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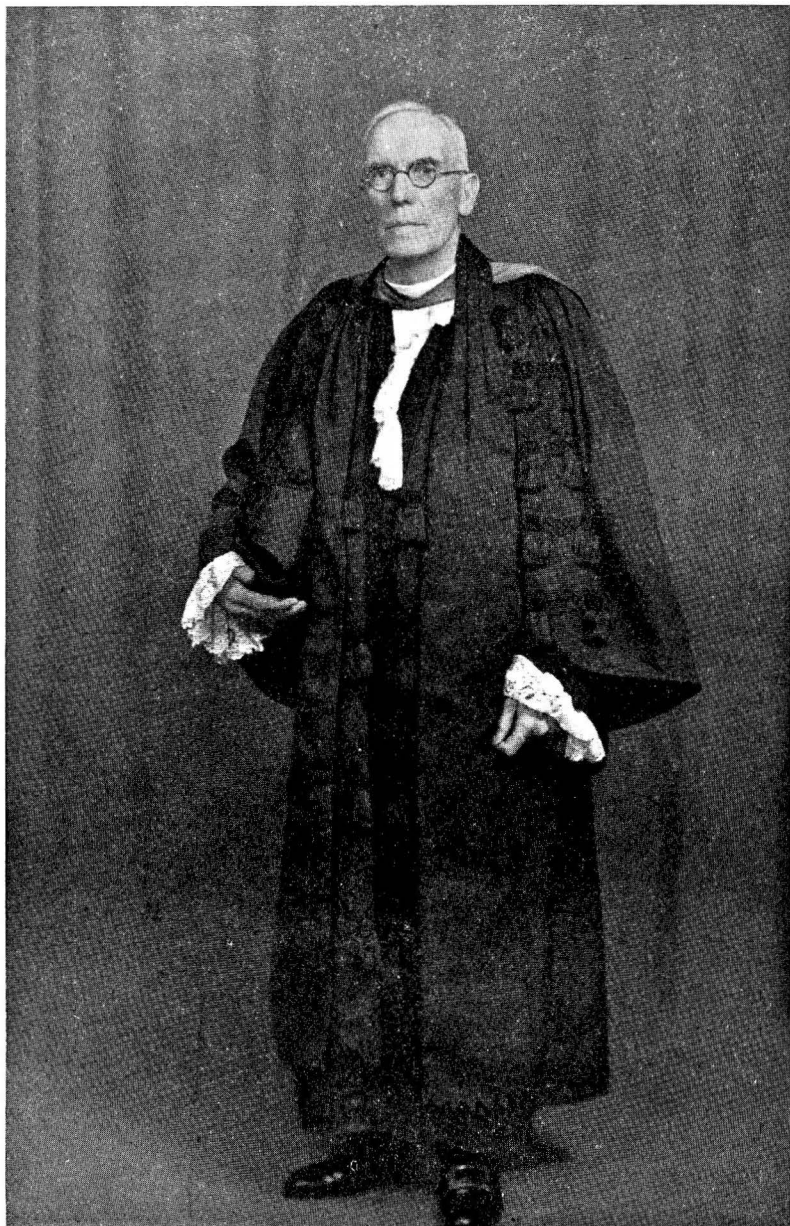
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THE LATE PRINCIPAL DONALD MACLEAN, D.D.

IN PIAM MEMORIAM  
PRINCIPAL DONALD MACLEAN, D.D.

1869-1943

HIS innumerable friends and admirers noted with regret a failure in the strength of our beloved Editor towards the end of 1942, but few were prepared for the melancholy news of his passing on 30th January, less than a year after his elevation to the Principalship of the Free Church of Scotland College in Edinburgh.

That office, although a fitting crown to his career and a source of comfort and affectionate pride to him, was but one of many that he filled with quiet worth and distinction. It was a legitimate satisfaction that he should be unanimously called to follow a long line of scholars who had adorned it, and to feel the trust reposed in him by the Church he loved and its ministry. It is not too much to say that to the officers and members of the Alliance of Reformed Churches throughout the world holding the Presbyterian System, Professor Donald Maclean was the embodiment of that beloved and doughty communion, and it was happy in its representative.

Our lamented father and brother was born in Lochcarron, Ross-shire, in September, 1869, and passed his boyhood amid the great Highland spaces. For all his amiable gravity of mien and shy disposition, there was something enviably boyish about him to the end, and it is not difficult to picture the enthusiasms and dawning vocation of the Gaelic "lad of parts". He entered the great northern university of Aberdeen—then, as now, renowned for its honest workers—at an early age, and there also he followed a path strewn with distinctions, the same quiet, serious, gently whimsical youth, downright in conviction and courage. It surprised no one when the call to the Christian ministry commanded him—the supernatural never seemed more natural; and his whole course at New College (and at the University of Edinburgh, where he took occasion to further his Celtic studies) approved his calling.

It was at Moy, Inverness-shire, in 1897, that he was ordained to the care of souls and at once his loving heart made him a good shepherd and suasive counsellor. Something of the prophet and hero was in his utterance and presence. The Union of the Free Church with the United Presbyterian Church did not commend itself to him and many of his colleagues in the Highlands, but none could doubt that he remained out of it conscientiously and felt the severance with keen pain. Amid the calamitous ecclesiastical strife that followed, he was valiant in guidance as brotherly in conflict and debate. Let us hope that that sharp, harsh era is long since among the "old, unhappy things". If it be so, the leal kind heart of Donald Maclean helped towards the reconciliation in which good men can agree to differ concerning even deep, dear affairs. But in such a passage he could not be left, peaceful and remote, in Moy. He was needed to lead the Free Church's cause and pulpit in Edinburgh, and in 1905 began a patient noble pastoral ministry there. In this he had the only prosperity he ever cared for, and his was a healing hand and gospel. To the business concerns of the Free Church likewise he brought—in countless Committees and ambassage—sage wisdom, generous prudence, caution without compromise. When war broke out, it was not long before new burdens of organisation were laid upon him, and his faithful work greatly benefited Gaelic soldiers and sailors and prisoners of war—men from Canada as well as from Scotland—even as the House of Commons publicly acknowledged. In 1919 he was Moderator of General Assembly—an onerous honour renewed in 1937—and in 1920 he became Professor of Church History and remained in that post, the pride of his colleagues and students, till his death.

But how little the bare record of dates and duteous services tells of the man he was! Scotland has never been "a nest of singing birds" like Wales or Ireland or England—a strange phenomenon indeed, when her romantic history and scenery is remembered, which some dilettanti have ascribed to her "repressive Calvinism". It may be that a preoccupation with the divine science has robbed her of some of her potential bards and what was given to theology has been lost to poetry. Howe'er that be, there was a vein not only of Celtic mysticism and vision, but of pure and sparkling lyric in Donald Maclean. It came out in many an address he gave at our Continental conferences of

Reformed Churchmen—and I recall how its nuances puzzled the Gallic logic of a French Church leader who heard an exposition, entrancing to me, of the Psalter! But much better evidence stands in his felicitous renderings of the Gaelic *Poems of Dugald Buchanan* (I wish I had that classic by me for quotation) and in his workmanlike translation of, and commentary on, the *Cáin Domnaig* (Law of the Lord's Day)—an admirable item (incidentally, and without disrespect) of consummate Higher Criticism properly so called.

“Its great antiquity, its distinctive Irish character, and the glimpse it gives us of social habits, modes of living, and complex procedure in civil and ecclesiastical courts, make a valuable addition to our knowledge, which makes a dark and remote period more living to the present. Of almost equal value is the clear proof the *Cáin* affords that the prohibition of baking, washing, shaving, fetching of fuel and other forms of labour, on the Lord's day, which was recognised throughout all Scotland till within recent times, had its origin, not in the austerity of the Puritans, as Roman Catholic and Protestant writers reproachfully assert, but in the zeal of the founders and builders of the Christian Church in Ireland and Scotland. It is somewhat ironical that the Roman Catholic Church, which claims exclusive right to the ecclesiastical heritage of the framers of the *Cáin*, should to-day be foremost in repudiating in practice its high ideals:”

—surely a deft and pretty rapier, my masters, but always unpoisoned!

It is a foible of my own subconscious processes to estimate my friends, colleagues and leaders according as they seem to resemble one or other of the great poets (or, if that be quite impossible, some other worthy trade must serve), and there never was any doubt that Dr. Maclean invariably brought William Wordsworth, one of the mightiest of all poets, to my memory—a seer most at home alone with God in God's great temple of nature, exulting in the beauty of the passing seasons and the mystical impulses they prompt, yet all uncowed amid the stir of human movements, placid and serene, and with fire hidden within that could at need be fierce indeed. I never saw

our Professor fierce, but time and again had cause to feel and admire this firmness that could be so kind. I shall never cease to prize journeys I was privileged to make across Europe in his company—to the Hague, to Elberfeld, to Geneva, to Prague—bound for Reformed Church Conference or Commemoration. His conversation and discussion were luminous and delightful, though no one could have called him talkative. His argument commended many a doctrine or reading which to one of a rather younger and less patient generation had for a reason of inexperience seemed strange or obsolete or incredible. His patience and extraordinary courtesy disentangled perplexities and problems that one taught in a somewhat different school and tradition had viewed only from another aery; and many a stubborn difference between the learned theologian and a tyro who had devoted time rather to history, literature and journalism (due, as often as not, to little more than nomenclature) simply vanished as he revealed how liberalism in social and political outlook, or humanism in literature, were not necessarily quite the holy and regnant spirits they had been assumed to be, when their hidden implications sought to lay themselves and their limitations on theology and supramundane verities. How good were his sympathetic opposals in a talk about pacificism where one felt the dilemmas, both moral and practical, besetting either of the main attitudes concerning war—opposals that events were to justify soon enough. How profound his statement of the residual mystery when it proved impossible to explain the “divine-human nexus” in the Person of our Lord—that problem so heavy that outsiders or the untheologically-minded often find it difficult to believe that our portraits of Jesus as human and of Jesus as divine are not portraits of two different Beings. Or, in realms less terrific and awful, how temperate and deferential his recognition that, for a temperament other than his own, the pealing or poignant music of the organ in church or temple might indeed speak as from Sinai or Calvary—yet clearly to him it seemed a thing less capable and noble, and it was possible that we might be deceived. Or when, with licensed playfulness, one pleaded that, if Church praises should be confined to the Psalter (as in his Church), surely the noble rhythmic prose of the Authorized Version should be preferred in most instances to any metrical attempt, how benignly he smiled, and shook his head and contented himself by metaphorically pulling one’s ears!

It was as Secretary of the World-wide Presbyterian Alliance that I had such fellowship and communion with this master in Israel. He was adequate proof in himself that (contrary to a widespread incredulity) the virtues of meekness and modesty are among the most virile of all. There was something deeply moving when almost every year he introduced me to the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland as guest and servant of all the Reformed Churches, for he always reiterated his sincere conviction that it was the true brotherhood and esteem found in that Alliance that had led the Free Church in a time of pain and loneliness into its rightful and serviceable place in the wider comradeship of our communion. That was a very generous ascription, and one is comforted if it be an all-too-handsome expression of something true. But it behoves me—and though I commit none but myself, I believe no other will cavil—to add a corollary: for I do not think it an exaggeration to say that in some respects the temperament of our Free Church of Scotland is somewhat closer akin to many of the Reformed Churches in Europe (or even in America) than that of its bigger sisters, and it aided a potent strengthening of the ties between us all. However that may be—and I have learned how infinitely various are the Churches which justly claim descent from Jean Calvin, and how many cross-entries would have to be made if one tried to assess in a roll their affinities as to doctrine and order and forms of worship apart from the first essentials—Dr. Maclean, both for his own sake and his Church's, was internationally revered. In the Netherlands, his was a very great name. It was hardly, if at all, less so in Switzerland, Czechoslovakia and in the Confessional Church of Germany (not to mention the United States of America, Canada, Australia and South Africa) than in the British Isles. And in all his associations his influence was sure equally to galvanise torpor or complacency, and to moderate intransigence or the zeal that outruns due tolerance or Christian charity, if either or all of these perilous spirits showed themselves anywhere. His piety and his good humour never failed.

Few men of our age better deserved a Boswell—failing which, a competent biographer (if a biography is ever a just memorial) may well be hoped for. This tribute of respect and (if I may say so) affection is writ *currente calamo*, and may well have omitted very important items and aspects. One thing, however, is too important for omission, and I have kept it for the

last—the gallantry of courage that founded this *Evangelical Quarterly*.

For consider the times in which he assayed and accomplished such an undertaking! Little by little almost every time-honoured quarterly, monthly and weekly had gone to the wall and vanished (sometimes after despairing amalgamations) under the stress and strain of a garish, over-taxed, over-driven day. *The Edinburgh Review*, the *Cornhill*, the *London Mercury*, the *Bookman*, the *Athenæum*, and a dozen more—all gone! New ventures, like *Everyman*, were short-lived. Perhaps half a dozen of the noblest have survived, *laus Deo*—not more: and we name no names. But it was in such a day of desolation and loss that Dr. Maclean and his colleagues and publishers chose to found a new theological review, international in scope and outlook, in defence of the Historic Christian Faith. Scarcely in an age of abundance would most of us have believed success possible for a venture so hazardous and far from “popular”—theology! and conservative theology at that!

But the thing *was* done, and in fifteen years and in midst of desperate wars it has not known decline or defeat—proof of an acknowledged need the sad earth over, but witness also to an eagle vision, a paladin faith and courage, in its founder and first editor. To say more of these things here might be unseemly—or unpermitted. But if the future conduct of these pages—which a stranger may be allowed to say he has greatly valued—preserves the courtesy, kindness and warmth of heart which Principal Maclean gave to them; the same quick understanding even of convictions perhaps not wholly shared; the same sympathy with gropings after truth amid the things that defy utterance; the same touch of the true Christian gentleman and dear friend and master—it will have a large and lovely service still to do *pro Christo et ecclesia*.

*Edinburgh.*

W. H. HAMILTON.