

MEMOIR
OF
REV. DONALD MACFARLANE

By
Rev. Donald Beaton

[Extracted from Memoir and Remains
of Rev. Donald Macfarlane,
Chapters 1 - 6.]



PREFACE

IN issuing this Memoir of the Rev. Donald Macfarlane to the public it is my duty to make acknowledgment of the help received from various quarters. During Mr Macfarlane's later years, Mr Kenneth Maciver, Strathpeffer, received from him and noted down much important information in connection with Mr Macfarlane's life and ecclesiastical career. This material has been largely drawn on in writing the Memoir, so that it may be said to be to a great extent autobiographical. To Mr Maciver also readers are indebted for the transcription of the Diary which is printed in this volume. Thanks are also tendered to the Rev. Donald Mackinnon, Portree, for supplying extracts from the Skye Free Church Presbytery Records, and to Captain Macintyre, Lochyside, Banavie, for sending extract of Minutes from Kilmallie Free Church Kirk-Session Records. Acknowledgment also has to be made for the help received from Rev. Neil Cameron, Glasgow, whose long and intimate friendship with Mr Macfarlane and whose knowledge of the ecclesiastical movements referred to in these pages made his help especially useful.

The Sermons reprinted in this volume appeared in the earlier volumes of the *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, and as these are now out of print and difficult to obtain, it was thought advisable that a selection of them should be reprinted.

In sending forth this volume, our prayer is that the Lord, whom Mr Macfarlane served loyally through grace, may bless the record of a life that was devoted to His service, for the edification of His Church and for the awakening of sinners.

D. BEATON,

Wick.

11th March, 1929.

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CHAPTER 1

DONALD MACFARLANE was born at Vallay, North Uist, in the year 1834. His father and mother, were natives of the Isle of Skye.

Mr Donald Macfarlane, his father, acted for years as the manager of farms on the estate of colonel Gordon of Cluny, Aberdeenshire, who was at that time proprietor of South Uist and Bana. His mother's name was Elizabeth; she was a daughter of Alexander Macdonald, Trotternish, Skye. There was a family of six sons to the marriage - of, whom Mr Macfarlane, was the fourth.

He received the first rudiments of education from his eldest brother, Angus, who taught a school at Frobost, South Uist. When his brother gave up teaching he was taught at home by his father. During the time that his father acted as manager of the farm of Dremisdale, South Uist, Mr Macfarlane attended the parish school for a year. On his father leaving South Uist to take up a farm in Benbecula Mr Macfarlane's educational progress was interrupted, as there was no school in the place at the time, and so he had to fall back again on home instruction. In 1850, however, through the efforts of the "Ladies' Society for the Religious Improvement of the Remote Highlands and Islands," a school was set up at Uiskeva, Benbecula. In his *Memoirs and Remains of Rev. D.*

Macdonald, Shieldaig, Mr. Macfarlane has an interesting reference to this school and its first teacher, Mr. Donald Macdonald, afterwards Free Church minister of Shieldaig, who became his life-long friend and stood by him in 1893. "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".¹ After two years this school was dosed and another opened at Griminish in the west side of the Island. Owing to this change Mr Macfarlane's education was again interrupted, as the distance from Uiskeva to Griminish was too great. His parents, however, were interested in his education, and he was sent to another school in the Island until he was qualified to act as a substitute for Mr Macdonald. In 1856, when Mr Macdonald, who was now teaching at Stoneybridge, South Uist, went south to attend the University, Mr Macfarlane was appointed his substitute. It was during this winter that the great change took place which changed the whole current of his life. The occasion was a sermon preached on the Monday of the Communion at North Uist by the Rev. Alexander MacColl, then of Duirinish, Skye, and afterwards of Lochalsh. In his dosing words, this honoured ambassador of Christ made an arresting exhortation. In his diary Mr Macfarlane says he would never forget the fervent and faithful appeal made by the preacher. He asked: "Is there any young man in the audience that will come to Christ?" At this time Mr Macfarlane did not know what coming to Christ meant, but he felt that he was the young man addressed by the preacher. From that day he began to seek fellowship with the Lord's people and to shun the fellowship of the world. To him this was a time of love, and the recollection of it in after days cheered and warmed his heart. The impression made on him at this time was deepened through reading tracts left in the schoolhouse by Mr Macdonald. Some of these dealt with the necessity of being born again, and these sent him to search his Bible with more attention and interest than he had ever given to it before. His sense of the sinfulness of his nature was deepened and became so vivid to his own mind that he imagined others were seeing him as he saw himself, but he discovered in speaking to them that this was not the case. So real was his sense of sin that he began to speak to his neighbours on the danger of their lost condition and to exhort them to forsake their evil ways. If he refrained from rebuking sin he felt guilt on his conscience. As time went on he became more and more enlightened in the knowledge of Christ as the only Saviour of sinners. He could mention many passages of Scripture which gave him peace, but he was indebted to the whole history of the Gospel in being enabled to close in with Christ as a lost sinner in

¹ Memoirs and Remains of Rev. D. Macdonald, Shieldaig

need of God's great salvation. In his letters to his friend, Mr Macdonald, Mr Macfarlane did not conceal the great change which had taken place. On Mr Macdonald's return from college, he persuaded Mr Macfarlane to stay with him in the schoolhouse during the summer months. Mr Macdonald's spiritual conversation and prayers were a great help and blessing to him. During these months Mr Macdonald taught him the rudiments of Greek, a language in which Mr Macfarlane had special delight, as the language chosen by the Holy Spirit in which New Testament was originally written. His interest in this beautiful language, so signally honoured by the Holy Spirit, soon made him expert in understanding it, and throughout life he took delight in reading his Greek New Testament. When the time for the return of Mr Macdonald to his university classes came round Mr Macfarlane was again left in charge of the school at Stonebridge. Before he began his university studies Mr Macfarlane acted as substitute at a number of other schools. Ere he entered college Mr Macfarlane decided to go south to earn some money for the prosecution of his studies. On the evening of the day he left home he arrived at Lochmaddy, resolving to cross the Minch to Skye by the mail packet, a sailing boat. A storm rising during the night, the packet could not leave the harbour. Mr Macfarlane was keenly disappointed at the delay. To pass the time he went to see a friend, who, in the course of conversation, said that it was a pity Mr Macfarlane had not been there yesterday, as the Rev. Norman Macleod, minister of the Free Church, Paible, had been at Lochmaddy making arrangements for the Society School there, which was vacant. So great a difficulty had been found in getting teachers to remain that the Established Church minister (Mr Macdonald) at Trumisgany at last told the people that he was tired trying to get teachers for the school and that he was now leaving it with themselves to get a teacher. As the people belonged to the Free Church, they intimated that they would like a Free Church teacher. The minister told them he did not care what denomination the teacher belonged to if he would teach the scholars. Mr Macfarlane's friend asked him if he would be willing to remain with them if appointed. Mr Macfarlane replied that he would. The Rev. Norman Macleod was at once communicated with - Mr Macfarlane himself being the bearer of the letter. He returned with a letter from Mr Macleod strongly recommending the people at Lochmaddy to appoint Mr Macfarlane as their teacher. The people willingly made the appointment. Mr Macfarlane taught on week days, but kept a Sabbath School and conducted religious meetings on Sabbath. This was something that the parish minister had not reckoned on, and he set about

to have Mr Macfarlane ousted. He applied to the S.P.C.K (Society for Propagation of Christian Knowledge)² to have a teacher of his own denomination appointed, and the Society granted him his request. When the new teacher came he was accompanied to the school by the parish minister, who asked Mr Macfarlane to give up the key of the schoolhouse. Mr Macfarlane refused, and said if he was compelled to give it up he would give it to the person from whom he received it. The minister said he was sorry to deprive him of the school, but that it had to be done. Mr Macfarlane told him that he did not believe he was sorry. The minister now tried a new tack, and asked him if he would like to be a teacher in connection with the Established Church. On receiving an answer in the negative, the minister asked him what he had against the Established Church. Mr Macfarlane replied that he had several things against the Established Church: among others, he might mention that communicants were admitted to the Lord's Table without being examined as to whether they were converted or not. To this the minister replied that the children of Israel in Egypt ate the flesh of the paschal lamb and that no one was prohibited from the Passover, and that ministers had no right to debar any one from the Lord's table. Mr Macfarlane met him by saying that Moses was charged by God to debar the ignorant, the uncircumcised and the stranger from the Passover. This reply brought the argument to an end. The minister again expressed his sorrow at the necessity of depriving Mr Macfarlane of the school. "You are not sorry at all, Mr Macdonald," came the straightforward reply, "and the reason is that you saw a spark of the Gospel lighted at Lochmaddy and you are trying to extinguish it, but you cannot do it; and let me tell you that if you do not stop your evil work that your end in this world will be miserable."

Though these events all seemed to have a dark side, yet the Lord was shaping the road by which Mr Macfarlane would reach college, as the following will show.

One of the officers, Captain Otter, R. N., who was engaged with Captain Thomas in survey work in the Western Isles, and who was interested in the religious welfare of the people, on making inquiries at Lochmaddy if they had any one to conduct religious meetings was informed of what had happened. The Captain noted Mr Macfarlane's name in his notebook. He then wrote to

² This Society maintained a number of schools throughout the Highlands

the Ladies' Society, in which he was interested, and recommended that Mr Macfarlane should be appointed at once to the school at Grimsay, North Uist. He was accordingly appointed immediately as substitute at Grimsay, and afterwards as teacher in full charge at Eriskay, South Uist, where he taught for two years before he went to college and for a few years afterwards. The ordinary rule of the Ladies' Society was that no teacher could be employed by them until he was one year at college. Through Captain Otter's influence this obstacle was removed out of the way for Mr Macfarlane. After teaching for a few years he had now sufficient money to pay his way for the first session at college. The storm and the persecution he met with were not indications of the Lord's displeasure, but part of that divine purpose in which the divine wisdom was seen clearly triumphing over what men would regard as signs of God's disapproval of a course on which he was yet to manifestly set his seal of approval.

He began his college course in 1863, and finished his divinity course ten years later. The length of time taken was due to the rule laid down by the Ladies' Society that their teachers should remain at least two years in charge of their school without going to college. In the university the Humanity (Latin) and Greek Chairs were occupied by the distinguished classical scholars, Prof. William Ramsay and Prof. Lushington. While under the latter he made a special study of Greek. His other professors were men of the first rank in their respective spheres - Prof. Veitch in Logic; Prof. Edward Caird in Moral Philosophy; and Prof. Sir William Thomson (afterwards Lord Kelvin) in Natural Philosophy.

He took his theology course at Glasgow Free Church College, where he had as his professors: Principal Fairbairn, Prof. Islay Burns,³ Prof. (afterwards Principal) Douglas, and Prof. James Candlish.⁴ During his time at this college there were two students from Bohemia and one from Germany, who came to study theology in Scotland because of the rationalistic teaching of their own theological professors.

His entry on college studies marked the beginning of those negotiations for union between the Free and United Presbyterian Churches that were to cause

³ A brother of the saintly Chinese missionary, William C. Burns.

⁴ A son of Dr R. Candlish.

so much grief to many of the Lord's people in Scotland. It was the beginning of sorrows for the Free Church. The first union negotiations came to an end in 1873, the year that Mr Macfarlane finished his studies. He used to tell a story in connection with Dr Adam, one of the leaders for union, but whose policy it was to gather the half-and-half's so that the opponents of union would be bereft of their votes. On the occasion in question, Donald Cattanach, Badenoch, was present, and on being asked after Dr Adam's motion at the Glasgow Presbytery had been carried if he intended following Dr Adam, "No!" replied the clear-sighted worthy, "It is enough for me to have fallen in Adam once and I do not wish to fall in Adam a second time."

During his college course Mr Macfarlane worshipped for the most part in Hope Street Free Gaelic Church, where the worthy servant of Christ, Rev. Alexander Urquhart, was minister. Sometimes he went to hear Dr Samuel Miller, one of Glasgow's great preachers, and for whom Mr Macfarlane had great respect. In those times, as he states in his memoir of Mr Macdonald, it was not difficult to get preachers whose teaching ministered to the souls of their hearers. Among some of the others whose ministrations he used to attend occasionally, were Dr Forbes, Dr Andrew A. Bonar, and Rev. Ralph Smith. There were also at that time many of the Lord's true people with whom fellowship could be had in the great city of the West of Scotland.

Mr Macfarlane was licensed by the Presbytery of Skye and Uist at Snizort, 24th June, 1874. After being licensed he laboured in several places as a probationer for two years. His first sphere of labour was at Dunoon, and it was while here he had the privilege of first meeting Dr Kennedy, Dingwall, though he had often heard him preach. The Doctor had come to Dunoon for the purpose of opening a church for the Gaelic portion of the congregation. During his stay there he resided with his sister, the widow of the late Rev. Hugh Mackay, Kilmun. On Monday Dr Kennedy sent for Mr Macfarlane. The thought of meeting the famous preacher filled Mr Macfarlane with a feeling of shyness. He was not long in his presence when the shyness vanished, as he found the Doctor to be a humble Christian and as gentle as a lamb, showing kindness to and fatherly interest in him. On parting, the Doctor said: "We shall know each other better yet."

On leaving Dunoon Mr Macfarlane acted as probationer at Berneray (Harris), Can-Bridge, Ballachulish and Lawers (Perthshire). His next place was Strathconan, where he had been asked to go by the Highland Committee of the

Free Church. This appointment was due to Dr Kennedy, who had recommended Mr Macfarlane. The people decided to give him a call, and on 6th January, 1876, he was ordained and inducted as first Free Church minister at Strathconan. Since the Disruption this congregation had been without a minister - the religious services being conducted by laymen. Among some of the outstanding men were Hector Jack and Duncan Maciver. The latter, who had a high reputation among the people, was noted for his meekness, but had passed away before Mr Macfarlane was inducted. It is related after his first Communion at Strathconan that Dr Kennedy, who assisted, asked a friend: "Do you the young man who has become minister of Strathconan?" On receiving an answer in the negative, Dr Kennedy said: "Do you know that, I felt quite ashamed of myself while listening to his prayers at family worship in his own house." Strathconan at this date belonged to the Right-Hon. Arthur James (now Earl) Balfour, M.P, who took an interest in the welfare of the people. He built a manse at his own expense, besides contributing handsomely to the Sustentation Fund. With the exception of a few, all the people were connected with the Free Church. Miss Balfour and Miss Faithful, a lady companion, were regular attenders while resident at Strathconan during Mr Macfarlane's ministry. The resident congregation at Strathconan was not large - about 200 - but the people were very attentive on attending the means of grace. Besides preaching on the Sabbath and conducting a weekly prayer meeting, Mr Macfarlane also catechised during the winter mouths. There is an entry in his diary relating to the time of his Strathconan ministry, which may be quoted here: "I was much harassed in my mind with temptations all the time while in Strathconan. There was one temptation, which followed me and brought me very low in soul and body, viz., atheism. This temptation began before I left college and continued to torment me for full three years. The only time of relief from it was when I was preaching. It would then flee away, but as soon as I would leave the church the awful flood would return, threatening to sweep away all my hope. Yet, I was sure in my mind that there was, and is, a God even in the midst of the flood, and that it was a temptation from the evil one. It left me as weak as a feather before the tempest. It was only gradually I got rid of it. By the time that I was under call to Moy it was getting less frequent and weaker and weaker, and after the change to Moy it left me for some time."

CHAPTER 2

AFTER three years and a half ministry at Strathconan Mr Macfarlane received a call from the Free Church congregation of Moy and Dalarossie to succeed the Rev. John Baillie, which he accepted. He was inducted to his new charge in 1879. Dr Kennedy introduced him to his congregation on the first Sabbath after his induction. In giving advice to the people after the sermon, he told them that they had now a true servant of Christ, and they should be very careful how they dealt with him and the message he delivered to them. He warned that if any of them troubled him the Lord would show His displeasure, which was manifestly seen in one case. There were a number of godly men and women in the parish at this time. Notably among them may be mentioned John Rose, Alexander Fraser, Donald Macgillivray, Duncan Shaw, and latterly Murdo Mackenzie. John Rose, who had studied at the university, was afterwards schoolmaster of Beaully, where his memory is still affectionately cherished by his old pupils. On returning from teaching he made his home at Moy and became an elder there. As a man of education and outstanding piety he was very helpful to the congregation when the minister was absent from his pulpit. Mr Rose died shortly after the separation in 1893, and before his death he expressed his thankfulness to God for being spared to see the stand made for the truth in 1893 and that he was privileged to sit at the Lord's table at Inverness in a pure Church. A few days after he passed from the table below to join with the saints in heaven. Alexander Fraser, another of the elders, was a man of prayer, who had the secret of the Lord. He was brought to the knowledge of the truth under the preaching of the Rev. Archibald Cook. He also rejoiced in the stand made in 1893, and was a faithful and useful member of the Church to the end of his life.

During the time of Mr Macfarlane's ministry there was a monthly "Question Meeting" held at Moy, at which "the men" of the congregation spoke to "the question" submitted by one of the brethren. Some of the Duthil "men" attended this meeting occasionally, among them being the godly Duncan Fraser, Can Bridge. Alexander Cattanach, Badenoch, was often a visitor to Moy. He was a living and lovable Christian and much given to prayer, and Mr Macfarlane remarked that he often felt on his spirit the presence of Alexander when he came to the parish. On Communion occasions he used to preside over the prayer meetings at Moy. There was no night sermon on the Sabbath at this time in Moy. The Rev. Alexander MacColl used to remark in reference to these

prayer meetings, which he highly approved: "The Pauls who plant are needed, but the Apolloses who water are as needful."

It was while at Moy Mr Macfarlane was married in April, 1880, to Mary, eldest daughter of Alexander Morrison, Solas, North Uist, an outstanding elder of the Free Church. Mrs Macfarlane proved a true helper to him through all his trials and afflictions. She passed away two years after her husband in Kinloid, Larkhall, the residence of her brother, Dr Morrison, 9th December, 1928, and was buried beside her husband at Dingwall.

During his Moy ministry a Bill was brought before Parliament by Mr (afterwards Lord) Finlay, the member for the Inverness Burghs, for the reconstruction of the Church of Scotland, and it had Mr Macfarlane's entire support, as will be seen from the following reference: - "I believe it would, if passed into law, put the Church of Scotland on a Scriptural basis. I entirely differ from Mr McQueen, Daviot, and Mr Mackay, Dores, in their sweeping condemnation of it, and I am as firm as ever in my opposition to disestablishment, and the removal of such eminent leaders as Dr Begg, Dr Kennedy and Dr Mackay from the battlefield makes me see the greater need for adhering steadfastly to the principles for which they so faithfully and honestly contended, and I would feel thankful if I saw the Scriptural relation between the Church and State restored, though I feel more concerned about the principle of establishment than any pecuniary benefits accruing from it."

In the year 1880 the case of Professor Robertson Smith came before the Commission of Assembly. It greatly agitated the Church and ended in his suspension, and this caused great discontent among his supporters. As might be expected, Mr Macfarlane voted for his suspension, and the following letter by him, published in the *Inverness Courier*, shows the stand he took against the discontented party: - "Sir, - from repeated reports of newspapers it appears that the decision of the last Commission of Assembly in the case of Professor Smith has caused a great deal of excitement in many quarters, especially in Elgin, Aberdeen, Greenock, Glasgow, and other places. This, in my opinion, shows that Satan is angry because the progress of his wicked attacks on the blessed Word of God has been so far arrested; and it is very sad to think that he should get so many supporters or sympathisers among professing Christians. Let those who so boldly take the side of the man that has done so much to shake the faith of precious and immortal souls in the Bible take heed lest their present audacity be turned into trembling and confusion when they

shall appear before the judgment seat of Christ to be judged by the inspired Word of God, which they now seem to regard so little. It is no new thing in the history of the Church to see members of Parliament, bathes, lawyers, and others holding responsible offices in the Church taking offence at the teaching of Holy Scripture, and standing up against the Lord and against His anointed. But 'He that sits in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision.' Strathdearn, 26th November, 1880."

During the heated discussion anent the Disestablishment of the Church of Scotland Mr Macfarlane faithfully adhered to the 1843 Disruption position and steadfastly opposed the Disestablishment crusade, though even at that time he saw breakers ahead, and in a letter to the *Inverness Courier*, dated 9th January, 1891, he says:- "In reply to the question, 'Where are the Chalmerses and the Cunninghams, etc.?' allow me to say that it is not at all improbable but a Disruption may ere long take place in the Free Church, and if so it shall then be seen how many of her ministers will deny themselves of their-, worldly all and launch themselves and their Church on the providence of God. Reference is made to the 'down grade' in the Free Church, and the probable cause of it is said to be 'want of faith in her ministers.' I should say that not only want of faith, but 'want of *faithfulness* on the part of the majority of her ministers is certainly the cause of it. The down grade began in 1863, and Disestablishment is a great step in the downward course."

In the year 1889 Mr Macfarlane received a call to Kilmallie, which he accepted to the great regret of his attached and devoted people at Moy. The people there did all they could to get him to remain among them, and when at last he accepted the call Alexander Fraser said that he did not believe Mr Macfarlane's work at Moy was finished, which in a way, proved true, for Mr Macfarlane assisted almost at every Communion at Moy since 1893 until failing strength rendered it impossible for him to do so. Even to the last he was looked upon by people of Moy as their minister, and they had a place in his heart which continued warm to the end.

At Kilmallie Mr Macfarlane laboured assiduously for a few years preaching, visiting, and catechising, and assisting at Communions. He had in his congregation a number of eminent Christians who were a great help to him; among these may be named - Donald Macmaster, John Macdonald, Alexander Stewart, Duncan Macdougall, Angus MacNaughton, Allan Young, etc.

As his preaching qualities became better known, other congregations desired to have him as their pastor, and in August, 1891, he was approached by the congregation of North Uist as to whether he would accept a call from them. On this he writes:- "Received a letter to-day from Mr D. Macdonald, North Uist, stating that the congregation there were thinking of giving him a call to become their pastor and asking he if I would encourage them to proceed with a call. I replied that I was not at present in a position to say that it was my duty to accept a call, but that I hoped and prayed that the Lord would give them in answer to prayer, a pastor who would feed the flock with knowledge and understanding. I am very much attached to that part of the world and to the Lord's people there, and more especially to Mr Macdonald. I was born in that parish; it was there I was first moved to concern about the salvation of my soul through the preaching of the late Mr McColl. There are thus many ties which shall never be broken binding me on North Uist, but I only three years in my present charge, and I feel that my work is not yet all done in it. Whether the Lord means to do good to the people here through me, unworthy me, I cannot say but one thing: I feel more encouraged to labour for the conversion of precious souls than I felt since I came to the parish, and this makes me unwilling to leave it in the meantime. I would like to labour more than I have done and to get more fruit than I have yet seen before leaving it. May the Lord help me."

Besides North Uist, other congregations approached him. Among these was the congregation of Daviot, but he gave them no encouragement to proceed with a call, yet, notwithstanding his decision, they proceeded to elect him, as is evident from the following entry in his diary:- "Received a letter from Daviot intimating that, notwithstanding my letter to their Moderator of Session, I was unanimously elected at a congregational meeting held there on the 4thand I saw in a newspaper the report of a meeting of the Free Presbytery of Inverness that a call is to be moderated in my favour on the 21st. What is this? I thought my letter to Mr Mackenzie would have put a stop to proceeding in the matter, but no. What am I to do? In case it may be from the Lord I shall consider the matter seeing the people are determined to proceed with a call. I shall wait on the Lord for guidance from His word and providence. Oh! send forth thy light and thy truth; let them be guides to me. While praying for guidance the following text came with light and gladness to my mind 'And I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known' (Isaiah 42: 16). Lord, lead me in the way in which I should walk and

make the path of duty clear to me. When praying again for light to make the path of duty plain, the latter part of the same text came to my mind with so much comfort as enabled me to look to the Lord for further light: 'I will make darkness light before them and crooked things straight; these things will I do unto them and not forsake them. In my case there is darkness and there are crooked things, but the Lord can do as He promised, and if the promise applies to me in connection with the call, then the path of duty will be clear to me so far as I can judge. Let me, therefore, wait on Him, having my eye on the pillar of His word and that of His providence. According as He is willing to guide me I am willing through grace to act - whether to remain where I am or to remove to another sphere of labour - though I feel inclined to remove if I, were to consult my own feelings. If that feeling be from the Lord I need the fulfilment of the promise before I can remove. When thinking of one difficulty I see in the way of leaving my present charge the following words of the great Apostle spoke to me: 'I conferred not with flesh and blood.' Though I believe the congregation as a whole would be opposed to me leaving them, there are some in particular I would feel it keenly if they did not acquiesce in the event of my being led to decide on leaving. But the Lord may make the crooked things straight." After further consideration, Mr Macfarlane refused the call.

About this time Mr Macfarlane received intimation of the death of Mr Walter Campbell, missionary, North Uist, a son of Mr George Campbell, Gaelic teacher at Scourie, and brother of Mr William Campbell, for long a missionary at Wick, and he writes of him: - "He was a true man of God and a dear friend to me - a man that was mellowed with the love of Christ and that did good work in the vineyard in his day. He is slow beholding the face of Christ, whom he so much loved and served on earth. His work on earth is finished and that in heaven begun. We miss him on earth, the redeemed in glory welcome him as one of those redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. Oh! happy are they who have got safely through the wilderness to the rest that remaineth for the people of God to enjoy Him and to serve Him in the state of perfection for ever and ever. His service on earth is sweet where He Himself is present with His people. His service in heaven will be sweeter, for His gracious face always shines on them there - no cloud of sin, darkness, or unbelief intervenes there between Christ and His redeemed. Their sun shall no more go down and their moon shall no more be darkened. The Lord is their everlasting sun and the days of their mourning are ended. Oh! to be of the blessed number who have a right and title through free grace to enter the New Jerusalem above when death comes

to remove them from time to eternity. Although we mourn the removal of God's people from the earth, yet there is something unspeakably pleasant associated with it - their being made perfect - their beholding the face of Christ - their company - their service - their everlasting felicity - all combine to fill the soul still in the state of imperfection with joyful thoughts that cannot be expressed. Oh! to be with Christ is far better."

About this date there is a reference in his diary to his successor at Moy: "To-day Mr Mackenzie was ordained at Moy, my former charge. I am glad they have got a good minister there and I wish him success. A godly minister is one of the gifts Christ received for His Church. Mr Mackenzie adheres firmly to the good old doctrines of the Word of God. There is great need of such ministers in this age when so many adopt the New Theology, which, as Spurgeon says, is no theology, but a departure from the Word of God." Another entry in his diary at this date may be quoted here: "I had great liberty during the first sermon when speaking of the glorious rest Christ would give to the redeemed at His second advent. I felt as at the very gates of heaven tasting freely of the happiness, which is enjoyed in full in the state of glory. I got a feast - ever blessed be God! He knows that I needed it."

In 1891 the Declaratory Act, was brought before the General Assembly of the Free Church and sent down as an overture under the Barrier Act to the Presbyteries of the Church. It was seen in the spring of 1892 that the vast majority of the Presbyteries approved of the Act, and consequently that it would be passed by the Assembly under the terms of the Barrier Act into a "binding law and constitution" of the Free Church. In April of this year Mr Macfarlane called a meeting of elders, etc., of the districts from Oban to Kilmallie to consider what should be done in the event of the General Assembly passing the Act. The unanimous decision come to by the meeting was that they could not remain in a Church which would tolerate the doctrines taught in the Declaratory Act. At this meeting Mr Macfarlane spoke calmly but deliberately of the far-reaching effect of the changes contemplated and of the necessity of adhering to the Bible and the Confession of Faith. At the General Assembly in May, 1892, the Declaratory Act⁵ was passed notwithstanding a strong protest from those opposed to it. The Kirk session of Kilmallie were

⁵ This act is given in Appendix I. Criticisms of its subtle teaching are given in the Free Presbyterian, Magazine, volume 1, pages 41, 121, 161, 201, 241, 281, 361, 401; volume 31, pages 139, 161, 201, 241, 321, 374, 401, 408; and volume 32, page 41.

unanimous in protesting against the Act, and notwithstanding the order of the Assembly to have such protests deleted from kirk-session and presbytery records, somehow the Kilmallie kirk-session protest, was overlooked, and it was never deleted, for it was proved afterwards that the Assembly was in error in requiring their deletion. The kirk-session protest is in the following, words: - "At Kilmallie, and within the Free Church there, on the 25th day of January 1893, the kirk-session met and was constituted. Sederant: Rev. D. Macfarlane, moderator, and Messrs D. Macmaster, Alexander Stewart, Duncan McDougald, Ewen MacMillan, Angus MacMillan, and Edward Wilson, elders. The minutes of last meeting were read and approved. The session unanimously agreed to engross in the minutes the following statement and protest against action of the last Assembly in passing the Declaratory Act into a law of the Church: 'The General Assembly of 1892 by passing the Declaratory anent the Confession of Faith has, in our opinion, taken a decided step in the direction of imperilling the interests of divine truth, and of innovation upon the doctrinal and ecclesiastical constitution of the Free Church, inasmuch as - First, under the head of the divine sovereignty and divine love it has so stated the doctrine of the Church as to sanction or give room for holding the scheme of doctrine known by the name of Calvinistic Universalism, whereby the mediation of Christ is represented as to be held and taught, not as the effect of the divine purpose of grace to individuals who are thereby saved, but as the expression of the general love of God to mankind for their salvation, the sovereign purpose of God towards individuals being to be considered as subsidiary to this in order to make the mediation of Christ effectual in the case of any. Secondly, under the head of the fall and its effect, the corruption of man's nature by the fall and his consequent need of the renewing work of the Holy Spirit, have been so stated as to minimize and imperil the doctrine of man's natural state of death in sin and his utter unrighteousness and ungodliness in the sight of a righteous and holy God. Thirdly, under the cover of the general ambiguous statement (that the office-bearers of the Church in subscribing the Confession are not considered as committed to any principle, inconsistent with liberty of conscience and the right of private judgment), framed in order to displace the fuller unambiguous statement on the same subject in the preamble to Act 12, 1846, anent the Question and Formula, the general doctrine of the Confession of Faith, respecting the exercise of civil authority about religion, is invalidated or set aside contrary to the design and intention of the Church in framing the foresaid preamble, and a door is opened for the admission to office in the

Church of men who deny that the State has any duty towards true religion and the Church of Christ. Fourthly, instead of the Westminster Confession of Faith, as the recognised standard of orthodoxy, in the Church, in all its heads and articles, has been substituted what is called the substance of the Reformed Faith as therein set forth - the Church being the sole judge of the particular points that are to be included under this category of doctrine, a provision which overthrows the fixed doctrinal constitution of the Church, and lays its creed at the feet of an irresponsible majority to determine the same at will. And we protest that the said Act shall not be binding on us or on those who may now or hereafter adhere to us, but that, notwithstanding the passing of the same Act, we, and those who may now, or hereafter, adhere to us, shall not be thereby prejudiced in maintaining the doctrines and principles of the Free Church as set forth in her authorized standards and authoritative documents, as hitherto recognised and understood, and in taking all steps that may be necessary to vindicate the said doctrine and principles and our own and the Church's rights, sacred and civil, in connection therewith.' Dosed with prayer. D. MACFARLANE, Moderator."

The question now arose as what was to be done, and it was decided by the opponents of the Act that an appeal be made to next Assembly to have it repealed. In November of 1892 Mr Macfarlane made it known that if this request was rejected he would cease to be a minister in the Church which had adopted the Act. In the spring of 1893 Mr Macfarlane received a call from the congregation of Raasay, which he accepted. In taking office Mr Macfarlane did so under protest against the Declaratory Act, and stated that he signed the formula without any reference to it.

As a good deal of capital has been made by some of the Constitutionlists who remained in the Free Church after 1893 of Mr Macfarlane not leaving the Church in 1892, reference may be made to the subject here; in a letter to the *Northern Chronicle* referring to a statement made by the Rev. Prof. Kennedy Cameron in his *Scottish Union of 1900*, he writes: "In last week's issue of the *Chronicle* I read your review of the book written by the Rev. John Kennedy Cameron. In his remarks about the Free Presbyterian Church, and especially about me, he made some statements that were not correct. He said that I was under the Declaratory Act for a year, and was inducted Raasay under it. Now, the truth is that I was not under that Act for one day. I was at Kilmallie in the year 1892, when the Act was passed into a binding law. As soon as we heard that, our session 'protested' against the action of the Assembly in doing that,

and the protest was written in the session record. Next year, 1893, I was translated to Raasay before the meeting of Assembly. On the day of my induction I stated publicly before the presbytery and the congregation that I was not taking office as minister of Raasay under the Declaratory Act in any sense or to any degree. After I left Kilmallie the Rev. John McAskill, Onich, was appointed moderator of the congregation. In 1894 an order came from headquarters to remove the protest from the session book. Mr McAskill refused to do so, and appealed to the Synod. From the Synod the case came to the Assembly. When the case was considered by that court, Sheriff Jamieson, who was a member of Assembly, said that he had to say that 'on legal grounds' they could not compel the congregation to remove the protest from the session record. I remained a year without taking up a separate position. The reason was that the Constitutionlists asked me not to separate till they would make an effort to make the Assembly repeal the Act. They were to do this at the meeting of Assembly in 1893. I was a member of the Assembly that year. The Assembly refused to repeal the Act. When I saw that, I tabled my protest, and took up a separate position in defence of the truth. It is very mean of Mr Kennedy Cameron to cast up to me now that I remained a year with them, seeing it was to help them I did so. Rev. John Kennedy Cameron's attack on our Church reminds me of the Samaritans who offered to co-operate with the Jews in building the temple after their return from captivity. When the Jews refused the offer, the Samaritans did everything they could to weaken the hands of the Jews in their good work. - I am, etc., D. MACFARLANE."

CHAPTER 3

SOME considerable time before the meeting of the Assembly of 1893 Mr Macfarlane communicated with Dr Balfour, Edinburgh, who had taken a prominent position in opposing the Declaratory Act, to ascertain whether Dr Balfour intended to protest and leave the Church in the event of the Declaratory Act being still adhered to. Dr Balfour's reply indicated that he was not prepared to go this length. When Mr Macfarlane consulted with his Constitutionalist⁶ brethren he met with no more success, for on showing his protest to them, though some of them approved of it, they would not go the length of signing it. He thus was left alone, and his feelings are indicated by the following entry in his diary: - "All men forsook me ... notwithstanding the Lord stood by me and strengthened me."

When the Assembly met, those who had been making rousing speeches and threatening drastic action if the Declaratory Act became the law of the Free Church, remained silent, and it was left to Mr Macfarlane, a man of a quiet, retiring, and timid disposition, who had not been heard boasting on the housetops what great things he intended to do, to step forward and, in the face of a hostile Assembly, table his protest.

Dr Rainy, after the protest had been read, rose and moved that a Committee be appointed to confer with Mr Macfarlane. The step taken by Mr Macfarlane created considerable commotion among the constitutionalists. They convened a meeting in Edinburgh at the dose of the Assembly. Among those present were the Revs Dr Balfour, Edinburgh; Murdo Mackenzie, Inverness; and Murdo Macaskill, Dingwall. Mr Mackenzie asked Mr Macfarlane, who was present, what he meant to do. Mr Macfarlane replied that it was his intention to have a Presbytery formed, and that they would then proceed to license students who adhered to them and whose theological studies had been finished. Mr Mackenzie, on hearing this, said, "You will compromise us." Mr Macfarlane, however, was quite determined to do his duty whatever effect it would have on the hesitating policy of the Constitutionalists.

In his Memoir of Rev. D. Macdonald, Mr Macfarlane makes the following reference to the separation which followed his protest: - "If it be asked, Why did it not take place in 1892 when the change was made? the answer is, Some

⁶ The name given to the party in the Free Church who adhered to the Constitution and opposed the policy of Dr Rainy.

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 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 been too hasty in the step we took, though the charge has often been made."

On his way back from the Assembly he was invited to preach to the congregation at Millhouse, Kames. On Monday a meeting of the congregation was held, which was addressed by Mr Macfarlane and others. After the situation had been explained, the congregation decided to separate from the Church which had adopted the Declaratory Act, and thus became the first congregation in what was to be known afterwards the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. Mr Macfarlane was greatly encouraged by the decision of the congregation. On his return home, he, on the Monday of Raasay Communion (second Sabbath of June), gave a very able lecture explanatory of the situation in which they were now placed, to a large congregation gathered from different parts of the West of Scotland. At the end he asked all those who desired to adhere to the Bible in its entirety as the Word of God, and to the Confession of Faith in all its doctrines as hitherto held by the Free Church, to stand up. All present, with the exception of about half a dozen, stood up. He asked then that the strangers present should sit down so that he might see how his own congregation stood. It was then seen that the few objectors, except one, were of the Raasay congregation.

It was then arranged that a meeting should take place at Inverness on Tuesday evening. There was a large gathering, and the Rev. D. Macdonald, who was present, took his stand with Mr Macfarlane. It was then decided that they should take immediate steps to form a Presbytery, to be called the Free Church Presbytery of 1843. Accordingly, on 27th July, 1893, the Revs D. Macfarlane, and D. Macdonald, with Mr Alexander Macfarlane, schoolmaster, Raasay, met and "resolved to meet next day, and, in the name of the Head of the Church,

form themselves into a separate Presbytery, not owning the jurisdiction of the courts of the presently subsisting Church, calling herself the Free Church of Scotland." In terms of this resolution the first Presbytery met at Raasay on the 28th July, 1893. Messrs Macfarlane, Macdonald, and A. Macfarlane, ruling elder, were the members present. "It was agreed that the Presbytery should be known and called by the name of 'The Free Church Presbytery of Scotland.' It was also agreed that a Statement, setting forth the reasons for taking this solemn step should be prepared, to be submitted to a future meeting of Presbytery, with a view to the same being engrossed in the minutes of the Court." At a meeting of the Presbytery held at Portree, 14th August, 1893, the Deed of Separation⁷ was read and approved by the Presbytery and engrossed in the minutes.

The Skye Free Church Presbytery, on learning the decision of Mr Macfarlane and his congregation, took steps to deal with the situation. The Clerk of Presbytery, the Rev. D. A. Macdonald, Kilmuir, addressed a letter to Mr Macfarlane, asking him to deliver up the keys of the church and manse because he had left the Free Church. Mr Macfarlane replied that he had not left the Free Church, but it was those who remained under the Declaratory Act who had done so. Perhaps, if the majority in the Free Church realised the disaster that was to overtake them in 1904 they would have made some arrangement whereby Mr Macfarlane and his congregation would have been left in possession of the church and manse. But not knowing what was awaiting themselves in a few years, they saw to it that Mr Macfarlane and his congregation would require to find a manse and church for themselves as best they could. Mr Macfarlane removed to Broadford, where he rented a house. From there he crossed the sea to Raasay every week-end until a manse was built.

In an extract from his diary, quoted at the end of this chapter, Mr Macfarlane makes reference to some difficulties he had to encounter at this time. At first the proprietrix, Mrs Wood, refused to grant sites for church or manse, but ultimately consented. About this time he received a letter from a friend, in which was quoted the words of the Psalmist: "All the horns of the wicked shall be cut off; but the horns of the righteous shall be exalted" (Psalm 75: 3), and he states that this was an encouragement to him in his conflicts, for which he

⁷ This document is given in Appendix 2.

praised the Lord. "It appears to me," he said, " that one reason why Satan attacks me so much and so often is that I took the lead in raising a testimony in defence of God's truth at a time when the faith once delivered to the saints was in danger of being overthrown in Scotland. It was a poor sign of the religious state of God's cause in the land when it was left to me, who am less than the least of His witnesses; but the Lord's cause was dear to me, and I could not see it fall to the ground, without putting my weak shoulder to it to hold it up as an unworthy instrument in His mighty hand. Others have suffered obloquy for the same cause, and the Evil One pursued them with vengeance all their days. Seeing that this is the chief cause of my sufferings, so far as creatures here have a hand in it, though the Lord has many reasons to chastise me, I seek to bear them gladly because I suffer for a good cause - the best cause. I see reasons daily to be filled with shame and confusion of face before the Lord for my sins and shortcomings, but I ought to rejoice that I am counted worthy to suffer for His Name's sake. So far as the Lord is concerned in my sufferings, I suffer justly - it is of His mercies that I am not consumed; but so far as creatures are concerned, in this I suffer unjustly. But enough of this. Let me seek preparation for serving the Lord on a coming holy Sabbath, if it is His will to spare me."

To many the separation was like deliverance from Egyptian bondage. There was a unity, zeal and warmth among those who left the Declaratory Act Church, which makes that time one of the green spots in their memories. The effort to check the movement was not confined to the out-and-out advocates of the new order of things, for among some of the most bitter opponents to the Free Presbyterian movement were former friends. This has invariably been so. There are no opponents so envenomed and fierce in their attacks as those who were at one time active and strong supporters. Whether their loud denunciations are a last resort to stifle the voice of a conscience ill at ease, or whether it is a cleverly executed plan to divert the attention of their opponents from the line of their retreat, it may be difficult to say, but the fact remains that quondam friends can be very fierce enemies. This is one of the ironies of religious and ecclesiastical life. One of the chief critics of the new movement was the Rev. Murdo Macaskill, Dingwall. He characterised the Free Presbyterian movement "as the most mischievous movement of modern times, and calculated only to do most serious harm to the cause of truth and godliness in our beloved Highlands." After all his rousing and fiery speeches and ignoble retreat in the day of battle, silence, even only as a negative virtue,

would have become him. Controversy brings out a man's strength or reveals his weakness. Men who were never suspected of holding certain opinions contrary to the truth reveal their views in the stress of controversy, and one is amazed at times to find that those who were regarded true as steel are only made of clay, and very poor clay at that. But the opposition to the Free Presbyterian movement from former friends and open enemies did nothing to retard it. The chief difficulty was to find preachers for the number of congregations asking for them. There can be little doubt that the Church would have been larger to-day if it had been able to supply congregations with preachers at the beginning. An ominous silence fell on the Constitutional leaders in witnessing against error in the Church - they were like men whose lips had been securely sealed by their own actions. All sorts of attempts were made to find an excuse for remaining in the Church under the Declaratory Act. Mr Macaskill suddenly discovered, after his fiery speeches against it, that it was only a "relieving Act." In a letter written at this time, Mr George Alexander,⁸ Birkenhead, deals, with some of the lame attempts made to cover an ignominious retreat. "The admirers of Dr Rainy," he says, "show their aptitude to follow him as he follows the grand old sophist when they say of the Declaratory Act - 'it is not an imposing but a relieving Act' But I ask how can they stand by that Scripture, 'Hold fast the form of sound words,' etc., when they suffer their hands to be tied by this Act? With it, how can they now lay hands on an unsound professor or minister and admonish or reject him for denying, say, the necessity of the new birth? With it, how can they rebuke such sharply they may be sound in the faith? Why, it cannot be done; for truly enough such are relieved by it of all liability to either admonition or rejection, or the otherwise just charge of being 'perjured persons.' Whereas before the passing of this Act these haters of the fundamental doctrines of the everlasting Gospel were by their first signing a form of sound words, and then afterwards writing and preaching contrary, undoubtedly 'perjured persons.' It is very evident to an observant onlooker that the Free Church has of late years developed an amazing number of admirers of Mr Gladstone, and these so blind that they swallowed (as is evidenced by their cheers) the last hook he cast them for votes, baited, as it were, with the very word he hates, 'the Reformation' - the thing he is spending his last effort to overthrow. Yes, sir, so

⁸ Mr Alexander, though resident in England, was a Scotsman. Though a Particular Baptist minister, he took a deep interest in the Free Presbyterian Church and all movements in Scotland that were of a Scriptural kind.

blind were these they saw not his craft, neither his duplicity, nor his utter contempt for consistency. But the Free Church has no less developed an amazing number of men who by their writings show that they have turned to fables and cannot endure sound doctrine. Now the late Sir William Mackinnon did a wise thing when he altered his will so that these oppressors of sound doctrine should not touch a penny of his money. I doubt not but the same Providence who directed him to withhold will also direct some others to bestow for the necessities of the Micaiahs who hate and abhor alike the rotten Gladstonian politics no less than the unsound doctrines of the present Confederacy. In the steps these honest and scripturally consistent men have taken - Mr Macfarlane, of Raasay and his brethren - they are in my view seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and in so doing they shall find all other things added to them. The eminent Dr Gill, when cautioned by some not to hazard too much in contending for the truth, replied: 'I am not afraid to be poor,' and Solomon of old has said: 'A poor man is better than a liar.'"

It has often been asserted that if Dr Kennedy lived he would not have separated, as had been done by the Free Presbyterians, but that he would have remained in the Church: but the following, which appeared in the *Northern Chronicle*, from the pen of a very intimate friend of Dr Kennedy's, shows the fallacy of this view: - "Free Church Manse, Olig, 10th November, 1894. Sir, - A letter appears in your issue of this week in which the question is asked - Could anyone who knew and esteemed Dr Kennedy ever think of him for one moment as embracing the views and agreeing with the action of the Rev. D. Macfarlane and Rev. D. Macdonald? To do so would be to cast a slur on his memory as a man and as a minister, as a theologian and an ecclesiastic. In reply, please permit me to state a conversation held with Dr Kennedy two years before his death, which it was deemed inadvisable to publish in his life, the Free Church being then unbroken; but his position being now questioned in your columns, it would seem not right to withhold it.

"It was in the summer of 1882, shortly after the permission by the assembly of the use of instrumental music in public worship, that a friend said to Dr Kennedy - "was not that an un-Presbyterian decision of last Assembly, allowing each congregation to bring in or not as they pleased instrumental music? Is there not something in our Standards about uniformity of worship?' 'Yes,' he replied, 'there is; but what does our advanced party care about the Standards - to them the Confession itself is a burden too grievous to be borne.' 'But they

cannot get out from under it and remain in the Free Church?' 'No, they cannot, nor can they alter it, but they can frame an Act modifying its doctrines, as has been done by the U. P. Church, a suicidal Act in my opinion.' 'But will the Constitutional party submit to that?' 'I should hope not, and yet the other party is revolutionising the Church bit by bit. Do you know I am contemplating a Caledonian Church?' 'A Caledonian Church! What do you mean?' 'I mean this, that I believe the Lord has a remnant in our land who will not brook a creed framed to suit and to shelter men of Arminian and Rationalistic opinions, a remnant that will separate, and as I think the separating party will be found especially in the districts lying north and west of the Caledonian Canal, I am naming it prospectively the Caledonian Church.' 'Dr what an idea! You know that, even if a Church was formed in these parts, it could not support itself.' 'No, not adequately, but our Caledonian Church will not, like our Disestablishment friends, throw overboard the Claim of Right and Protest, and a fitting opportunity may yet arise for their pressing the Claim on behalf of the people of the Highlands, and securing for them a share in the endowments pledged to Scotland for the maintenance of religious ordinances practised in accordance with the Confession of Faith and Presbyterian Standards.' Well, Doctor, if these are your views, I hope they will not be realised in a hurry, for I believe the difficulties and responsibilities connected with the organizing of your Caledonian Church would end your days.' 'Perhaps so, and perhaps I shall have joined the Church of the First Born before the crisis comes; but that it will come, within a very few years, appears to me inevitable.' - I am, etc., - C.R. AULD." ⁹

As the Free Presbyterian movement extended, the call for Mr Macfarlane's services increased to such an extent that he was seldom at home. His congregation, however, did not complain - they renounced their own claims and rights for the general good of the cause. Mr Macfarlane has an entry in his diary referring to those times that may be appropriately quoted here: - "We lived," he writes, - "in Broadford for five years. I went to Raasay on Saturday for the Sabbath work, and returned to Broadford on Monday, which caused great inconvenience, expense, and trouble. But my health was good, and I was happy. Mr Alexander Macfarlane, the teacher kindly gave me lodgings from

⁹ Mrs Auld died in July, 1928, at the great age of 95. Her husband, the Rev. Alexander Auld, was the author of *Ministers and Men in the Far North*, and *Life of Dr Kennedy*.

Saturday till Monday, when I came to preach to my people, and both he and Mrs Macfarlane were kind to me during the five years I was without a manse. We were applying to Mrs Wood all the time for sites to build a church and manse, but for five years she blankly refused unless we took sites in the north end of the island, where we did not need a church. At last a petition, signed by all the people, was sent to her, and then she granted sites at Holman, but on certain conditions, which would seem to make it impossible for the poor people to comply with. One of these conditions was that they would give up claiming any right to the meeting-house at Torran, on the north end, which they themselves built, with some help from the late Mr Wood, who, it was said, handed over the building to them as their own property. Another condition was that they would require to have all the money necessary to meet the cost of building before they would be allowed to start, and that the church would require to be built first [before the manse]. This seemed to some to put an end to their hope of ever having church or manse though they got sites. Indeed, some who were not favourable to us said: 'There is no harm in giving them sites on these terms; they shall never be able to build.' But they did not know the mind of Him who says, 'My thoughts are not your thoughts.' 'We got all the money required, and both edifices were completed towards the end of August, 1899. We came to live in the manse in November following, and found ourselves supplied, with houses better than those out of which we were evicted. We praised the Lord for His goodness to us, and saw that none ever loses, even in temporal things, by following the path of duty. Not only the Lord made up the loss of houses, but the salary of the ministers was as good as when they were in the Church they left." As most of God's people have times of depression as well as prosperity in this world, and it is well that it is so, for it helps to keep them closer to Himself, so it was with Mr Macfarlane, as we find from the following entry in his diary:

"How much we need the quickening and reviving work of the Spirit in Raasay! My own soul needs it, and the congregation needs it. 'Wilt Thou not revive us again, that Thy people may rejoice in Thee?' Thine arm is not shortened, and Thine ear is not become heavy. Oh! stir up Thy strength and might, and come for our salvation! We are like the bones in the valley, dry, disjointed, and scattered. We are weak and helpless to raise ourselves to life, but Thou art our Creator, and though we destroyed ourselves, Thou canst create us again anew in Christ. Thou art glorified in doing this work. Oh! may it please Thee to do it. Tarry not. Come and breathe on us by Thy blessed Spirit, that we may live to

praise and glorify Thee. My waiting eyes are towards Thee. We are sinful and unworthy, but I plead the merits of Christ, who glorified Thee. I plead the promises of Thy Word, and Thou hast said: 'I will be enquired of by the House of Israel,' for these things which Thou hast promised. Thou hast given many great and precious promises that poor sinners might come to the throne of grace to plead their fulfilment. I come to Thee with these promises that Thou mayest make them good to us. The cause is Thine own; the enemy seeks to destroy it and to triumph over it. Oh! discomfit him. Bruise his head under the feet of Thy poor people! Take the prey from him, and raise up many in these islands to serve Thee. Amen"

CHAPTER 4

In the year 1903 Mr Macfarlane received a call from the congregation of Dingwall. He intimated his willingness to accept the call if placed in his hands, and gave, as his authority for so doing, the words, "Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it" (Revelation 3: 8). The Presbytery, in the exercise of their rights, refused to put the call into his hands. The Northern Presbytery, - which, were prosecuting the call, appealed to the Synod. When the appeal came before a *pro re nata* meeting of the Synod, it was unanimously decided that the call be put into Mr Macfarlane's hands by the western Presbytery.

When leaving Raasay he preached from the text: "And now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified " (Acts 20: 32). And in concluding the service he said: "In parting with you as a congregation who have been committed to me, and to whom I have endeavoured to preach for the last ten years, I now commend you to God and to the word of His grace. Ministers are removed, but God never changes. Cleave to Him and to His word of grace. God and His word are unchangeable. You professed when we took up a separate position as a Church to be followers of the truth and not of men, except in so far as they followed the truth. Hold fast your profession. Some may say when a minister leaves a congregation, the people, or some of them, will leave the Church and join another Church. But those who say so forget that ministers are not the Church. I do not think that any of you will leave the Church; but if any do so, they will prove that they are followers of men and not of the word of God's grace. I may mention that the church and manse are the property of the congregation as long as they adhere to the principles and constitution of our Church. It will not go by majority. In the case of a division, even one member or adherent of the congregation can claim the property. That is secured in the title deeds. I am conscious of my shortcomings in my endeavours to preach the Gospel to you, and I often mourned that I saw so little fruit in the way of conversion to God among you. But I hope the Lord's people were edified in some measure, and that the seed sown for the last ten years may yet be blessed, to some at least, in bringing them to Christ. I desired, and laboured for, the salvation of you all."

Dingwall was without a settled pastor for ten years, but, through many ups and downs, remained faithful to the cause. Mr Macfarlane was inducted there on 8th May, 1903, and ministered to the congregation until his death in 1926. Though a small congregation, they were not unwilling to face heavy financial responsibilities. Soon after Mr Macfarlane's induction a Church (which was later on enlarged), and afterwards a manse, was built. Mr Macfarlane, during the early part of his Dingwall pastorate, continued meeting the many calls made on his services, until declining health restricted the sphere of his labours to congregations within a short radius from Dingwall. It was during his Dingwall pastorate he published the Memoir and Remains of his dear friend, Mr Macdonald, Shieldaig. He also wrote a number of pamphlets¹⁰, and continued witnessing against the errors of the day both in Church and State. One of his sermons, in which he denounced Dr Whyte's indiscriminate quotations from writers of the Greek and Roman Catholic Churches, was reported in the North Star (Dingwall) - a copy of which was sent to Dr Whyte. Dr Whyte sent Mr Macfarlane his book on Thomas Shepard, and, in acknowledging it, Mr Macfarlane sent Dr Whyte the following letter:- "I beg to acknowledge receipt of your book on Thomas Shepard, which you have kindly sent me some time ago, for which I thank you. There are some good things in the volume, but there are other things which are of a different character. Indeed, there is in it a strange mixture of heterogeneous elements. If I did not know who was the author of the book, I would conclude from the artful way in which Popish elements are introduced into some of the lectures that it was written by a Jesuit. For instance, you associate Cardinal Newman, Dr Pusey, and Santa Teresa with the Apostle Paul, Luther, Shepard, Rutherford, and other true Christians, as authorities on Christian doctrine and experience. Now, any man who knows the history of Newman and Pusey must know that they were notorious hypocrites. In proof of this I cite themselves as witnesses. Newman confessed that he held office in the Protestant Church for twelve years as a concealed priest; and Pusey, speaking of his Romanising work in the Church of England, said: 'We put the leaven into the meal and waited to see what would come of it.' You, knowing all this, speak of these treacherous men as authorities on Christian doctrine and experience! Again, on page 63 of your book, where you speak of the picture of Jesus Christ, you teach Popish idolatry. The Second Commandment forbids the worshipping of God by images. And yet

¹⁰ A list of these will be found in Appendix 3.

you advise your congregation to do what God forbids! Where was the intelligence of your hearers when there was none to stand up in the Church to protest against your idolatrous teaching? As an introduction to this element of Popery, you spoke of the godly Durham causing a study to be made at the head of the stair, where he gave himself to spiritual reading and prayer. You know that he had no picture of Jesus Christ in his study to remind him of his duty to pray. He was not an idolater like your friend, whom you associate with him in order, it would appear, to make your Popish teaching more acceptable to your congregation. Was not this the reason? Let conscience answer. In addition to many objectionable things in your book – a few of which I have pointed out - allow me to say that I cannot reconcile your profession of Protestantism with your advocacy of union with the Church of Rome, which you boldly do in your sermon on the Reunion of Christendom. In seeking union with the apostate Church of Rome, you so far serve that Church while in the pay of a Protestant Church. Your conduct in this respect is strangely inconsistent with your profession of Protestantism, as well as with your high position now as Principal of a Protestant College,¹¹ where your influence over the students will be great, either for good or evil. As you are so fond of joining the Church of Rome, the honest course for you to take would be to walk over at once to that Church, and not wait till you bring others along with you. If you do so, the cause of Christ will not, in my opinion, suffer any loss. All the loss shall be your own. May God in mercy bring you, by the teaching of His Spirit, to see the error of your ways ere it be too late. I shall be glad to hear from you what you have to say in reply to my letter." Dr Whyte never replied.

As might be expected in a town charge, he saw and heard much to trouble and vex him from day to day, but he unflinchingly endeavoured to condemn everything contrary to and in opposition with the revelation given of the divine will and law, as shown in the following extract from his diary:- "In this degenerate age, the 20th century," he writes "people will not contribute anything to charitable objects without some vain demonstration to please the carnal minds such as concerts ,with profane songs, and sometimes dances and other doings. It is a bad sign when people will not give a farthing to help their fellows except through the hands of Satan. This is not the way of showing charity to the poor, as pointed out in Scripture. When the Apostle Paul proposed a collection for the poor in the churches, the money was willingly given by the members of the Church without a concert or any other vain

¹¹ New College, Edinburgh

amusement such as is practised by carnal people in our day. And the contributors enjoyed more happiness in the discharge of their duty than can be enjoyed by those who seek their happiness in the broken cisterns of concerts and other carnal amusements. But this is an Epicurean age, in which pleasure and luxury are considered the *magnum bonum* and the chief end of man. When Self is the god, all must be done to please it. Not a penny must be given to relieve the starving poor except a sacrifice is first offered up to this jealous god. It has many worshippers in our day, and hence the many concerts, dances, and a great variety of other amusements prevalent throughout the land. The end of these things is death eternal. When the Spirit is poured from on high, the false god shall be dethroned and the true God will be worshipped."

Mr Macfarlane, like every true minister of Christ, was not without his troubles in Dingwall, as the following entries in his diary indicate: "Some that left the congregation are very bitter against us, especially against me," he writes. "I must have my troubles, but the words in Psalm 62: 12 comfort me. I am, therefore, encouraged to go forward in the strength of the Lord. He will give me the victory at last, notwithstanding the wiles of Satan. I gave no just cause to these men to be against me, and I have no ill-feeling towards them: and I commit myself to God to defend me from their rage, or rather from the rage of Satan, who breathes his vengeance through them. He can do nothing but as the Lord permits him. O! Lord, rebuke Satan, and bring these men to repentance. Meantime I seek to humble myself under the mighty hand of God, that in due time He may exalt me. They that will follow Christ shall have to bear their cross." In the same connection he writes:- "Received a letter from Duncan Fraser, Carr-Bridge, expressing sorrow at the removal by death of Mr William Fraser, elder, from the small congregation at Dingwall, and encouraging me to look to the Lord for support in all my trials." His letter is worth preserving, and runs as follows: - Ellan: April 5th, 1907. Rev. and dear friend, - Many a time I was of the mind to write you, but was always failing, which is like *me*. But when I heard of dear William Fraser's death, which you will feel after all you have gone through of late, I delayed no longer in writing to you. There are many discouragements in the way, but it will be all to the glory of Him who can make all things work for good to them that love Him. Oh! I cannot love Him. But if I could love Him when I liked myself, what worth would be in it? In the midst of all discouragements I hope you are kept up to the great and precious Promiser above as you had been for some time. Dear

friend, Jeremiah himself had need of comfort when everything was so discouraging. What was the use of buying a 'field', when everything was turned upside down? I am sometimes so far down that I do not know how to pray for this generation, which seems to go mad. Again I will be taking courage from the 'beloved' Daniel, who was praying before the time, yet was heard so soon. But I feel the want of the spirit of prayer. I would like to have a line from you, though unworthy. - Your unworthy friend, D. Fraser."

Letters such as this encouraged him, and he makes reference to them in his diary: - "I take it as a token that the Lord is mindful of me that two of His praying people have in these days of trouble sent me a message of sympathy and comfort, especially as I did not inform them of what I have gone through in my soul since I saw them. It seems that they found out my case at the throne of grace. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him."

Mr Macfarlane did not hesitate to protest against movements, however popular, which he regarded as not making for the best interests of the people. While highly appreciative of the aim of the Comunn Gaidhealach to keep Gaelic alive, he strongly opposed their methods, as the following shows:- "The people of Dingwall were to-day busy, and in high glee at their own Vanity Fair - The Mod. The Mod has for its object the teaching of Gaelic and to keep up that language among the Highlanders. This is a commendable object, but there are many objectionable things in connection with it, such as vain songs and dancing, which must have a deteriorating effect upon the moral and religious character of those connected with it. Ladies and gentlemen of high position in the world are at the head of this invention, and, though they do not intend it, Satan is using them as instruments to keep the rising generation in his net. When the Gospel prevails to bring sinners to Christ, these vain and sinful practices vanish away; but alas! in this age the most of men and women are bent on going to everlasting perdition. They have no ear to listen to the voice of Christ in the Gospel, but are ready to listen to the voice of Satan. But we who seek the salvation of precious souls ought to warn them against the devices of the great enemy of God and men, and we mean by God's grace to do it."

While strictly refusing to attend anything that savoured of levity, he willingly countenanced anything that tended to promote the temporal and spiritual well-being of the citizens and of the country at large, and specially helped to maintain and promote Protestant principles. Of one of the meetings held

towards that end he writes: - "Attended a meeting tonight in the Masonic Hall to hear a lecture by Mr Graham, Edinburgh, on 'Rome's Opposition to Protestant Missions.' "That there were comparatively so few of the grown-up people present at the meeting shows how little interest the people of Dingwall take in the cause of Christ. When there are meetings for worldly amusements held, very often the people turn out in crowds, but they have no heart for what pertains to the cause of Christ, and the salvation of their own immortal souls. How Dingwall has changed since the time of Dr Kennedy! I was struck with a remark Mr Graham made in course of his lecture, viz., that the emissaries of the Romish Church always work in places where Protestants preach the Gospel, and not in heathen places where the people never heard the message of salvation When I heard this, it occurred to me at once that this was consistent with the name of 'AntiChrist.' It is where Christ works AntiChrist opposes Him. AntiChrist is, according to his name, against Christ, and opposes Him wherever He works by the Gospel. But Christ will overcome and destroy AntiChrist."

He was a keen observer of all the movements within the Churches, and took special notice of the union of 1900. Writing at that time, he says: - " 30th October, 1900. To-day the union between the so-called Free Church and the United Presbyterian Church will be consummated. Soon it shall be heard and seen how many of the Constitution ministers have not been decoyed by the love of the world into the union. 31st October - Read in the *Northern Chronicle* to-day a short report of the proceedings of last Assembly anent union. Only 27 voted against it while over 600 voted for it. Rev. Murdo Mackenzie, Inverness, who sent a declaration to the Assembly craving the venerable Court to make it possible for him to enter the United Church, is put in a corner. Dr Rainy pointed out to him, what he ought to have known, and must have known, that the union was to take place on the basis of the Uniting Act, which went through the Barrier Act, and that a declaration of that kind could not be embodied in the Constitution of the Church. It remains to be seen what Mr Mackenzie will do in the circumstances, as he is ambitious of popularity, and thinks that he will not be popular enough in a small Church. I should not wonder at all though he should enter the United Church on Dr Rainy's terms. He stated publicly at a meeting of his congregation last week that he would not join either the Established Church or the Free Presbyterian Church (the Secession Church, as he called it), and that the only alternative left him was to enter the United Church. A large majority of his congregation signified their

approval of following their minister in this *downgrade* step. I see the names of Revs. Ewen Macleod, Oban, and William Mackinnon, Gairloch, among the ministers that did not enter the United Church. If they had made a stand in 1893 it would have been some evidence of their faithfulness to the truth and cause of Christ. But the property kept them under the Declaratory Act for the last seven years. Unless the ministers that did not join the union purge out all the corruptions that were introduced into the Free Church since the Disruption of 1843, their creed is as unscriptural and unsound as that of the Union Church. That purgation can be accomplished only by an Act of Assembly - under the Barrier Act - rescinding the Declaratory Act and other Acts legalising these corruptions. The doctrine of Establishment, or the relation between Church and State, should be more clearly stated than it is in the question put to office-bearers in the Free Church. At the Disruption there was more prominence given to the spiritual independence of the Church than to the relation that ought to subsist between the Church and the State. It was not disputed then that it was Scriptural that there should be such a relation. In fact, the Church, was established. November 5th - I saw in a paper to-day that Rev. Mr Mackenzie, Inverness, is among the ministers that did not enter the United Church! He failed to get into that body, and, therefore, he must of necessity remain with the minority. This must be humiliating to him, seeing that he decided to enter the large Church. It would appear from reports that the great bulk of the people of the Highlands will keep aloof from the United Church. Whatever the minority may do as a separate Church, I am glad that so many of the people are kept from going into the Church which is founded on such a sandy foundation as the Declaratory Acts of the two Churches which have now become one body. May the Lord preserve a remnant for Himself in the midst of the General declension! I am informed that a number of the people are coming to hear our ministers. I would wish this, not for the sake of having a large following, but for their own sake, that they may hear that which is founded on the Word of God, and be attached to what I believe to be the Original Free Church."

In August, 1904, the famous decision of the House of Lords was announced, and he makes the following comment in his diary: "Monday, 1st August, 1904. A wire came to-day stating that the Court of Session decision in the Free Church property case was reversed by the House of Lords. The newspapers to-morrow will reveal whether this is correct. If correct, the news will be hailed with approbation by all who adhere faithfully to the Confession of Faith. It will

put a check on innovations in Scotland and England. It was not, however, principle but property that was uppermost in the minds of those that gained the case. The judgment of the Lords in the case may cause a confusion in the minds of some of our people in the Free Presbyterian Church - I mean in the minds of people who are ignorant of the real cause of our separation in 1893. But those who came out for principle then will remain steadfast with us, and those who may leave us, if any, shall be no loss to the cause of Christ in our Church. The sifting is still going on, and it shall be no loss to have the chaff blown away. It is likely that some in our Church will move for union with those that gained the property, but, for my part, I do not think that union with these would be beneficial to the cause of Christ in the land. Even though they (the so-called Free Church) would repeal the Declaratory Act and purge their Church from the other innovations introduced, I would not be prepared to join them. For when we came out the best of the office-bearers and people followed us, and their places were filled up with other office-bearers and members who were not reckoned worthy of such a position in the Church of Christ, and in the event of union these would have their vote in the Church Courts, and would carry by a majority any measure they desired to introduce into the Church. In that case we would be in the same muddle as we were in before we separated in 1893. "Tuesday, 2nd August, 1904. - Yesterday's report about the Free Church case is confirmed to-day by the Press. What a shock the decision must give to the U. F. Church! That is what they have for their backsliding. It should be a warning to others.

A testing time now came when it was to be shown how many were willing to stand by the testimony raised in 1893. In answer to a letter from one in a congregation where the seed of division was sown by such as had a desire to return to the Free Church, he writes:- "I received your letter in reference to the disagreement in your congregation. I am very sorry that there should be any discord in the congregation. I have been for some years, after we have taken up a separate position as a Church, going to your congregation to dispense the Communion, and so far as I could see, there was great harmony among the people there. Indeed this was the case till some of the Anti-Unionist ministers went and told our people that there was now no difference between their Church and ours, and some in their simplicity believed them. Hence the attempt now made to form a kind of union between our congregation and that of the Anti-Unionists - at least in the way of mixing together at public worship. This, I believe, was the origin of the contention which has, alas! come to such a

height among you. I am aware, as you remind me, that you were among the first there of the men that joined us in our testimony in defence of the Lord's cause in the land. From long acquaintance with you, I expected, and was very pleased, that you stood up in defence of the truth, while many others of whom we expected otherwise failed to do so when the time of trial came, and I am glad that now, at the end of ten years, you say that 'we should stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath us free.' We have great need of grace, to enable us to stand fast in that liberty. The sifting that began in 1893 is still going on. Some by it have been already thrown out of our Church, and I should not wonder at all though others who were not sincere in espousing the cause of Christ in our Church might be thrown away by Him in whose hand the fan is." What he said came true, for some, who, at first, were ardent Free Presbyterians, proved unfaithful, as after events showed.

In 1905 a number of the ministers of the Church began to agitate for union with the Free Church, and as they failed in carrying the Synod with them, they went over to the Free Church. Naturally this agitation pained Mr Macfarlane. He was not present at the Synod meeting in Glasgow which rejected the motion brought forward by these brethren, but the following comments in his diary indicate his mind:- "The half-yearly meeting of the Synod of our Church was held in Glasgow to-day. I do not know what they have done, but hope that if the young ministers who caused discord at the last meeting at Inverness tried to drag our Church into union with the Free Church they were frustrated in their bold and imprudent attempt. We shall hear a report of the proceedings soon, if spared. 15th November. - Heard to-day of the proceedings of Synod. These ministers moved that the Synod appoint a committee to confer with the Free Church anent union. This motion, which was moved by the Rev. John MacLeod, Kames, was defeated by a counter-motion moved by the Rev. Neil Cameron, Glasgow, by a majority of eleven. This is a result for which I feel thankful. I hear that there were some who did not vote for either motion. I have no faith in *neutrals*, for if they were to make known their minds they would be found on the wrong side. Lukewarm Christians are distasteful to the Lord (Revelation 3: 6), and they cannot be of much strength to His Church in the time of trial. The Synod also expressed disapproval of Mr MacLeod's conduct in lecturing in the Free Church College without consulting his brethren in the Presbytery. At his ordination he promised obedience to the Presbytery and Synod, and yet he took that step without the sanction of either! The Synod, therefore, acted justly in what they did to Him for his arbitrary conduct

in the matter. It is high time that our Church should let these ministers and other office-bearers, who think that they can act in a high-handed way, see that they must obey its laws or leave the Church. Those who agitate for union with the Free Church have now, I am told, adopted a new invention to hide the real end in view. They say they do not want union, but simply to appoint a committee to confer with the Free Church to ascertain the points of agreement or difference between the two Churches! If union is not the end in view, why appoint a committee at all? These men ought to act in a straightforward way, and not in a Jesuitical way to hide their real intentions. They cannot hide their intention under these pretensions from those who have their eyes open. In their extremity they betake themselves to these vain tactics. But hitherto they have not succeeded, and I hope they shall not succeed in future. It would be far more honest for them to walk over to the Free Church and leave us in peace to carry on the work which the Lord in His over-ruling providence gave us to do. Our Church would get on much better without them, and the cause of Christ would lose nothing by their departure.

17th November. – I learn the Free Church Committee of Admission appointed a committee to confer with the ministers and elders in our Church who agitate for union. It is likely that these will apply for admission into the Free Church at next Assembly as their efforts at the Synod were defeated. They shall, of course, be admitted. The sifting that is going on in our Church will throw out these from it to make it manifest though they were with us they were not of us. By this sifting the Lord is purifying our Church - throwing away those whom He knows would be of no use in maintaining a faithful testimony for His truth and cause in a backsliding generation. The chaff shall be thrown away, but not the least grain of the wheat shall be lost. Oh! for grace to be faithful. 'By grace ye stand.' There are *inward and outward* trials through which God's people must go."

In connection with this cleavage and with an article which appeared in the *Northern Chronicle* at this time, he writes in his diary: - "Read a lengthy article in the *Northern Chronicle*, presumably by one of the dissenting ministers who left us, in defence of their rash action, with bitter attack on us for not forsaking the Scriptural position we had taken up in defence of God's truth in 1893. Without any breach of charity, I think it is plain that it was the love of the world and not the love of God or his truth that made these ministers leave our Church. It would appear that they are conscious of this themselves, and they are, therefore, trying to prop up themselves in their false position with

plausible arguments to make their action appear justifiable in the eyes of the public. Some call us 'Seceders,' but we are not Seceders. The word *seceder*, according to the literal meaning, is to step aside from a position. We have not stepped aside from the position of the Church of Scotland for centuries. It is those who have left that position who are seceders from God's Word and worship. But what is the reproach or the obloquy of the creature in comparison to having God's approval in our stand on behalf of His Word and worship.

CHAPTER 5

IN 1915 Mr Macfarlane, feeling the infirmities of years, sent in a letter of resignation to his Presbytery. The Presbytery met with the congregation, and, after hearing the views of representative men in the congregation, it was decided "that in view of Mr Macfarlane's advanced age, the state of his health, and the distinguished character that belonged to him as a minister of the Gospel, they cannot see their way to oppose the resignation; and, on the other hand, in view of the fact that the Presbytery have not had time to consult with their esteemed father and brother, Mr Macfarlane, regarding his intended resignation, and in view of the deep sorrow which the Presbytery realise to have been felt by the congregation when they heard of the proposed resignation, and, further, in view of the circumstances that Mr Macfarlane himself is likely to be present at the Synod, the Presbytery decline to come to a definite conclusion, and refer the matter to the Synod for a decision. The Presbytery at the same time would venture to submit as a suggestion to the supreme court of the Church that, in the event of these deliberations resulting in Mr Macfarlane's actual resignation, the said court would instruct the Financial Committee to see to it that Mr Macfarlane's salary would, as at present, be equal to that of the other ministers of the Church." When the Synod met in June, 1915, it accepted Mr Macfarlane's resignation, and the Northern Presbytery appointed the Rev. John R. Mackay to act as interim moderator of the Kirk-Session of Dingwall. In referring to the resignation the Presbytery placed the following expression of deep regret on their records:- "The Presbytery took occasion to put on record their sincere and deep regret at the prospect of their venerable and worthy father and brother, Rev. D. Macfarlane, being shortly to leave them so far as an active pastorate in Dingwall was concerned; they would desire to acknowledge their sense of indebtedness to the adorable Head of the Church, who permitted them for so many years to have pleasant and profitable fellowship, both in the courts of the Church and in the ministry of the Gospel, and their prayer was that Mr Macfarlane might be long spared, and that, even if his services as a pastor over a particular charge have come to an end, that he may be enabled still to take part in the work of the Church and the preaching of the Gospel among them." At next meeting of Presbytery Mr Macfarlane withdrew his resignation, to the great satisfaction of the Presbytery and to the joy of his congregation.

In 1918 another agitation for union with the Free Church was started through advances made by that Church to the Synod. This agitation caused Mr

Macfarlane more grief than the former in 1905, as it was led by the Revs. J. R. Mackay and Alexander Macrae, men with whom he had been long associated in the bonds of the Gospel, and whom he highly respected and loved. The agitation ended by four of our ministers¹² going over to the Free Church. Mr Macfarlane steadfastly set his face against this movement, as he had done to the former, and was cheered by the fact that the people stood faithfully by the testimony of the Free Presbyterian Church.

On 6th January, 1926, Mr Macfarlane attained his jubilee as a minister, and, with the hearty approval of the Presbyteries of the Church, it was decided to make a presentation to him. At the meeting of the May Synod, 1926, arrangements were made for making the presentation, and on Friday, 21st May, a small company of friends, with Rev. D. M. Macdonald, Moderator of Synod; Rev. D. Beaton, Clerk of Synod; Mr James Mackay, elder, representing the Southern Presbytery; and Mr Kenneth Matheson, elder, representing the Northern Presbytery, met in the Free Presbyterian Manse, Dingwall. The Moderator, after opening the proceedings with devotional exercises, presented an address from the Synod, and thereafter the Clerk handed Mr Macfarlane a cheque for a substantial sum. Mr Macfarlane thanked the Church cordially for their kind remembrance of him, and expressed the wish that he desired God's blessing to rest on all his friends. The happy function was brought to an end by the singing of Psalm 133 and the pronouncing of the benediction.

Though Mr Macfarlane had reached such a great age, his mental faculties remained almost as strong as ever up to the last. He spoke in his own pulpit invariably twice every Sabbath till the beginning of 1925, when he spoke generally only once. He preached every Sabbath except the last two he was in the world. It was his wish that it should be so, and the Lord granted him that wish. On 1st November, 1926, he held a meeting to make arrangements for the approaching Communion in February. This was about the last business he transacted in this world. On Thursday night, the 4th November, 1926, he passed into the presence of the Lord who redeemed him, and whom he had served faithfully and lovingly in this world. To him the words of the Apostle might be truly applied: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of

¹² Revs. John R. Mackay, Alexander Macrae, Andrew Sutherland, and Norman Matheson.

righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto to all them also that love His appearing” (2 Timothy 4: 7, 8). His funeral took place on Tuesday, 9th November, to the Dingwall Cemetery. There was a very large gathering at the funeral - friends from different parts in the north and south being present to show their respect to one whom they honoured for his faithfulness as a minister of Christ. All the ministers of the Free Presbyterian Church, with the exception of three who were unable to come, were present, as also the ministers of the different denominations in the town and a considerable number from neighbouring congregations. Solemn services were conducted in front of the manse, and the assemblage followed the remains of that which was mortal of Donald Macfarlane to the grave, leaving it there until his Lord will come to gather to Himself His redeemed.

The last words in his diary may be fitly quoted here: - “The day star arises inwardly in the heart of believers before they pass from time to eternity to give them light going through the valley of the shadow of death and to dispel their doubts and fears, and to enable them to say in the full assurance of faith: 'We are going to heaven to be forever with the Lord.' To die is a solemn thing even for the Lord's people. It is, dreaded by many, sometimes by some to whom death is gain. I am a weak creature myself, often harassed by unbelief, but I would not dread to enter eternity this moment. But I wait the Lord's time” (4th January, 1909).

Mr Macfarlane lived long enough to see the Church which was so dear to him lengthen its cords and strengthen its stakes. It began its career in the world without a great flourish of trumpets. Its leaders, Mr Macfarlane and Mr Macdonald, were not men who courted the applause of men; both of them were Spirit-taught, and they made the honour of their Master the one great aim of their lives, and He honoured them both by a wealth of love and affection from God's people which is given to few in our day. This sketch of Mr Macfarlane's life may fitly conclude with his own words in reference to Mr Macdonald, with the substitution of his own name for Mr Macdonald's, and the addition of a few phrases to meet the changed conditions of the Free Presbyterian Church in 1926: - “As a minister of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland [Mr Macfarlane] 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 into England. It crossed the Atlantic into Canada and the United States. It took root in South Africa and Australia, and at the time of Mr Macfarlane's death it had a student preparing for mission work among the Jews, who has since been settled in Palestine]. 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 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 (Jeremiah 28: 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 backsliding age, no weapon formed against us shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against us in judgment 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 Macfarlane] 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' (Hebrews 10: 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' (Matthew 28: 19, 20)."¹³

¹³ Memoir and Remains of Rev. D. Macdonald, Shieldaig

CHAPTER 6

WE purpose in this concluding chapter of the Memoir to give a review of Mr Macfarlane as a man, a Christian, a preacher and a witness for the truth. Physically, Mr Macfarlane was of slender build and of average height. His health was not very robust, but he was able to stand a great deal of fatigue. He dressed carefully, and his words in this connection describing Mr Macdonald may be applied to himself: "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." Mr Macfarlane possessed an exceptionally clear mind, a resolute will to follow the path of duty when it was clear to him, and a buoyant and cheerful spirit. This latter feature of his character was seen at its best when he was in the company of trusted friends. He had a keen sense of humour and a fund of stories, which he told in his own inimitable way. He had remarkable skill in making use of these stories to point a moral or drive home an argument.

As a Christian Mr Macfarlane, alike in his walk and conversation, bore abundant evidence of the great change that came over him in his youth. He had been brought face to face with God's law and learned that his own righteousness would not avail. When brought into the liberty of the Gospel the Lord Jesus became precious to him as his only hope. He was severely tempted at times, and, on occasions, for long periods; but at length out of them all the Lord delivered him. He was not ignorant of Satan's devices, and by being sifted as wheat he became a succourer of many who passed through fiery temptations. His own account of these temptations are recorded in his diary, so that no further reference need be made to them here, except to say that occasionally they followed hard on experiences of great Gospel liberty and joy. It may be that such happy experiences were granted to him ere he was assailed by the enemy. Be that as it may, Mr Macfarlane knew the depths of Satan, but he also knew the heights of joy and comfort which his Lord graciously granted him. On one occasion he writes: "I felt as if at the very gates of heaven - tasting freely of the happiness which is enjoyed in full in the state of glory." on another occasion he writes: "Found great comfort from - 'But God who is great in mercy'; could not contain myself; wept with joy." As he put it himself, he was often deprived of his comfort, but not of his hope. He also points out in his diary that Satan's method in tempting him was not so much in

presenting some sin before him as a bait, but rather in discouraging his heart and weakening his hands in his endeavour to serve the Lord.

A very notable feature of his character as a Christian was his life of prayer. All who were privileged to enjoy his company could not help feeling here was a man who held frequent intercourse with heaven – in fact, one whose conversation was in heaven. He lived in an atmosphere of prayer, and those who never knew him must feel in reading his diary that this was a man upon whom the Spirit of supplication and prayer had been richly poured. Such a dependence upon God brought him into communion with Him and His Son, Jesus Christ.

His deep sense of sin made him appreciate God's great provision in Christ, and though in darkness many a time yet the sun shone through the clouds and he went on his way rejoicing as one who had a good hope through grace. How deep his sense of sin was may be gathered from his own words: "I have now come to this, that I dare not complain of any trouble of mind or body but sin in its guilt, dominion and depravity in my nature." To him there was no ground for boasting - he was a sinner saved by grace - and his whole life proclaimed that great truth. A sense of his sinfulness and the Lord's sovereign mercy to him kept him humble all his days. His fine spirit of humility showed itself in his associations with his younger brethren in the Church courts. There was no attempt to domineer or make the younger men feel that his position in the Church as a father demanded respect from them. But what he never asked was most willingly given by them.

As a preacher Mr Macfarlane had a place in the estimation of the Lord's people that can be only accounted for by the fact that he was feeding them with the very finest of the wheat. It was not his oratorical gifts that captivated them, for, in the accepted sense of the word, he was no orator. Neither was it his lively manner in delivering his message that kept up their attention, for in presenting the truth he did so in a quiet, calm, deliberate way. But there was something in the message that excelled all these, and that was the unction that accompanied the truth delivered. It fell like the gentle dew from heaven upon the hearts of those, who delighted in the message of the everlasting Gospel. It was the unction of the Holy Ghost blessing His own truth to His chosen. God's people sat under such preaching with great delight. For one thing, the preacher knew what sin was, and knew also that God had provided salvation, and when he spoke to his fellow-men on these momentous matters

those who had passed through kindred experiences received the truth "in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." He spoke from the heart to the heart.

He shunned not to declare the whole counsel of God. He believed the Bible to be the Word of God with all his heart, he received its truths unhesitatingly, and whether these were popular or unpopular with men never weighed with him as a servant of Jesus Christ. God's sovereign choice in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world was declared without any hesitancy as to whether it would be wise in this rebellious age to do so or not. He shunned not to declare that the rejecters of Christ would certainly go to hell at last. However awful that truth was, he felt it was his duty to proclaim it, and he did so, faithfully and solemnly warning his hearers that, while it would be well with the righteous, it would be ill with the wicked. He never forgot in his preaching that he was only a servant in the Master's house, that the message was not His, but that of Him whom he served.

Mr Macfarlane excelled as an expository preacher. He had a special gift in getting at the meaning of the passage he was expounding, especially in its relation to its context. No preacher we ever listened to excelled him in this gift. The result was that the message had a substantiality and a fitness that were alike satisfying and pleasing. One felt as one listened that doors were being opened that gave the hearer views of the truth that were altogether new and fresh. This gift enabled him to keep up the interest of his hearers while it instructed them. His preaching had always a sound doctrinal foundation even in his most experimental and practical discourses. He was careful to preach Law and Gospel, and in doing so he made use of doctrine, experience, and practice. He did not believe in the modern teaching that the life is everything and that the doctrine is not of much account. By the doctrines of God's Word he made an appeal to the understanding of his hearers, but as one who rightly divided God's Word he did not confine himself to doctrine, and he would have readily consented to Dr Duncan's warning: "If you preach all doctrine, then that is all understanding and that is a monster. If you preach all experience, that is all heart and that is a monster; and if you preach all practice, that is all hands and feet and that is a monster. Preach doctrine, experience and practice." This is what Mr Macfarlane did.

As an experimental preacher he knew the different phases of sin in his own heart, its deceitfulness, its depravity, its deadening effects, its determination to

gain the mastery. Added to this was his knowledge of Satan's devices. The result was, when he preached to the tried and tempted heritage of God they felt they were listening to one who had been in deep places himself and who could tell them the way he got deliverance. He could speak with knowledge of the work of the Holy Spirit in effectual calling and in His work of sanctification. In doing so he was speaking of what he himself had passed through, though he did not make his own experience a standard for others. He fully recognised that the Holy Spirit is sovereign in His dealings, working how, when and where He pleases.

Mr Macfarlane was careful as a preacher to make pointed application to his hearers of the doctrine and experience he preached. He did not leave them with the impression that it was a matter of indifference whether they practised what was set before them or not. They were stewards to whom a great trust was given; and it became them to be very diligent because the time was short. It was with no cold and indifferent heart he delivered his message, but as one who yearned that Christ would be formed in the hearts of his hearers as the hope of glory. He had to weep because his labours showed so little fruit, as many a faithful messenger of God has had to do, but he prayed for the salvation of his hearers. "Oh! that the Lord would begin to convert sinners," he writes, "I pray for it and labour for it and look for an answer to the Hearer and Answerer of prayer." He could say with the Apostle: "I am jealous over you with godly jealousy; for I have espoused you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Corinthians 11: 2).

A feature of Mr Macfarlane's sermons which is worthy of notice is their remarkable clearness and simplicity. The first characteristic was due to the fact that he had a good style both in English and Gaelic, and the latter was due to clear thinking and mastery of his subject. It was not the result of paucity of thought or mental poverty, but rather the reverse. Hence his sermons had an attractiveness for a mixed congregation that would not be felt if the same truths had been presented in a more involved way. The writer recalls a sermon he heard from Mr Macfarlane preached in St. Jude's well over thirty years ago on the doctrine of justification by faith. It was one of the simplest sermons as far as the language and the treatment were concerned that he ever heard, but it was listened to with entranced interest by the congregation. A book of sermons by Mr Macfarlane was published in 1918, and the present volume includes a number also, so that the reader will be able to judge for himself the kind of teaching he delivered to his hearers.

Mr Macfarlane expected, as every minister of Christ has a right to expect, that no unbecoming disrespect should be shown to the Gospel message in its delivery, but it was only occasionally he rebuked, but when he did so the rebukes were remembered by the culprit and others. On one occasion he was annoyed by a man continually pulling out his watch to see the time. He stopped his discourse and said: "There is a man present who has no interest in what I am saying. His eye is on time; mine is on eternity." He then quietly proceeded with his discourse. Mr Macfarlane's steadfastness as a witness for the truth now demands our attention. Reference has already been made to his natural timidity, so that the noble stand he made in 1893 is not to be set down to natural courage. Neither is it to be attributed to mere ecclesiastical belligerency or a desire for a place in the sun. His most reckless enemies could not charge him with that. When he took his stand in 1893 he was known but to a limited number in the North of Scotland. He had lived a country minister's quiet life, doing his duty faithfully in proclaiming the Gospel, and when he stood forth as a champion of the truth it, was not because he sought that position, but because no one else was courageous or faithful enough to take it. His concern for the cause of truth was his motive in making such a stand. What it cost him is known only to the Lord that gave him grace to stand, but we may learn from what he has written about those who resiled from the position then taken up how deeply impressed he was in his mind of the righteousness of the step taken in 1893. Others might waver, who wrote and spoke stronger than ever he did, but he remained steadfast to the end. A friend of long standing, who passed through the stirring events prior to 1893 and after, writes thus of him: " Mr Macfarlane was a man on whom one could depend. He sat down and counted the cost before he began to build. Consequently, one could be sure that, however long one would be without meeting him, he would be of the same mind as he was when he parted with him. He never changed his mind in the least to the duty of the Free Presbyterian Church to hold by the position taken up in 1893. He opposed union with the Free Church when the last effort was made to have the two bodies brought together as firmly as he did on a former occasion."¹⁴ Bunyan's description of Mr Stand-fast passing over the river may be fitly quoted here, as Mr Macfarlane was certainly a Mr Stand-fast: "When Mr Stand-fast had thus set things in order, and the time being come for him to haste him away, he also went down to the river. Now there was a great

¹⁴ Rev. Neil Cameron in the Free Presbyterian Magazine, vol. 31: page 369.

calm at that time in the river; wherefore Mr Stand-fast, when he was about half-way in, stood a while and talked to his companions that had waited upon him thither; and he said, This river has been terror to many; yea the thoughts of it also have often frightened me. Now, methinks, I stand easy, my foot is fixed upon that upon which the feet of the priests that bare the ark of the covenant stood, while Israel went over this Jordan. The waters, indeed, are to the palate bitter, and to the stomach cold; yet the thoughts of what I am going to, and of the conduct that waits for me on the other side, doth lie as a glowing coal at my heart. I see myself now at the end of my journey, my toilsome days are ended. I am going now to see that head that was crowned with thorns, and that face that was spit upon for me. I have formerly lived by hearsay and faith; but now I go where I shall live by sight, and shall be with Him in whose company I delight myself. I have loved to hear my Lord spoken of; and wherever I have seen the print of His shoes in the earth, there I have coveted to set my foot too. His name has been to me as a civet-box; yea, sweeter than all perfumes. His voice to me has been most sweet; and His countenance I have more desired than they that have most desired the light of the sun. His word I did use to gather for my food, and for antidotes against my faintings. 'He has held me, and hath kept me from mine iniquities; yea, my steps hath he strengthened in His way.' Now, while he was thus in discourse, his countenance changed, his strong man bowed under him; and after he had said, Take me, for I come unto thee, he ceased to be seen of them."

Who would true valour see,
Let him come hither;
One here will constant be,
Come wind, come weather.
There's no discouragement
Shall make him once relent,
His first avow'd intent
To be a pilgrim.

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