

Obituary

The late Reverend Donald Malcolm MacLeod

Mourning the loss sustained by the removal of godly men from the church below has ever been the acknowledged and proper tribute of affection for them. Those who carried the martyr Stephen to his burial "made great lamentation over him". Far from being forgetful of their deceased pastors, the Hebrew Christians were to dutifully remember those who had spoken to them the word of God, whose faith they were to follow, "considering the end of their conversation". The obligation remains. "To remember them in what they did and taught, so as to follow them in their faith and conversation, this is a duty of no small advantage to us." (Owen) The late Rev. Donald Malcolm MacLeod has not only left a fragrant remembrance behind him but also, as a Pastor and Christian, an example worthy of our emulation.

He was born in Glasgow on 8th November 1920, and was "hushed to sleep in Jesus" on 21st June 1978. His parents belonged to Raasay and in the divine purpose events were so ordered that it was there that he was to spend his childhood years. Two months before Donald Malcolm was born, his father, by then a respected elder in the St Jude's congregation, passed away at the early age of forty-two. The stricken widow returned to her native isle and there, with Christian fortitude, brought up her large family. We are told that the father had a promise that one of his sons would be a minister of the Gospel and it is interesting and remarkable that this was to be the one born after his own death.

It would appear that Donald Malcolm was from a very early age found taking interest in Divine things. This interest, under the benign influence of the Holy Spirit, increased and developed as he listened to the Gospel from the lips of those who preached it in Raasay when he was in the days of his youth. He had a special attachment to the late Mr William MacSween (father of the late Rev. Malcolm MacSween) who for many years served the Lord Christ as a lay-missionary on the island. One particular sermon preached by him on the parable of the fig tree planted in a vineyard (Luke 13) seems to have made a deep and abiding impression. The death of a beloved thirteen-year old brother was also an

event that was to ever be remembered by him. This God-fearing young boy, we are informed, solemnly warned each member of the family to seek the Lord and his dying advice seems to have profoundly affected his youngest brother.

In 1941, he was called up for military service but the following year it pleased the Lord to lay him low with a severe illness. This was to confine him to hospital until 1944, much of the time immobilised in plaster, and learning to endure affliction as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Staff and fellow-patients were left in no doubt as to where he stood in regard to the things of God and that this witness was not without effect appears to have been shown in the change which came over some with whom he came into contact. The "Letter to the Young" in the January, 1968, issue of the "Young People's Magazine" touchingly refers to this period of his life and indicates that his "abounding in the work of the Lord", even restricted to a hospital bed, was "not in vain in the Lord".

Discharged from the Forces in 1945 and enjoying a measure of health he was able to attend communion seasons that year. At Fort William in April he publicly confessed his faith in Christ for the first time. Like others, whose minds came to be occupied with thoughts of entering the ministry, he shrank back at first out of a sense of his own insufficiency, from applying to become a student. Five years were to be spent as a lay-missionary in Plockton before he eventually complied with the constraint laid upon him. How tried he was in connection with this matter is indicated in the account which follows of an incident which took place during his Plockton days. Difficulties having arisen, the young missionary decided to flee his post. 'He went south', we are told, 'to attend Glasgow and Edinburgh communions and had purposed not to return although he had not made anyone aware of this. Late one afternoon he boarded the Edinburgh to Glasgow train and sat down in an empty compartment. About two stations along the line a lady came in and sat down opposite him. She was a total stranger and his dress was in no way indicative of his occupation as in fact he was wearing, for warmth, his Air-force top coat. Without any preliminary conversation she said to him: "You are a Preacher of the Gospel. I hope you are not thinking of giving it up. Such men as you are greatly needed in this evil day. Do not abandon your calling." He returned to his post.'

Being well equipped intellectually he, without much difficulty, completed the prescribed course in Arts at Edinburgh University and thereafter entered upon his theological studies. These, however, were interrupted by another protracted period of illness and a large part of 1954

was spent in Raigmore Hospital during which he was again immobilised in plaster. His mother had by this time passed away and the kindness of friends over this period and especially after his discharge was all the more appreciated. Annie and Hugh MacAngus, Fearn, took him under their roof and tenderly cared for him until he was sufficiently recovered to resume his studies and Donald Malcolm was ever mindful of their kindness. It was in the MacAngus home that he resumed preaching, delivering his sermons in a sitting posture.

In the Lord's kind providence his health improved and after being duly licensed to preach the Gospel he was subsequently inducted to the joint charge of Lairg and Bonar in January 1956. Over the years which followed his labours were much valued both among his own people and throughout the Church as he assisted at communion seasons and became more widely known. Blessed with a rich, resonant voice and having a thorough, experimental grasp of the Truth as it is in Jesus he was an able, attractive Gospel Herald. Moreover, having come through so much trouble himself, he was well qualified to comfort others in tribulation and this he was not remiss in doing. In 1957 he was united in marriage with Miss Shona Fraser who proved herself to be a true helpmeet to him until death did them part. Six children were born to them, the youngest being only four years old when her father died.

After five years in Sutherland he accepted a call to the Stornoway congregation being inducted there on 19th September, 1961. The duties connected with this pastorate were both numerous and arduous and for seven years he conscientiously discharged them earning the respect and esteem of the people in the process. The Day of Judgment will, we believe, reveal that his labour was not in vain in the Lord. Over and above his pastoral work he in a very able and acceptable manner fulfilled the duties of Editor of "The Young People's Magazine", this responsibility being assigned to him in 1957. His opening articles under the title "Letter to the Young" reveal how gifted he was as a writer and how concerned he was for the spiritual welfare of our young people. We believe they will be read with pleasure and profit in generations to come. In 1965 he was appointed Moderator of Synod and carried out the duties of that office with wonted efficiency. For the last year and a half of his Stornoway ministry he also acted as Clerk of the Outer Isles Presbytery.

Mr MacLeod accepted a call to Auckland in September, 1968, and parting with his flock in Stornoway to take oversight of another in a far-distant land was a great wrench and not only for him but also for the Stornoway congregation. In 1975 we welcomed him back for a visit which

included attendance at the Synod meeting of that year. Little was it realised then that when the Synod would meet three years later from that date a message of sympathy and encouragement was to go to the Auckland minister on account of his being critically ill and nearing his end in time!

In January, 1978, he was apparently so obviously unwell that it was decided to carry out exploratory surgery. This revealed the existence of a malignant tumour and that the disease was so far advanced that there was no hope of recovery as far as human means were concerned. This information he, himself, we are told received with great equanimity and shortly thereafter wrote to close relatives in Scotland: 'To let you know that the Lord according to his Word is a present help in trouble. The King has brought me into His banqueting house and His banner over me is love. He has caused me to rest in Him in such a way as that ever since I knew my condition on Saturday, I have enjoyed what is written, "Thou shalt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee". Only for about five minutes or less on Monday, I think it was, did I feel disturbed at the prospect of death. The Lord has removed the fear of death and I lie as in His blessed arms. "Underneath are the everlasting arms." When I waken at night He is still with me and as I am writing I feel as if "my cup runneth over". Oh, to praise the Lord with me. "Extol the Lord with me, let us exalt His name together." I am all black and vile in myself but He is showing me how white and altogether lovely He is. Oh, seek to know Him I had breakfast in my room, and then read my precious, precious Bible May we all meet "where Christ is all the glory, in Immanuel's land."'

This happy frame of mind continued and those who spoke to him by telephone from Scotland as well as his beloved ones around him can testify of the calmness with which he spoke of his impending dissolution and his longing to enter into that state of everlasting blessedness, which he now, as to his soul, enjoys. Knowing that he was to die and not to live he set his house in order, giving each of his children the same exhortation: "Seek the Lord; be good to your mother; love one another; do not leave the Church of your forefathers", and requesting that the words, "There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust". Acts 24:15. be inscribed on his tombstone, if one were to be erected. This request was in due course fulfilled.

On Wednesday, 21st June, he departed. The funeral took place the following Saturday. Those present paid their last respects by attending worship at the Otahuhu church and thereafter they laid his mortal

remains to rest in Papakura cemetery to await the Lord's coming. (10)

May his sorrowing widow and children derive much comfort from the consideration that he, whom they loved in time, is now with Christ in glory, and may all of us who profess to be following after him in the heavenly race seek to keep our eye fixed on the same Jesus that we also may finish our course with joy.