrangements were made for building a schoolhouse. The building was soon constructed in a central locality to suit the convenience of the scholars, some of whom lived at a considerable distance from Uiskeva. As there was accommodation for the teacher in one end of the building, Mr. Macdonald took up his residence there. For a time he lived alone in his new dwelling, but he had a neighbouring boy to keep company with him at night. Afterwards his sister Jessie kept house to him. Here he resumed his work of teaching the school during the week and carrying on his missionary labours on Sabbath days. More scholars attended the school; some came from the west side of the island and took lodgings in the neighbourhood, so as to be within reach of the school. There were no fees to pay, and this was an inducement to parents to send their children to this school, it being the only one of the kind in Benbecula at that time. The people continued to attend his Sabbath services with increasing interest, and it need hardly be said that law and Gospel were most faithfully proclaimed to them by a man who had experimental knowledge of both as few had. His addresses could not fail to arrest attention. The character of the preacher, his genuine piety, his fervent earnestness, and his yearning desire for the salvation of their immortal souls, together with his most heavenly and solemn manner, added weight to his message, and produced a salutary influence on his hearers, which confirmed them in their conviction the oftener they heard him, that the Lord was speaking to their hearts through His servant.

He remained at the school in winter. One of the rules of the Society was that the teachers should remain at the school for at least two winters during their College course. Owing to Mr. Macdonald's delicate state of health, and other causes, he remained at home for several winters before he finished his studies at College. This accounts for the comparatively long time he took passing through College. His remaining at home this winter was a benefit both to the school and to the people. Both were privileged to have his valuable services all the year round. Towards the end of the following summer (so far as I recollect) the Uiskeva School was transferred to Grinish, on the west side of Benbecula, and the Society translated Mr. Macdonald to that district. The reason of this change was that several of the grown-up pupils at Uiskeva had to leave the school to attend to their occupations at home, and the number remaining was considered too small to continue the school there. At any rate, this was alleged as the reason; but it was suspected that the people on the west side were to blame for the change, and that they had been applying to

the Society for the purpose of getting the school to their own side of the island. This change was much regretted by parents whose children would have attended the school had it been continued at Uiskeva; and the loss of Mr. Macdonald's missionary services among them was incalculable, especially as there was no man in the place who could conduct meetings on Sabbath. The fruits of Mr. Macdonald's labours at Uiskeva were of two kinds, secular and spiritual. As to the first, the scholars made good progress in learning, during the short time he was with them. Boys who had some education before he came to the district were now reading Latin; children who commenced at the alphabet could read and write well; and a desire for more knowledge was aroused in the minds of some, which led their parents to send them to another school after their teacher had left. The school was examined annually by a minister appointed by the Society, and the report showed that the Uiskeva School stood on a par, in point of efficiency, with the other schools, according to the stage at which the scholars commenced. With regard to the second, the most of the pupils were able to read intelligently the Bible in English and Gaelic, and to repeat from memory the Shorter Catechism, as well as large portions of scriptures, particularly the Psalms. Mr. Macdonald's missionary labours and his holy example had the effect of bringing about a reformation with respect to Sabbath observance, which was much neglected before he came to the district. A desire after the means of grace was another result; and in the case of some his labours were made effectual to the salvation of their souls. Eternity alone will reveal the good he was the honoured instrument of doing at Uiskeva.

MR. MACDONALD AT GRIMINISH

Here he begins his school in an old building, which was once used as a meal-mill; hence the Ladies' School here was called "The Mill School." It was given to the Free Church people for a place of worship, as they had no church; and now that the Society gave them a teacher, the use of it was granted to the much-favoured people for the educational benefit of their own children and the children belonging to other denominations. The children of all denominations, Free, Established, and Roman Catholic, attended the schools of the Society. They were intended for the spiritual and temporal benefit of all. The people knowing that there were no fees to pay, children gathered to the Mill School from all townships within reach, so that the teacher soon had a crowded school. But he was full of life and energy, and desirous of doing all the good in

his power to young and old, and he managed to carry on his heavy work to the satisfaction of his employers, and with much benefit to those under his tuition. Mr. Macdonald conducted Sabbath meetings here also. There was no settled minister in connection with the Free Church in Benbecula at that time. Benbecula was a preaching station in connection with Carinish, North Uist, and the probationer at Carinish preached here once in the three weeks. In the absence of the probationer the meeting was conducted by a pious old schoolmaster, Mr. Ronald Matheson, a native of Skye, and sometimes by Mr. Macdonald. Mr. Macdonald conducted meetings on Sabbath in other districts also. He came occasionally to Uiskeva, and thus showed his interest in the people among whom he first began his labours of love. On these occasions he came on Sabbath morning -- accompanied by a friend -- and returned home in the evening. The distance he had to travel on foot, without a road, was about seven miles. He was then, as indeed he was all his days, so nimble and active in his movements that he would take a comparatively short time to accomplish the journey. The only thing that kept him long on the way was, that he would rest at certain stages to conduct worship with his companion.

It was when he was at Grinish he came to know the Rev. Christopher Munro, Strathy, who was at that time officiating as a probationer between Carinish and Benbecula. These two worthies being of kindred spirit, partaker of the same precious faith, and alike in Christian experience, there was a friendship formed between them which was not broken by death.

MR. MACDONALD AT STONEYBRIDGE

After he had taught at the "Mill School" for a few years, the Society removed Mr. Macdonald to their school at Stoneybridge, in the parish of South Uist. The school here was not so large as the one he had left; but the change brought more work to his hand as a missionary. There was no ordained minister in South Uist at the time, nor for a long time thereafter, and the Free Church people scattered over the extensive parish depended for Gospel ordinances on the services of a catechist, and the occasional visit of a probationer. In these circumstances the services of the Ladies' teachers in mission work were much needed and in great demand. Besides other districts in which meetings were held by some of the teachers, there were two principal preaching stations at which services were held every Sabbath. These stations were *Daliburgh* and *Howmore*. Mr. Angus Maclean -- "the excellent catechist," as the Rev. Alexander MacColl used to describe him lived at Daliburgh, and officiated there

two Sabbaths, and every third Sabbath at Howmore. Mr. Macdonald conducted the meeting at Howmore the two Sabbaths the catechist was at his own end of the parish, and sometimes supplied the place of the catechist at Daliburgh the Sabbath he was at the north station. I had the privilege of being associated with Mr. Macdonald for some time at Stoneybridge.

In the winter of 1856, when he went south to attend his in the winter of 1856, when he went south to attend his classes at College, he employed me as his substitute to teach the school during the session; and when he returned from College I remained with him for the summer and lodged in his house. It was during my stay with him then I began to see what a bright Christian he was, and to appreciate him as an eminent man of God. Though I knew him to some extent at Uiskeva (I was one of his pupils there), yet I was not then in a position to understand what a great privilege we had in having such a teacher. His savoury spiritual exercises, both in the school and in his dwelling, were truly precious. He conscientiously and diligently attended to his duties in the school during the school hours; and after the school was dismissed, and dinner over, there was always some time spent in reading a portion of Scripture and in prayer. Every day was like a Sabbath, and yet "the Lord's Day" was the queen of the week. As he had to officiate on Sabbath, Saturday was devoted to the work of preparation for the duties of that sacred day. So far as I recollect he did not at that time commit his thoughts to writing; his preparation consisted in prayer and meditation on a passage of Scripture. Sometimes the schoolhouse, -- which was connected with his dwelling was his study; other times the open field. He often went to the shore of the Atlantic and walked up and down the beautiful sandy strand, meditating on his subject, and ejaculating his thoughts in the way of preaching; as if a congregation were before him -- the roaring waves of the great ocean, which rolled in rapid succession upon the beach, making it impossible for passers-by to hear his voice. On Sabbath he rose early. He made it a rule that we should be up at six o'clock, and that rule was punctually adhered to. Until the breakfast hour -- nine -- the time was occupied with private devotions, reading the Scriptures, and prayers. After breakfast and worship he walked to Howmore - a few miles distant to conduct the meeting there. In the evening he held a prayer meeting in his own room, where the few Free Church people in the district gathered. I shall never forget the happy time I spent with Mr. Macdonald at Stoneybridge. His house might be called a "Bethel -- the house of God"--, and he was himself a Jacob who wrestled with the Angel of the Covenant and prevailed. I saw him

in different states and moods sometimes so much cast down with a feeling of desertion that he could not enjoy any earthly comfort; other times so much filled with the Lord's gracious presence that he had to stretch himself quite prostrate on the bed. He was not at that time left long without comfort. He was an importunate suppliant at his Father's door.

There was a monthly prayer meeting held in connection with the Ladies' Schools for a blessing on the labours of the Society, in which Mr. Macdonald took part. This meeting was held in rotation: at Daliburgh, Stoneybridge, Lochdar, and Benbecula. The Catechist – one of the ablest laymen in his day presided at the meeting, and the teachers and other excellent Christian men took part in the exercises. The meeting was looked forward to with great desire and expectation, and people gathered to it from all parts of the parish – some travelling long distances. It was no uncommon thing to see some present who travelled twenty miles! It was to the people like a communion season. There was no communion held in South Uist till within a year or two before Mr. Macdonald left the parish after finishing his studies at College. This meeting was more needed on that account, and more prized by the good people. There was a communion held at North Uist once a year, which Mr. Macdonald attended regularly, and at which his valuable services were in demand at the question meeting on “the Friday” and at prayer meetings.

The Rev. Norman Macleod was the only ordained minister in Uist in connection with the Free Church since the Disruption until some twenty years subsequent to that event. He was settled in the *quoad sacra* charge of Trumisgary a few years before the Disruption, and joined the Free Church in 1843. He was an evangelical minister, and had good ministers assisting him at communion seasons. He had the able assistance of the Rev. Alexander MacColl for sixteen years. This attracted large congregations to the communion; and the preaching of Mr. MacColl was largely blessed to the conversion of sinners and the edification of saints. There are some Christians in North Uist yet as the fruit of his labours. Mr Macdonald taught the school at Stoneybridge till he finished his studies at College.

The Ladies' Schools were the means of much blessing in the Highlands. Besides helping a large number of pious young men to prosecute their studies at College, who were not able otherwise to do so, they were, in a limited sense, a second Iona – a centre of evangelical light from which emanated the beams of the Gospel to some corners of the Highlands which were hitherto but partially

enlightened. By their means much religious instruction was imparted to the young -- some of whom would not care to read the Bible were it not for these schools -- and the instruction given was blessed unto salvation to not a few. This was true we believe in the case of children who had been under the tuition of Mr. Macdonald.

MR. MACDONALD AS A STUDENT.

We shall now resume consideration of Mr. Macdonald as a student. He studied arts in the University of Edinburgh. In the Moral Philosophy class, when he got a subject for an essay, in writing it he largely took advantage of his knowledge of the Bible and of his own in experience of that unerring rule relative to the whole sphere of man's duty. All his papers were, however, sustained. It may be mentioned that in each of his other classes he got through with fair success, as testified by the professor's certificate at the end of the session.

During his time in Edinburgh, Mr. Macdonald formed the acquaintance of some eminent Christians. Notable among these were Dr Duncan and Robert Flockhart. Dr Duncan took a fatherly interest in him, and there was mutual friendship between them. The doctor conducted a meeting every Saturday, at which he expounded a passage of Scripture and spoke most faithfully to the students in reference to their prospective work as ministers. Mr. Macdonald, though not then a Divinity student, attended his meetings. He told many interesting anecdotes about Dr Duncan and his Saturday lectures; two of which may be related. On one occasion when the doctor was lecturing on a passage where there is mention made of "stealing the Word of the Lord," he paused for some time, and then looking at the young men before him, he warned them with tears in his eyes to take heed that they would not be guilty of "stealing the Word of the Lord." He spoke with such solemn gravity and deep earnestness that Mr. Macdonald said he could never forget it. On another occasion, he was so much cast down in his mind that after coming to the meeting he could not pray, but sat in his chair weeping. He asked one of his students to open the meeting with prayer, adding "Pray for me." After prayer, the doctor began his lecture; and got wonderful enlargement in speaking. Mr. Macdonald enjoyed these lectures immensely, and derived much benefit from them.

Robert Flockhart was also most helpful to Mr. Macdonald. This man was a pensioner, who had served his time in the army; and having been converted

while on service in India, he became a great street preacher. Having faithfully served his Queen and country, he became "a good soldier of Jesus Christ." He held his meetings on the streets of Edinburgh. Crowds of people gathered around him; and although he endured much insult and suffering in the performance of his duty – roughs in the crowd sometimes pelting him with bits of stick and stones – he still held his ground, and was very successful in winning souls to the Saviour. Well knowing the profligacy of some soldiers, he lost no opportunity of speaking to their case when any of them appeared among his audience. He held a prayer meeting in his own house, where a number of godly young men gathered. Mr. Macdonald, attended his meeting, and when Mr. Flockhart came to know him he made him one of his praying men. Mutual Christian friendship ensued, and the more they came to know each other the more the friendship grew. Mr. Flockhart acted as a nursing father to Mr. Macdonald, who often in soul trouble ran to his friend's house for comfort. Though Mr. Macdonald got such clear evidences of his interest in Christ when he realised the liberty of the Gospel at the outset of his Christian course, yet he was often afterwards tempted to doubt the genuineness of his faith. He began to discover after that time of happy enjoyment the fountain of iniquity that was in his heart, and he could not reconcile, this state of things with his being a new creature in Christ. This occasioned him much perplexity, and he was often thereby brought into bondage. As he knew that Mr. Flockhart was an experienced Christian, and that he could frankly disclose his mind to him, he often went to him in his trouble. On one occasion he went in great distress to see his friend; but after knocking at the door he had to wait for some time outside before he got in. Mr. Flockhart was according to his daily custom wrestling in secret prayer at the throne of grace, and though he heard the knock he was unwilling to give up the exercise in which he was so intently engaged. But Mr. Macdonald, like the importunate widow; knocked on so persistently that the praying man had to rise from his knees and open the door. When he saw Mr. Macdonald, he gravely said to him, "Ah, young man, you have disturbed me very much today." After Mr. Flockhart had spoken suitably to the case of his young friend, he sent him home to his lodgings a happy man. Knowing the sorrows and joys of Mr. Macdonald, Mr. Flockhart used to say to him, "You are a wonderful man; you come to me in great misery, and I send you away rejoicing in the Lord."

During this period Mr. Macdonald was much exercised prosecute his studies with a view to the ministry or not. He wrote Mr. Flockhart from North Uist on

the subject, and in after-years often acknowledged his obligations to this worthy man for the help and encouragement he got from him. The following is Robert Flockhart's interesting reply:-

7 RICHMOND PLACE,
EDINBURGH, 18th October, 1850.

My DEAR SIR, -- You will no doubt be surprised that your letter to me has remained so long unanswered. In explanation I have to say that the ordinary course of postage from North Uist to Edinburgh necessarily takes considerable time, but, in addition, your letter, as you will observe, has been misdirected to West Richmond Street instead of Richmond Place. Your letter was thus some weeks in reaching its destination. When I received it, I would have at once answered it, but owing to my advanced age, the labour of writing letters is very considerable, so that I am compelled to trust to the kindness of friends to write my letters for me. The young man who occasionally writes for me happened to be in the country when your letter came.

Need I say how much I sympathise with you in your present position? I have laid your case before the Lord. I do hope the Lord, in answer to our prayers, has cleared up to you the path of duty. If now I venture to give you any counsel, my prayer is that the Lord would speak to you by me. The dealings of God's providence are to be observed by His people. They are to be judged of by the infallible Word of God, not by our own opinions. We are not to infer from the circumstance of our meeting with trials that we are out of the path of duty. On the contrary, the Christian path is beset with trials. It is through much tribulation that we enter into the kingdom of heaven. The children of Israel in their journey to Canaan had to cross the Red Sea, had to travel through a waste, howling wilderness. They had enemies on all sides – the Egyptians, in their rear, the Canaanites in front, the Amalekites and others on either hand. But it was not the combination of these enemies against them that slew so many of the Israelites; it was their own evil heart of unbelief that provoked Jehovah, who would otherwise have been their shield and deliverer, to give them up to the will of their enemies. Let us take a lesson, and not fall after the same example of unbelief. Let us seek the Lord's guidance as to the path of duty. When once we have learned that, it remains that we go forward.

You can make application of this to your own case. If the Lord has put it into your heart to devote yourself to His service, you need not fear but He will

support you through every difficulty in the course of preparation for it. His name is Jehovah Jireh, "The Lord will provide." It is only the eye of faith, however, that can see sufficiency in Him. Seek to get a thorough conviction of His infinite all-sufficiency to your every want. Think of this text: "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." This will support you when you are overwhelmed with a sense of your own weakness and insufficiency for the work. When you are troubled with fears as to the supply of your temporal wants, you might derive much comfort from our Lord's discourse in Luke xii. 22, etc.

If your desire to serve the Lord in the Gospel spring from love to God and to the souls of men, if it spring from a desire to glorify God in the salvation of lost sinners, I pray God that your desires may be strengthened and that you may progress in your studies, because I feel assured that the Lord will not send you a warfare on your own charges.

The apostle gives us a general direction to pray always, to pray without ceasing. This is our duty continually, but especially it is our duty in the day of trial. As the Psalmist says "Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me" Put God to the proof by abiding in prayer, and the blessings which you supplicate will descend upon your soul. Hoping that you will experience blessedness of waiting upon God, I remain very truly yours,

Robert Flockhart

Mr. Macdonald studied Divinity in the Free Church College, Glasgow. Before he could be admitted as a regular student into the Divinity Hall he had to pass the "Entrance Examination." We claim no mark of distinction for him as a brilliant student; but the fact that he successfully passed the Entrance Examination, which is required of all Divinity Students, shows that he was at least a conscientious and painstaking student. There were some other students who failed to pass that test of scholarship, and had to go to Canada to finish their studies there, where the standard of learning is not so high as it is in this country. The change from the University to the Divinity Hall was welcomed by Mr. Macdonald as more congenial to his mind. He began his theological studies in Glasgow under professors of eminent piety and learning. There were no heretical professors in the Free Church College then; or, if there were any, they durst not give vent to their views in their public teaching. Indeed, the

professors in the Glasgow College at that time were so orthodox and faithful that if a student made any statement in his discourse at variance with “the faith once delivered to the saints” he would be reprimanded, and made to retract before his discourse would be sustained. This was in favour of Mr. Macdonald who was sound in the faith himself, as the Highland students then in general were. From their knowledge of the Bible, the Shorter Catechism, and the Confession of Faith, the Highland students knew most points in theology previous to their entering the Divinity Hall; and such of them as were taught of the Lord understood them in some good measure. So far then as theology was concerned, Mr. Macdonald felt more at home in the Divinity Hall than he did in the University. Notwithstanding that he had to study the various errors that have troubled the church from the beginning, and have often marred its beauty, his study of the Bible more than compensated for that somewhat disagreeable, but always necessary and instructive task.

When a passage of Scripture was prescribed to him for a discourse; he went at it prayerfully and diligently till it was finished. All his discourses were sustained, and several of them with high approbation. There was one discourse in particular which one of the professors greatly admired and highly praised. In his criticism the professor said that he had great pleasure in sustaining Mr. Macdonald’s discourse; that the perusal of it afforded him immense delight; and that it reminded him of the highly spiritual discourses of Samuel Rutherford: Mr. Macdonald had not at that time read any of Rutherford's writings. Those who were acquainted with Mr. Macdonald know that he was a most spiritually minded man, and they will not be surprised that the professor should pronounce such a high eulogium on his discourse. Any fault found with his discourses was the elaborate length of some of them. He was full of spiritual thoughts, and when he got freedom to express these in words he was not to be regulated by the clock.

There were many excellent ministers in Glasgow during this period, such as Dr Millar, Dr Forbes, Dr Andrew Bonar, Rev. Ralph Smith, Knox's Church, and others; and it would not be difficult for people hungering for the bread of life to find a pastor to minister to the needs of their souls. (Mr. Macdonald was for a short time at school in Glasgow at an earlier period, when he heard with, much appreciation the Rev. J. R. Anderson, and became personally acquainted with him. At this date Mr. Macdonald went for most part to hear the Rev. Ralph Smith. His congregation was not very large, but it was composed largely of godly people. Mr. Smith's preaching was very spiritual and of the kind that

suited Mr. Macdonald. There was a prayer meeting held in the hall of the church every Sabbath in the interval between services, which Mr. Macdonald attended, and in which he took part. On one occasion I saw him so much overpowered with the Lord's presence when engaged in prayer that he fainted. Were it not that I was standing behind him he would have fallen to the floor. The week previous to this occurrence he was very much cast down in mind, caused by an unguarded word a member of the congregation said to him when they were discussing a point in doctrine. He was very tender in his feelings, and easily hurt. But the Lord came to his help at that meeting, and vouchsafed him an extraordinary deliverance. Some present got alarmed, thinking that it was some serious bodily trouble that affected him, and that he was dying. Wine was brought to revive him, but, with a heavenly smile on his face, he refused to taste it; he was already supplied richly with the "love that is better than wine." "As I saw him before in such state, I felt no fear of his dying of this happy ailment. Mr. Macdonald was no sentimental enthusiast, he was a sober-minded man, but sometimes he enjoyed so much of the Lord that it quite overpowered him. The apostle John was no enthusiast; but when Christ revealed Himself in His glory in the isle of Patmos " he fell at his feet as dead." It was something of the same glory that affected our friend at Knox's church.

Among the intimate Christian friends Mr. Macdonald had in Glasgow, two of whom he had the greatest regard may be mentioned, John MacConnel and Margaret MacPhee, better known as Peggy Phee. These were eminent Christians, and had near access to the Lord at the throne of grace. They were the means of great comfort to Mr. Macdonald; and he was often in their company, derived much benefit through them in his soul troubles. I knew John MacConnel, and often visited him along with Mr. Macdonald. I never saw Peggy Phee; she was taken to her eternal rest before I went to Glasgow; but I often heard Mr. Macdonald speak of her as the greatest Christian woman he ever saw. It is well known that she was many a time the means of relief to Dr Duncan in his dejected frames.

Mr. Macdonald frequently preached in some of the Gaelic churches during his student days in Glasgow, and the "poor in spirit" were very fond of hearing him, and were refreshed by his highly spiritual services.

CHAPTER III.

Licence – Ordination and Settlement at Shieldaig - Labours

AFTER Mr. Macdonald had finished his studies at College he was after the usual preliminaries licenced by Presbytery of Skye and Uist (as it was then designated) on the 2nd May, 1866. The ministerial members of Presbytery present were the Rev. Roderick Macleod, moderator, Rev. Norman Macleod, North Uist; Rev. John Fletcher, Bracadale; Rev. Alexander MacColl, Duirinish; Rev. John S. M'Phail, Sleat; and the Rev. James Reid, Portree, clerk.

For several years he laboured as a probationer in various parts of the Highlands, Bernera, Harris, Mull, Arisaig and Eig, Shieldaig, and other places. He was not long at Shieldaig when the congregation there proceeded with a call in his favour. He accepted the call, and was ordained to the pastoral charge of Shieldaig congregation by the Free Presbytery of Lochcarron on 25th April, 1872. Although the people of Shieldaig had joined the Free Church at the Disruption they were without a settled minister for the long period of twenty-nine years. The Rev. Colin MacKenzie was the minister there at the Disruption. He was, it is said, an evangelical minister, but, though he joined the Free Church, he left Shieldaig when the great crisis came and went somewhere else. Mr. Macdonald was the first Free Church minister there. The people steadfastly adhered to the Free Church for many years in the midst of many disadvantages, and their faithful patience was at last rewarded by getting such a godly pastor as Mr. Macdonald.

There was neither church nor manse before him when he was settled. This was principally owing to the fact that Sir John Stewart, who was at that time proprietor of the Lochcarron estate, refused to grant a site for either. Site refusal was very common at the time of the Disruption and in some cases the evil extended to a long period subsequent to that event. In these circumstances Mr. Macdonald had to put up in a small house in the village, while for the most part he had to preach to his congregation on the hillside. There was a small meeting-house in the village where the congregation worshipped when the state of the weather would not permit them to meet outside, but when all the congregation turned out it was far too small to hold them. In that case they were obliged to worship outside whatever the state of the weather might be. Many a time the minister was under the necessity of preaching in the open field in the winter season when the snow was falling, and he would have to wipe off the Bible the flakes of snow before he could see

his text. But this state of matters must soon come to an end. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof." "The king's heart (yea, and the proprietor's heart too) is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water; he turneth it whithersoever he will" It is well for the cause of Christ that it is so. In the year 1876 (I think) the Lord turned the heart of the proprietor to favour the long-tried congregation of Shieldaig. He granted sites for church and manse. The only difficulty now was how to get money to enable them to be built. The people were poor, and were not able to meet the cost of building. But they were not left long in that difficulty. The Free Church as a body came to their help, and undertook the responsibility of providing the amount required. The General Assembly heard of the faithful adherence of the Shieldaig congregation to the principles of the Church for the long period of twenty-nine years without a minister, church, or manse, and now that they had got a minister and sites, they unanimously resolved on presenting them with church and manse, without burdening them with a single penny of the cost. This was an act of generosity, but not more so than deserving. Building operations were begun with as little delay as possible, and both edifices were completed in the year 1877.

The congregation being large, and scattered over a wide area, intersected by arms of the sea, the work entailed a good deal of labour on the minister, particularly in the way of visiting. There were three centres at which services were conducted on Sabbath, Shieldaig – where the church is – Torrison and Diabeg. Mr. Macdonald preached at Shieldaig two Sabbaths in succession; at Torrison every third Sabbath, as a rule; and at Diabeg occasionally. There was a schoolmaster at Diabeg who conducted meetings there on Sabbath evenings, and through the day when the people could not come across to the church. In the course of years Torrison was disjoined from Shieldaig, and formed into a preaching station under the superintendence of the Highland Committee, who supplied the people with a probationer or missionary. Many of the people however adhered to Mr. Macdonald, so that the disjunction did not relieve him of his usual work at Torrison. The circumstances which led to the disjunction caused a good deal of trouble and annoyance to Mr. Macdonald, but he lived to see that he had no cause to regret the part he took in the controversy connected with the Torrison case. As the section of Mr. Macdonald's congregation at Torrison had no church there, he set about getting one built. He got a site at Annot from Lord Lovelace, and collected the amount of money required for building the church. The church was not, however, erected. The

reason of this shall be explained afterwards. At this stage we simply state the fact.

But though Mr. Macdonald made every possible effort to provide a place of worship for his people, his great concern was to instruct them in the things which belonged to their everlasting peace. He laboured for the salvation of their souls; He did this not only by his faithful preaching from Sabbath to Sabbath, and by visitation at their homes, but also by speaking to them personally when he met them on the road. He was always meditating on the things of eternity himself, and when he came in contact with any of his people he was sure to speak to them concerning these important matters. He took a special interest in the young, and when he met any of them he would most lovingly and earnestly press upon them the duty of seeking the Lord while He might be found. The young had reciprocal love for their minister, and held him in great respect, and had confidence in him as a man of God. When some of the young lads had to leave home for work elsewhere, they would always call at the manse to see their minister and get his advice before starting on their journey. He would give them the best advice, implore the Lord's blessing upon them, and often kiss them when parting. He endeavoured in the Spirit of the Gospel to win the young to the Saviour, and the Lord blessed his efforts in that respect to some of the young men of his congregation. Not to mention some who are still living, two, who have long since gone to their eternal rest, may be mentioned -- Duncan Mackenzie and Angus Macdonald, who were bright Christian young men and for whom Mr. Macdonald had the greatest regard. He deeply mourned the loss of these to the Church, and I saw him shedding tears when referring long afterwards to their departure. He loved them so much that he often expressed a desire to be buried near them.

Shieldaig during Mr. Macdonald's time was an evangelical centre to which large crowds of people resorted on communion occasions. For some years after his settlement there he had Dr Kennedy as his principal assistant at the communion; at other times the Rev. Alexander MacColl, or the Rev. John Macqueen, Daviot; once the Rev. Christopher Munro, Strathy. Mr. Macdonald did not preach at his own communion; he only served a table. But his solemn presence in the congregation was an impressive sermon.

For some years Mr. Macdonald's labours were confined to his own congregation, except that he assisted some of his co-presbyters at their communions. In the year 1876 the field of his work at communions was some-

what enlarged. He assisted at the Strathconon communion in that year. There were several of the Lord's people present, and they were thankful that he was brought to the ordinance. Some of them never heard him before. He assisted at Strathconon each year afterwards till a vacancy took place in 1879. This change enlarged still the sphere of his labours at communions. He assisted that year at the Moy communion. The people of Moy and the neighbouring parishes never heard him before, and they wondered that there should be such a precious minister in the Highlands of whom they knew nothing more than that he was the minister of Shieldaig. Some of them did not know even so much about him. His coming among them seemed to them as if the Rev. Archibald Cook had risen from the dead. He was so like Mr. Cook in his personal appearance and manner, and particularly in his preaching. Mr. Macdonald continued to assist regularly at Moy till the year, 1888 when a vacancy occurred in the congregation. From 1879 to 1888 he assisted at the Duthil communions also, and his services were greatly appreciated there too. The first communion at which he was there, he preached the action sermon on Sabbath, and on Monday after the services were concluded, an old godly woman, who was hearing him on Sabbath, was asked how she liked Mr. Macdonald's preaching yesterday? "Liked his preaching!" she exclaimed; "there were showers of the heavenly dew coming down upon me all the time he was speaking." From 1888 to 1893 he assisted, at the Kilmallie communions with much acceptance and profit to immortal souls.

CHAPTER IV.

Declaratory Act – Separation and Testimony for Truth

WE shall now advert to an important epoch in the ministerial history of Mr. Macdonald -- important not only as it concerned himself personally, but more especially as it concerned the cause of Christ in Scotland. We mean the event of the separate position which we as a Church were obliged to take up in order to maintain a faithful testimony for Christ in the country.

The circumstances which led to that crisis may be briefly stated. In the year 1892 the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland passed a Declaratory Act, in terms of the Barrier Act into a binding law of the Church, whereby the Creed and Constitution of the Church were completely altered. Because of this change Mr. Macdonald and the writer, along with a body of elders, students, and members of the Church, felt themselves bound in conscience to adhere to the original Free Church in accordance with its creed and constitution as settled in 1843, and therefore they separated their connection from the body that adopted the new creed. This separation took place in the year 1893. If it be asked, why did it not take place in 1892 when the change was made? the answer is, Some did speak of separating at that time, but there was a cry among the Constitutionalists to keep together, to act in concert, and to wait till they should exhaust all constitutional means in their power to persuade the Assembly to reconsider their action with a view to the rescinding of the Declaratory Act. At the Assembly of 1893 there was an effort made by the Constitutionalists to this effect; but the Assembly refused to rescind the Act or even to appoint a committee to consider whether anything should be done with a view to its being rescinded, which was all that the motion of the Constitutionalists craved. The Assembly made it distinctly clear that they would never rescind the Act. There was, therefore, no alternative left for us but to separate. We waited with the Constitutionalists as long as we could, and perhaps longer than we should. We cannot be justly charged with having being too hasty in the step we took, though the charge has often been made.

When he was at Kilmallie communion in the spring before the meeting of Assembly in 1893, we had a talk over the state of matters in the Church. We were then of the opinion that Dr Balfour, Edinburgh, and some other ministers would separate in the event of the Act not being rescinded, and we were prepared to join them. But we resolved that we would separate, in that event,

though none other would. In consequence of the faithful stand Mr. Macdonald made in defence of the principles of the Free Church, the General Assembly, at the instance of the Presbytery of Lochcarron, took steps to deprive him and his congregation of the church and manse which they had gifted to them in 1877. The end of it was that the minister and his congregation were evicted from these buildings and deprived of the money collected for the Annot church. The Assembly of 1877 presented them with church and manse in consideration of their faithful adherence to the principles of the Free Church; the Assembly of 1893 deprived them of these gifts for the very same reason! How strange this action of the latter Assembly must appear to all intelligent men! But it was what might be expected. The Assembly of 1877 was a court of the Free Church, and its members in the main were loyal to its principles; the Assembly of 1893 was not a court of the true Free Church, but the Assembly of a Church whose creed would allow its ministers to preach almost any heresy they pleased without let or hindrance. If any of them should have been taken up for heresy, the Declaratory Act was at their back to defend them. That Act was their doctrinal standard. The Church, having changed its creed, showed no mercy to Mr. Macdonald; even the minority, who dissented from the finding of the Assembly, and yet remained in the corrupt body, were foremost in their efforts to deprive him of the ecclesiastical buildings. Mr. Macdonald is again without a manse to shelter him, but he has a clear conscience and a contented mind. He and his congregation are once more under the necessity of meeting for public worship in the open field with a canopy of heaven as their only covering. He was happy there before, and he is happy there now -- much happier than those who had driven him to the hillside. He is a man of faith. If he has left houses for the sake of Christ and the Gospel, he is sure that he shall, according to the promise, receive other houses instead. -- When he was at College in Glasgow, he and a fellow student went out one day to look for lodgings, and after spending the most of the day in their pursuit they failed to get a place to suit. At last his companion said to him, "It is not likely that we can get any lodgings at all; every house we go to is filled up." "We *will* get lodgings," Mr. Macdonald said emphatically, "no fear of us; faith will get lodgings." Faith will now get church and manse for Mr. Macdonald, though he is without both. He got comfortable lodgings in Glasgow after all improbabilities, and he will get a substantial church and manse at Shieldaig. He has only to wait in *faith* till the Lord's time comes. Meantime he rented a small cottage on the south side of Loch Shieldaig, where he put up till the Free Presbyterian Manse was built. He

had every Sabbath during his residence there to cross the loch in a boat to the north side to preach to the congregation, which caused him much inconvenience, and sometimes danger. The great majority of the people joined him in the position he took up, and though they had to meet for public worship under unfavourable circumstances, their attendance on the means of grace was remarkable. The good cause with which they were connected provoked their zeal, and the opposition they met with only made them more courageous, and more determined to maintain the testimony of Christ in the land for themselves and for coming generations. Though they should have to worship on the hillside all their days, they were determined to maintain the banner they had lifted up for the sake of the truth. But they are not to be left on the hillside all their days. "The Lord will provide." Their generous proprietor, Mr. Murray of Lochcarron, at their request, kindly and readily granted sites for church and manse, and sent his manager to point out the sites. As the minister had a temporary dwelling he decided that the church should be erected first (Mr. Murray did not make that a condition in giving the sites, he left the matter to their own choice). As for funds, money poured in from many quarters; the congregations of our own Church contributed most liberally to the fund -- "for they were willing " -- and handsome contributions came from many sympathisers outside our own denomination. The amount required was soon obtained, and a comfortable church was completed in 1895. Soon thereafter arrangements were made for building a manse. As it was thought too soon to appeal to the people for funds after their liberality towards the erection of a place of worship, Mr. Macdonald advanced £600 -- without interest -- of his own money towards the building till the money would be collected. The manse was finished in 1897, and Mr. Macdonald ere long took up his residence in it. In the good providence of God, the Creator and Ruler of heaven and earth, both the minister and the congregation are now in possession of houses out of which neither the General Assembly nor the Presbytery of Lochcarron can drive them. Their comfortable condition now is a fulfilment to some extent of Christ's promise -- "Verily I say unto you, here is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or ,wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the Gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life" (Mark x. 29,30)

The things which happened unto Mr. Macdonald have "fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the Gospel." Shieldaig, though the place of his residence, is

no longer the bounds of his parish, or of the field of his labours, -- Scotland is his field. In a Church with so few ministers, and so many people to attend to, he has often to be on the move preaching to other congregations, especially on communion occasions; and even when, in the good providence of God, the number of our ministers began to increase, his labours at communions were rather multiplied than diminished. When congregations that never heard him before came to know him, there was a unanimous desire that he should be at the communion. He preached repeatedly -- on communion occasions, and at other times, in almost all our congregations between Edinburgh in the south and Strathlyon in the north. As the sphere of his labours extended, his preaching power was proportionately enlarged. His youth was renewed, like the eagles. The separation was a great benefit to him, as it was to many others. His associations -- in a backsliding Church -- prior to that event were grievous to him, and caused him bondage of spirit. He finds himself now in a more congenial society, both in regard to ministers and people -- in a Church settled on a scriptural foundation, and embodying the principles and doctrines of the Free Church of 1843.

It was reported in Uist that Mr. Macdonald regretted having separated from the body then calling itself the Free Church. He heard this, and the first time he was at the communion in North Uist thereafter, he said at the close of the service on Monday, "I have something to say to the congregation before dismissing. It has been reported by a minister, who visited this parish recently that I have regretted leaving the Free Church (so-called). I wish to give a flat and public contradiction to that unfounded report. Instead of regretting the step I conscientiously and deliberately took, I feel myself *like a bird let out of a cage.*" And so he was. He was much happier in his present position and preached with greater freedom than he had done for years before. His separate position, as a minister of the Free Presbyterian Church, was no less a benefit to the cause of Christ in the land. There was a revival of the doctrines of the Reformation, and many people who had been for a long time famishing for want of the bread of life, heard the Gospel from his lips, and were fed, who would not have had that privilege, had it not been for the position he now occupied. Many praised the Lord for the "separation," even for the sake of hearing Mr. Macdonald.

CHAPTER V.

HIS LAST ILLNESS AND DEATH

IT may be said that Mr. Macdonald died in harness. This was his own desire. He was very desirous of living long that he might preach Christ to his fellow-men, and also of being able to preach to the end of his life, even though he should die in the pulpit. Such was his love for the work of the Lord on earth, and his earnest desire to spend and be spent for Christ! A few years before his end he had a severe attack of influenza, which confined him to the manse for some time; but he recovered, and was afterwards as vigorous as ever. In the summer of 1900 he was at six communions in succession, -- at Coigach, Shieldaig, Raasay, Gairloch, Inverness, and Moy, and preached with great energy and extraordinary liberty. His text on Monday at Raasay was, -- "And ye now therefore have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you" (John xvi. 22); and some of his hearers came to the conclusion, from the heavenly frame of soul in which he was, that this would be the last time they would see him in the island -- that he would soon be at his eternal rest. And so it came to pass. After his services at these communions his work outside his own congregation was finished. He preached for some time in his own church after returning home, but his health began to decline, and when he attempted to preach, he would before proceeding far with his sermon, faint in the pulpit, and require to be helped to the manse. He did not suffer pain in his illness, nor was he unhappy in his faintings. After his own communion in June 1901, he attempted to preach was seized with one of these fainting fits during the first prayer, and was helped to the manse. On recovering strength he said to Mrs. Macdonald, "Had I died in the pulpit to-day, I would be now with Jesus. "When I heard that he was fainting in the pulpit, I was afraid that he was suffering great pain and that he was dying. When assisting him at his last communion I told him of this. He said, "The faintings were not so serious, I was very happy in them. They were such as you saw me have at Stoneybridge and Glasgow," His body was getting weak, and the Lord was so rich to him that the earthen vessel could not bear the weight of the glory revealed and communicated to him. It was but an earnest of the "exceeding weight of glory" his soul was to receive after dissolution of the "earthly house of this tabernacle." He was able to rise till within a week or two of his death, and he felt very happy, One day he said to his wife, "I cannot conceal from you how happy I feel; I never enjoyed such happiness in my life as I do to-day." Jesus was thus, as he hoped, encouraging him to enter the

valley of the shadow of death. In a letter he wrote in his last illness he said, "Jesus was so kind to me and to you in the past, that I am hoping that He will make a point of encouraging me across Jordan." Now on the brink of the river he might sing with the Psalmist:-

"Yea, though I walk in death's dark vale,
Yet will I fear none ill:
For thou art with me; and thy rod
And staff me comfort still."

The Rev. J. R. Mackay, Inverness, had cherished the purpose for a considerable time that he would (God willing) visit Mr. Macdonald about a certain date, and strange to say, the day on which he realised his intention, was the day on which Mr. Macdonald died. Mr. Mackay arrived within an hour of his end. He asked Mr. Macdonald whether he knew him. He answered in a low voice, "Yes." Then Mr. Mackay asked him, "Are you upheld by the Lord in your hope?" He replied, "Yes" Mr. Mackay then read the seventeenth chapter of the Gospel according to John at his bedside; but as he was afraid M. Macdonald was too weak he hesitated to engage in prayer. Mr. Macdonald noticing this said, "Pray." After prayer Mr. Macdonald said to his wife, "Mary, give him food." These were the last words he spoke to any one on earth.

Mr. Mackay left the room to partake of the food, but while he was thus engaged he had a strong impression that he should be watching by the side of his venerable friend in the hour of weakness. He rose from the table and returned just in time to see his happy entrance into the haven of everlasting rest. Mr. Macdonald was lying on his back in bed -- looking with beaming eyes heaven-ward, and taking no notice of the friends around him. In that position he closed his eyes, and calmly and peacefully departed this life "to be with Christ, which is far better." Thus died this esteemed servant of Christ, on Tuesday, the 20th day of August, 1901, in the seventy-sixth year of his age, and the twenty-ninth year of his ministry. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace" (Ps. xxxvii. 37).

His remains were interred in the churchyard at Applecross on the following Friday -- between the graves of Duncan Mackenzie and Angus Macdonald -- in accordance with his own wish. All the men of the congregation that found it possible attended the funeral, and even the young children of the village gathered in groups to pay their last tribute of respect to their beloved minister, and followed the funeral part of the way. Lochcarron, Gairloch, and Applecross

were largely represented at the solemn gathering. Two of Mr. Macdonald's nephews -- Mr. John Macdougall and Mr. John McCaskill, North Uist -- were also present. All the ministers of our Church would have come to the funeral if they could. Those present were the Revs. John R. Mackay, Inverness; Alexander McRae, Portree; Alexander Stewart, Edinburgh (then of Oban); and the writer.

Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again" (John xi. 23).

And this is the will of him that sent me, that everyone which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day" (John vi. 40).

"Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave; where is thy victory?" (I Cor. xv. 54, 55).

CHAPTER VI.

A DESCRIPTIVE SKETCH OF MR. MACDONALD.

We shall devote this last chapter to a review of Mr. Macdonald as a man, a Christian, and a preacher.

MR. MACDONALD AS A MAN.

Physically, Mr. Macdonald was of middle height, of slender build, and pale complexion. Though not robust in health, he had a wiry constitution. In his movements he was one of the most active men I ever saw, possessing a remarkable quickness and agility. Though temperate in his diet, he could, to old age, take his food heartily, and few slept so well as he did. Whenever he put his head on the pillow he generally fell asleep and slept on until morning. The chief exception to this rule was when he was tossed with the tempest of temptation, he would then get little or no sleep. In ordinary circumstances, however, he rested well, and his slumbers were not easily disturbed. During a certain communion season there was one night a terrible thunderstorm, and in the morning, when the awful thunders of the past night were spoken of, Mr. Macdonald said "I did not hear them." There was one peal so exceedingly loud that it seemed as if the huge rocks near the manse had tumbled down on the roof. It awakened everyone in the manse except Mr. Macdonald. In his outward garb he dressed neatly, and always appeared in public respectably clad, as a minister of Christ ought to be. Though a sharp rebuker of persons, whose vanity of mind broke forth and blossomed luxuriantly on the top of their heads, he approved of people clothing themselves in a becoming manner, according to their station in society. He kept a pony and a four-wheeled carriage for trips to Lochcarron to attend meetings of Presbytery, and to the railway station when going to communions. Sir John Stewart kindly gave him grazing for his pony gratis, in the deer forest near the manse. When Mr. Murray bought the estate, Mr. Macdonald wrote him to ask if the same favour would be continued to him. That generous proprietor wrote him in reply to say that he would be very pleased to give *hospitality* to his pony. Mr. and Lady Ann Murray were all also very kind to Mr. Macdonald, and friendly relations existed between them to the end.

Mentally, he possessed an average power of intellect, a resolute will in following the path of duty, a keen conscience to discern between right and wrong, and very warm affections. He had a good taste for the beautiful, the

grand and the picturesque in nature, of which the scenery around him in the Highlands presented choice specimens. The works of creation were to him objects of admiration, though no objects of *adoration*. He viewed them in relation to God, their great Creator and Ruler. He showed his interest in these things in his poem (in Gaelic) on "The Works of Creation." Though not a poet in the highest sense, Mr. Macdonald had a distinctly poetical turn of mind, and composed several pieces of verse, samples of which we have given. His sermons, also, were often suffused with poetic feeling and adorned with poetic language. Mr. Macdonald had a very keen and intelligent sense of humour, and his flashes of wit were bright, telling, and memorable.

Socially, Mr. Macdonald was very reserved and of a retiring disposition among strangers, but quite frank and affable among friends, and a most agreeable companion. Possessed, as we have said, of a keen sense of humour, he was very entertaining in the company of friends; and though averse to anything savouring of frivolity, he would often join in a hearty laugh, and would be the better of it.

Some who were not acquainted with him thought him a very queer man, and fabricated and circulated ridiculous stories about his alleged eccentricities which had no foundation in fact. But the promoters of these stories were known to be persons who had no sympathy with true godliness, and, therefore, no *respectable* - not to say *godly* - man or woman would give heed to their stories about him. He was, like his own Master, "from above," and his conversation was in heaven; they were, like their own master, "from beneath," and their conversation was in the flesh. He was a very kind man and a most faithful friend. He had full confidence in real friends, and confided in them with child-like simplicity. He had, however, a mind of his own, and if any of his fellows tried to divert him from following what he considered to be right, they would find out that they reckoned without their host in dealing with him.

MR. MACDONALD AS A CHRISTIAN.

As a Christian Mr. Macdonald had not in his day many equals, and but few, if any, superiors. He belonged to a stamp of Christians who were once known in the Highlands as eminent models of true Christianity. He had the privilege of having been brought up in his younger days among those who might be truly said to be fathers and mothers in Israel, and this left a stamp upon him all his days afterwards, which marked him out as towering head and shoulders above the generality of the Lord's people in his day. He followed these models as they

were followers of Christ, but Christ Himself was his great pattern. It is a great privilege for young converts to be brought up at the feet of experienced Christians. It was remarked about the good men trained under the edifying ministry of the Rev. Roderick Macleod, Snizort, that when they went to a communion in another part of the country they would soon be known, by those who knew Mr. Macleod, as having come from his congregation. They bore the impress of the teaching they received. Grace needs nursing, and the child of grace requires training; and Christians will bear in after-life the impress of the spiritual teaching they receive in their younger days.

In attempting to give a description of Mr. Macdonald as a Christian, we shall point out some of the more prominent features of his character.

At the outset we may say that he was a Christian of deeply-rooted piety. He was pre-eminently so. Grace is deeply planted in the souls of all Christians, but the process of the work of the Spirit in the implantation of grace is not alike in degree in all Christians. Some are brought out of a state of nature into a state of grace with comparatively little painful experience; others, again, go through deep and trying passages of soul exercise: the pains of hell take hold of them and they are kept under the bondage of the law for a long period. The latter class of Christians are generally, though not invariably, more deeply rooted in Christ than the former, more steadfast in the faith and less apt to backslide. Mr. Macdonald passed through a powerful experience of law and Gospel. The Holy Spirit ploughed deeply by the law into his soul to prepare a habitation for Christ revealed in the Gospel, and the revelation of Christ was correspondingly rich and full. His was not the superficial piety that is so prevalent in our day - a piety which has no root in the heart, is not deeper than the tongue, and if the tongue were taken out would depart along with it. And even in the case of those who are the subjects of a true work of grace, the consideration of Mr. Macdonald's deep piety ought to put them to searching of heart, and to stimulate them to stir up the gift that is in them.

Another feature of his character as a Christian was his *prayerfulness*. Prayer is the breath of the living soul. Those who live without prayer give evidence that they are spiritually dead, and there are many such in this generation. All true Christians pray, but there are some more eminent for prayer than others. Mr. Macdonald was of this class. The Spirit of grace and supplications was bestowed on him in no small measure. He prayed without ceasing; he lived in prayer, prayer was his element, his delight. Some impose prayer as a penance,

but it was not so engaged in by our friend. To be unable to pray, to which affliction he was no stranger, was an intolerable penance to him. Those who make prayer a penance never prayed by the Spirit of prayer. To the natural man the duty of prayer - especially private prayer - must be a heavy yoke; and if he prays in public it is to make a vain outward show of the inward grace he lacks: Mr. Macdonald spent much time in secret prayer. This was characteristic of him from first to last. When he was awakened by the Spirit to a sense of his sin and misery, he began to pray, and during the long period he was in the grasp of the law he was much in the exercise of prayer. And when he tasted that the Lord was gracious, prayer became so sweet to his taste and so profitable to his soul that it must be his companion and diligent servant as long as he is a pilgrim in the wilderness. He did not allow the spirit of prayer to sleep long, and this kept him fresh under the unction of the Spirit. By the law he was driven to the Throne of Grace; by the Gospel he was sweetly drawn to that mercy-seat. A sense of sin and an apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ made him a constant suppliant at the Throne of Grace. He prayed as a sinner and as a believer. He was, in his own experience, the chief of sinners, but he knew that Jesus saves His people from their sins. He came to the Throne of Grace, not in a perfunctory manner, but on a special errand: "he would see Jesus." Nothing short of seeing Him would satisfy him. Neither the prophet's servant nor the prophet's staff would do; he must see the great Prophet Himself. However long it may take before his request is granted, he continues to wrestle in prayer. "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me," is the language of his wrestling. It was not in his closet merely he was thus instant in prayer; he was the same in public.

On some occasions under a sense of desertion he added *fasting* to prayer. He fasted, not in a Pharisaical or self-righteous spirit, thinking that his fasting was meritorious, and that the Lord would give him the needed blessing on the ground of it; but he rather used it as a means, just as prayer is used as a means of obtaining the blessing. The little boy that is sent to the shop for a loaf, knows very well that his asking the bread does not pay for it. The blessings of salvation are bestowed freely on sinners purely on the ground of Christ's righteousness, but there are divinely appointed means to be used by us in order to receive them. Fasting is one of these means. He used fasting as a means, and found it very beneficial to his soul; and so also have many of the Lord's people found it. I would recommend this way of seeking the Lord to Christians under the hiding of His face, and I can assure them that their seeking

of Him shall not be in vain. Mary stood at the grave weeping and fasting, and the risen Jesus appeared to her, and made himself known to her, so that she exalted with joy, "Rabboni, my Master ! " Many a time Mr. Macdonald found Jesus, whom he so much loved, by means of prayer and fasting.

Mr. Macdonald was a Christian who, like Enoch, "walked with God." His fellowship was with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. Others might see was the secret of his intimate walk with God. By that means he kept up communion with Him during his course in the wilderness as few have been able to do. If any of the Lord's people went about the city asking the question, "Saw ye him whom my soul loveth? "they had only to go to the watchman at Shieldaig; they would find Him there with Mr. Macdonald. He could not live without Christ. It was not enough for him to know that he was in Christ, and that he would be with Him in heaven after finishing his pilgrimage in this world; he must have His presence and fellowship - so far as that was possible - during his time on earth.

Another prominent feature of his character was his assurance of his interest in Christ. His assurance was sometimes clouded by unbelief and a deep sense of depravity of his nature, but on the whole, it was kept up from the first time Christ revealed Himself to him as his Saviour, and the beloved of his soul, to the close of his life on earth. A man who was so prayerful and enjoyed so much of Christ's presence and communion could not fail of having the assurance of a saving interest in Him, any more than a man who has so often seen the sun, and experienced his benign influences, can doubt the existence of that light of the world. On account of the diurnal revolutionary motion of the earth the sun is daily hid from our sight during the night, but having seen him so often we believe that he still exists, and will again appear in his usual glorious light. Mr. Macdonald had his nights without the light of Christ's face shining upon him, but "he waited for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning," and Christ, the Sun of righteousness; appeared to him again - "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." Thus his assurance was maintained, and confirmed. Indeed, his assurance increased as he was ripening for glory. On his death-bed he received the greatest tokens of the Lord's loving-kindness to him. He was fully persuaded that he was "departing to be with Christ"; he was longing to be with Him where He is, that he might behold His glory.

Mr. Macdonald was a *holy* Christian - not perfectly holy, for that is not attainable by any Christian till death. He led a consistent holy life all through

his Christian career. Some seem to think that assurance of faith leads to licentiousness of life. It was otherwise with Mr. Macdonald; it is otherwise with all true Christians. Those who are of that opinion - it is only an opinion - labour in a servile spirit to obtain eternal life by their own obedience; while those, like our friend, obey the law of Christ from a sense of their obligations to Him as their Redeemer and Lord, and from a principle of holiness implanted in them in their regeneration. "If ye love me," Christ says, "keep my commandments." Mr. Macdonald loved Christ, and he endeavoured as far as he was enabled by grace to keep His commandments. He did not do this as a slave who must obey for fear of the whip, but as a son who is willing to obey and please his Father. In his holy life he left an example behind him in the world worthy of being followed. "Remember them.....who have spoken unto you the Word of God; whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation" (Heb. xiii. 7).

He was a *humble* Christian; he considered himself "less than the least of all saints." There were two things that kept him humble - a deep sense of the sinful-ness of his nature, and a deep sense of the Lord's mercy to him. Between these two pillars, of which he never lost sight, he walked humbly before the Lord all his days, He considered all whom he believed to be the Lord's people greater than himself. His humility made him great in the estimation of others. The greatest Christians are the humblest. Mr. Macdonald was little in his own sight, but great in the sight of the greatest of the Lord's people. The Rev. Alexander MacColl, who was for a time a co-presbyter of his, and who considered him as one of the greatest Christians in his day, said, "Mr Macdonald thinks that there is none of the Lord's people so sinful as he is." That was just what Mr. Macdonald thought of himself. He was a great sinner in his own estimation, and a great saint in the estimation of the Lord's people. He learnt of Jesus, who was "meek and lowly in heart."

He was a joyful Christian. He had his share of sorrows as few had, but he had times of rejoicing too. To use a Scripture paradox, he was "sorrowful, yet always rejoicing." His frequent enjoyment of God made him joyful. Drinking so abundantly out of the fountain of true happiness, as he did, he could not be otherwise than joyful. His seasons of sorrow without communion with Christ were but like the short summer nights as compared with the times in which he enjoyed that sweet communion. In his happy moods he would sing almost without ceasing- according to the divine injunction - "Is any merry? let him sing psalms." Mr. Macdonald was merry, and he sang psalms. On a communion occasion at which he assisted, when the other ministers went out on the

Tuesday after the communion for a drive, he was left in his lodgings to rest. He was singing alone all the day. There were strangers from the south living in one end of the house; and one of them said to the landlady in the evening, "I never saw such a happy man as that minister; he has been singing the whole day - from morning to evening!" Mr. Macdonald was very fond of singing praise to God, and was much in that exercise. He had a poetical mind, but, strange to say, he could never learn any of the psalm tunes. When asked, "How can you sing the psalms not having learnt the tunes?" he answered, "When I am in a singing mood I make tunes for myself." Another outstanding feature of his character was his *spiritual-mindedness*. His "affections were set on things above, not on things on the earth"; his "conversation was in heaven." This must be true of all genuine Christians, but some excel in this matter more than others. Some Christians are carnal in their thoughts, words, and actions when they ought to be spiritual, so that it will be difficult to distinguish them from the men of the world. Mr. Macdonald was not so. He often quoted the much-needed exhortation - "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Prov. iv. 23), and watched over his heart. This was needed, because the carnal mind was in him as well as the spiritual. By his spirituality of mind he could easily be distinguished from the men of the world, and he excelled many Christians. Though in the world, he was not of the world. Wherever he was, alone or in company, his mind was set and exercised on the things of eternity. In the midst of the noise and bustle around him when travelling, he was as spiritual in his thoughts as when he was sitting in his study. He carried with him a highly spiritual mind whithersoever he went. If his fellow-travellers asked him, "Where are we now?" he might answer with the Rev. Robert Finlayson on one occasion, "Wherever you are, I am between Genesis and Revelation." That was the field of his thoughts. He was meditating on the law of God day and night.

Mr. Macdonald was a hopeful Christian. Not only that he had "good hope through grace" himself, but he was hopeful of the *success* of the Lord's cause in the world in, the darkest times. He looked at the bright side of things. He looked at God's eternal and unchangeable purpose of salvation, His promises concerning His Church, which all must be fulfilled. He lived in such close communion with the Lord as that he embraced the promises regarding the knowledge of the Lord covering the whole earth as if they were already fulfilled. He did not shut his eyes on the floods of error that the enemy was pouring in to destroy the Church; he was well aware of these floods, but he

was confident that the Lord's cause would gain the victory at last. He knew that the government was upon the shoulders of Christ, that "the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand," and that "he must reign, till he hath put all his enemies under his feet."

Mr. Macdonald was a *tried* Christian. During his Christian course he had many severe trials from the temptations of Satan and indwelling sin, and he did not wholly escape persecution by the world. But his greatest trials came from the "carnal mind." The holier he was getting the heavier and the more loathsome the body of sin and death was felt by him. Few Christians, if any, suffered more in this respect than he did. He hated sin with perfect hatred, and sin hated him with equal hatred. There was a hard struggle between the two till death put an everlasting separation between him and the sinfulness of his nature. Often did he say on earth, "I hate vain thoughts." He has now parted company with such thoughts for ever. He is now one of "spirits of just men made perfect." There is one temptation which has severely tried many of the Lord's people, from which Mr. Macdonald was exempt, viz., atheism. Satan did not manage to inject that hellish dart into his mind. I have thought that this was the reason: During the long time he was under conviction of sin, he had such a sense of his responsibility to God that the evil one had no opportunity of suggesting such a thought, and he was so much in the enjoyment of God after he had been brought into Gospel liberty that it would be in vain for Satan to say, "There is no God." It is men who were never truly convinced of their sins, and who never enjoyed God, that are the subjects on which the evil one works with success in this blasphemous idea. He knows that many poor sinners dread being brought to account to answer for their ungodliness, and a very convenient way of drowning their sense of responsibility is to make them believe that there is no God, though this negative belief does violence to their moral nature. They rest at ease in this false refuge till they are terribly disturbed in the flames of hell for ever! It is otherwise with the Lord's people. God is their portion; the object of their faith, love, and hope, and the temptation is intolerable. To the former the thought is welcome, to the latter it is most repulsive.

We mentioned that Mr. Macdonald did not escape persecution from the world. He suffered a great deal of persecution from some professors of religion, and from some people who made no profession of religion at all. When he stood up alone in the Presbytery of Lochcarron in defence of the truth, his professed brethren in that rev. court did all they could against him. They deprived him of his church and manse, and drove him and his

congregation to the open field, and if the law of the land would have permitted it, I have no doubt they would have agreed to his being shut up in prison. They went as far as the law would allow them. This will be a lasting stigma on his brethren in that Presbytery. He suffered much persecution from other people also. But he bore all patiently, in a Christian spirit, and with Christian behaviour. He did not render evil for evil. "He committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." "Vengeance is mine; I will recompense, saith the Lord." The Lord did execute vengeance - even in this world - on some of Mr. Macdonald's persecutors. Some of the members of the Lochcarron Presbytery did not escape chastisements, we believe, for their unchristian treatment of him, and it would be good if those who survive would repent of the evil they did. Other persecutors were punished also for the same reason. Many instances of this might be adduced, but the following two may suffice :- In a company of gossipers, where Mr. Macdonald was the principal topic of conversation, a woman in the company, who was an enemy to Mr. Macdonald, said, "I would wish to trample him under my feet." In a short time thereafter, we were told, she met with an accident, and was a cripple - unable to walk - till her death! The other instance is this: - On a communion occasion at which Mr. Macdonald was one of the assistants, a man came late on Saturday night to the window of his lodgings, and began to miscall him and the other ministers by name in a very loud voice, so that all the neighbours heard him. Some who knew said that the wretched reviler was bribed to perform his evil work. This case also was visited with tokens of the Lord's displeasure. It is sad to think that men in a Gospel land, and with the Bible in their homes, should be so brutish, and even more brutish than the barbarous heathen who have not yet enjoyed that privilege. These examples of the Lord's manifest judgments ought to be a warning to persecutors of His people. If wicked men were wise for themselves they would take good care not to maltreat Christ's servants or any of His blood-bought people. He regards them all as the apple of His eye, and he that touches them touches the apple of His eye (Zech. ii. 8). He will recompense tribulation to them that trouble them (2 Thess. i. 6).

Mr. Macdonald was a *sympathetic* Christian. He sympathised with his fellow-creatures in general in their afflictions, but his sympathy was drawn forth in a special manner towards the Lord's people in their soul troubles. He was a much exercised Christian himself, and he could enter with fellow-feeling into the difficulties, perplexities, and temptations of others similarly tried. He was very tender towards young people brought under concern about their souls;

and young converts, in whom he believed the "good work" was begun, found in him a nursing father. He remembered when he was in such a state himself, and he knew how to feed new-born babes in Christ with "milk" when they were not yet able to eat "strong meat" - He knew that it takes some time before children get teeth after they are born. He had a word in season" to meet their doubts and fears. He knew from personal experience all their trials, and he sympathised with them, and encouraged them. His younger ministerial brethren in the Free Presbyterian Church found him a most sympathising friend, they often felt happy in his company, and they now deeply mourn his loss to the Church on earth - a loss which is not likely to be made up in this generation.

Mr. Macdonald was a *steadfast, immovable* Christian. All Christians are not so steadfast as they ought, and none can be steadfast but "in the strength of the Lord, and in the power of his might." It is easy to profess steadfastness till the time of trial comes. Then it will be seen who is steadfast. A time of trial came in 1893, and many ministers who professed great zeal for the Lord and His truth, in the pulpit, Church courts, and on the platform, drew back, but Mr. Macdonald stood firm. He did not boast of the stand he made; he only did his duty; and he left a faithful testimony for the Lord behind him, which it becomes us to "hold fast."

MR. MACDONALD AS A PREACHER.

The sermons appended to this memoir are specimens of his preaching. · But sermons in print may be compared to pictures of the men who preached them. Some pictures look fairer on canvas or paper than the men they represent; other pictures fail to sufficiently show the beauty of the men portrayed in them. Mr. Macdonald's printed sermons are of the latter sort. They are fair specimens of his sermons, but they necessarily fail to sufficiently represent him as a preacher; they are mere notes of his sermons some of them taken down by hearers. He did not write out his sermons in full, and those taken from his manuscript are but what may be called *leading thoughts* to guide him when preaching. And even though we had his sermons in full, they would of necessity lack much on paper which accompanied them when delivered by the living voice. It is only those who had the privilege of hearing Mr. Macdonald that can have an adequate conception of him as a preacher.

Mr. Macdonald was strictly Calvinistic in his views and teaching. Calvinism is much older than Calvin himself. The doctrines which that great theologian

preached and systematised were in the Bible long before he was born; they are as old as the revelation of God's purpose of salvation. Mr. Macdonald adopted and preached these doctrines, not because they were the views of Calvin, but because they were the doctrines taught by the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures. The Word of God was the matter of his preaching. He cast no doubt on the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as being the Word of God, given by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. There was a combination of the doctrinal, the practical, and the experimental elements of theology in his sermons. No minister preached more clearly than he did the state of sinners by nature, the provision of grace, the Person and work of Christ, the work of the Holy Spirit in the application of redemption, the duty of sinners to repent and believe the Gospel, and the various experiences of believers in their wilderness pilgrimage. We do not mean to say that he was a great theologian, in the technical sense of the term he studied systematic theology and knew it well but he was a great Biblical theologian, and had a deep knowledge of the Scriptures, which he quoted with remarkable aptness. He had an original mind, and had a great liking for allegorical and typical subjects; he often preached from texts in the Song of Solomon, and from texts bearing on the sacrifices of the old economy. "The Rose of Sharon," "The lily among thorns," and the "Paschal Lamb" were favourite subjects of his. Sometimes he took up historical subjects; - spiritualising them - such as the histories of Isaac and Rebecca's marriage, of Joseph and his brethren, of the famine in Samaria and the lepers, etc. He had a lively imagination, which he brought into play - within legitimate limits - in discoursing on these subjects, and he made them interesting, useful, and easy to be remembered. Many striking things he said are still fresh in the minds of some who heard him. But his great theme was Jesus Christ and Him crucified. A sermon without Christ he never preached. Christ was the all and in all to him. His method of dividing a text was all his own. He was not a man that would do justice to himself in arranging the subject of his discourse. But though he had not a logical mind for that work, he would in the course of the sermon bring out clearly all the points of doctrine contained in his text. In treating his subject he was very much regulated by "the law of association of ideas." This led him to dig out of his text many precious jewels, and to minister sweet morsels of the bread of life to hungry souls.

His style was direct, simple, homely, yet marked by an easy flow of language, abounding with many happy turns of expression. He never aimed at rhetorical phraseology in delivering his message. He came "not in excellency of speech

or wisdom, "declaring the testimony of God. His speech "was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power." He largely used Scripture words and phrases. He preached in Gaelic and English. He felt more at home in Gaelic, but when he got the liberty of the Spirit he spoke beautiful English, and was as fluent in that language as in the other. He spoke in a clear and distinct voice, which could be heard at a long distance. On communion occasions, when thousands of people gathered, those in the outskirts of the congregation would hear him quite distinctly. For a man who was somewhat delicate in body, his voice was wonderfully strong.

His manner in the pulpit was reverential, solemn, and impressive. Before preaching he wanted to be alone with God. He went from his knees to the place of worship, and he did not like to be interrupted on the way by any fellow-creature speaking to him. His mind was wholly absorbed in the solemn work in which he was to engage, and the least interference would disconcert him. He is charged with a message from the Lord to immortal souls, and he will speak that message to them from the pulpit before he can have private intercourse with any of them. Therefore he avoided coming in contact with his fellow creatures before preaching. They may speak to him after the Lord's service is concluded, but not before.

In beginning public worship, he approached the Lord at the throne of grace "with reverence and godly fear," deeply sensible of the greatness and holiness of Him whom he was to address in prayer; the holiness that becomes His house and service; his own sinfulness and vileness in the sight of Him who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.. In this attitude he always remembered that the place whereon he stood was holy ground. Very few ministers, if any, more realised the solemnity of addressing the Most High in prayer than Mr. Macdonald. His first prayer impressed and solemnised the congregation, and prepared their hearts to listen to his sermon. He spoke with great energy, vehement earnestness, and rich unction. Though he spoke loud, under the unction of the Spirit, there was great mellowness in his voice. He was himself deeply impressed by the message he was delivering to others; he wept as he preached. He seldom preached without the freedom that the Spirit alone can give. He found Christ for his own soul before he went to preach; "he held him and would not let go until he had brought him into his mother's house" (the Church). When he enjoyed the Lord, and warmed up with his subject, he became truly eloquent not the eloquence of *art*, but the eloquence that proceeds from a *heart* moved by the love of Christ, zeal for the glory of God,

arid a yearning desire for the salvation of sinners. He might truly say, "The love of Christ constraineth us." · Sometimes he would receive such an overpowering measure of the Lord's presence as made him either pause for a little, or give vent to the fullness of his heart in, a strange utterance which cannot be easily described, A writer in "Wodrow's Analecta," giving a description of Mr. Samuel Rutherford as a preacher, says that that saintly minister sometimes had a peculiarity in his utterance when preaching.' He calls it a *skreigh*. These are the words of the writer: - "Rutherford had a strange utterance in the pulpit, a kind of *skreigh* that I never heard the like" ("Wodrow's Analecta"). It was always when Mr. Macdonald was in his best mood preaching he had this *skreigh*. Some found fault with him for this peculiarity, but he said, "I wish I had it oftener." He was himself feasting on Christ when he was preaching Him to others. Happy is the minister that is in such a state!

In preaching on the sufferings of Christ few ministers could excel him. He proclaimed the Gospel in all its fullness and freeness. Christ's atonement was the only but the all-sufficient ground of the sinner's reconciliation with God. All sinners to whom the Gospel came were invited to come to God on that ground. He preached, like Christ and His apostles, the universal call of the Gospel. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; buy without money and without price," was his invitation to all sinners he addressed. He preached the law with much fullness and faithfulness; but he never dwelt upon it without showing that "Christ was the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth." His preaching of the law when he took it up would make sinners tremble; but he was, very specially, a rich preacher of the Gospel. His preaching was *practical* as well as doctrinal. He had a deep knowledge of human nature; the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of the natural heart; the proneness of men to seek to recommend themselves to God's favour by the "filthy rags" of their own righteousness, and to expect to be admitted to heaven at death without a change of heart. He made practical application of his teaching to the hearers as he proceeded with his sermon. He made sinners understand that he was not addressing sinners many miles away from the place of gathering, but those before him. He pointed out their sins; showed the remedy provided in "the blood that cleanseth from all sin;" called them to repentance and to faith in Jesus Christ. Head knowledge would not do; mere outward reformation would not do. They needed a change of *nature* as well as a change of *state*; they must be "born again of the Spirit" before they can enter the kingdom of heaven. He reproved, rebuked, and exhorted with all

long-suffering and doctrine.” He addressed the understanding, the conscience, and the heart of his audience; he was close and pointed in his teaching.

His preaching was largely experimental. In discoursing of the work of the Spirit in effectual calling and His progressive work of sanctification, few could come up to him. He spoke that which he knew. Without mentioning himself, he spoke of the work of the Spirit as He wrought mightily in himself. He did not, however, make a standard of himself according to which He must work in others. He knew that the Spirit is sovereign in His operations, and that He works how as well as where and when He pleases. He was satisfied when he found the work of grace in any, however the process might differ in non-essentials from his own experience. In speaking of Christian experience he found himself traversing familiar ground; the field was well known to him. In no part of the way from the flight from the “ City of Destruction “ to the gate of the “ Celestial City” did he need ask John Bunyan, “ Where are we now? “ A minister who is a good judge of preaching said, “Mr. Macdonald was the best preacher of experimental theology I ever heard.” This way of preaching was very useful to the Lord's people; it was they only that could understand it, and many a time light was shed on their path when they walked in darkness hearing Mr. Macdonald. He was a good feeder of the flock of God. When he found them on the field of experience, he did not leave them to feed there only; he led them to the green pastures of the Gospel where Christ as a Shepherd feeds His flock. Christ Himself is their food: “ his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed; “ He is “the bread of life” and “the water of life.” To Christ and His fullness he guides them.

Mr. Macdonald's character as a preacher-- his great spirituality of mind, his sublimity of thought, his high reverence of God, the profuse unction which pervaded his utterances, his brokenness of heart and contrition of spirit, his humble opinion of himself, wondering that he should be permitted to put his hand to such a holy work as that in which he was with his whole spirit, soul, and body engaged - and the solemn warnings and gracious encouragements he gave expression to - all told with effect on his hearers, even on the fool that says in his heart, “There is no God” (Ps. liiii. 1). An atheist who was hearing him on one occasion confessed that if any argument would prevail to convince him of the existence of God, Mr. Macdonald's preaching would do it. Not only the matter but the *heavenly manner* of his preaching had this effect. We may suppose that the language of the atheist's immortal soul was that of Agrippa when listening to Paul's powerful and convincing speech, “Almost thou

persuadest me to be a Christian." If so, we are sure Mr. Macdonald's answer would be in the words of the great Apostle of the Gentiles, "I would to God that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day were both almost and altogether such as I am except these bonds." Mr. Macdonald was a great spiritual preacher, but very little in his own eyes. While he exalted Christ in his preaching, he himself sank out of sight; he did not seek his own glory, but the glory of Christ. He thought highly of Christ, but very lowly of his own preaching. He often said, "When I hear some other ministers preach, I feel as if I never preached a sermon myself as it should be preached." This was his estimate of himself, but others thought quite differently of him; they considered him in many respects one of the greatest Gospel ministers in his day. In these respects he stood on a par with Dr. Kennedy and the Rev. Alexander MacColl. Intellectually these great Gospel heralds were far before him, but in regard to spirituality of mind, unction, and nearness to the Lord he was, in our opinion, equal to them.

When assisting at communions he was very reluctant to take the *action* sermon. That work was too great and solemn for him to undertake. Other ministers were, he thought, more fit for that heavy task than he was. With pressing he was often persuaded to take it, and before he proceeded far with the service it would be evident that the Great Master of the feast had brought him to "the banqueting-house" to eat and drink abundantly himself and to minister the feast to other hungry and thirsty souls. At the fellowship meeting on Fridays he was not at his best in *opening* the question; but *closing* it he felt himself at home, and, indeed, he was in his right element. It was a real treat to hear him closing the question. When there were many men to speak, the sederunt on the Friday was generally long, but when Mr. Macdonald began the closing address the attention of the congregation was revived and riveted as if the meeting had only begun.

CONCLUDING REMARKS.

In the foregoing biographical sketch we have not been drawing the picture of an ideal, perfect man. Among our fallen race "there is no man in this world that sinneth not" (I Kings viii. 46). During his time on earth, Mr. Macdonald was not perfect; he had his infirmities, imperfections, and shortcomings incident to other Christians, and there was none more ready to admit this than himself. At the same time, we are confident that we have not overrated his superior qualities, his excellencies, as a man, a Christian; and a preacher. He is perfect

now, "not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but ... holy and without blemish." He honourably finished his course, and entered the joy of his Lord.

As a minister of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, Mr. Macdonald saw the foundation stone of that Church laid in 1893, and took an active part in the laying of it. He lived to see the Church grow from a small beginning - like a grain of mustard seed - to a tree, spreading its branches through the Highlands, in some directions through the Lowlands of Scotland, and even crossing the wide Atlantic Ocean to some parts of America! He saw this, and was glad, and praised the Lord, to whom all the praise is due. Some men thought, said, and wished, that our Church would not grow larger than its first small beginning. Dr. W. C. Smith, speaking from the Moderator's chair in the General Assembly, compared our movement in defence of God's truth and cause to the steam issuing from a small teapot that would soon exhaust itself by the process of evaporation. But he was disappointed. Dr. Walker, the editor of the then *Free Church Monthly*, publicly predicted that our Church would, in the course of three or four years, become extinct, and the reason he gave was that our funds would by that time be exhausted! The *wish* was father to the thought. But so far as this prophecy of that rev. gentleman is concerned, all that he has for it is that he bears the *mark* of a false prophet (Jer. xxviii. 9). His prediction did not come to pass. Our movement was not of man, but of God, and so long as we, as a Church, faithfully adhere to, and display the banner we have been enabled to lift up for the sake of the truth in our land in a backsliding age, "no weapon formed against us shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against us in judgement we shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord."

By the Divine blessing, Mr. Macdonald left the Free Presbyterian Church on a sure footing, and in a prosperous condition. Ours is the duty of maintaining the position to which the Lord has called us, and which He has hitherto owned and blessed. If we do so, we may expect that He will continue His loving-kindness to us, and bless us more and more, and make us a blessing. But if we yield in any point of our testimony, we may be sure that we shall fall behind in proportion as a Church witnessing for Christ and His truth. Great responsibility lies on the present and future ministers and other office-bearers of our Church. "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for he is faithful that promised" (Heb. x. 23). "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and,

lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen “ (Matt xxviii. 19, 20).