

# Alexander Macleod

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## Biography by John Macdonald

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This biographical piece is found in *Sketches of the Men of Sutherland* by George Macdonald (Lairg).

Alexander Macleod, one of the most godly and devoted men whom Sutherland has produced, was a native of Balchladich, Stoer, on the south-west coast of that county. He was born in the year 1786. His mother was a very godly woman. In his youth he had gone to hear that eminent minister, Rev. Charles Calder of Ferintosh, through whose instrumentality he was brought to the saving knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus.

After passing through college, and being licensed, he became minister first of the Gaelic Chapel, Dundee, and in the year 1821 was transferred to Cromarty. In the year 1824 he was presented to the parish of Uig in Lewis, where his ministry was greatly blessed.

When he went there the spiritual condition of the people was deplorable, but his advent brought the dawn of a better day. Gross darkness prevailed owing to the unsound pulpit teaching which had hitherto been the rule. 'The people perished for lack of knowledge.'

There was much public profession, but little spiritual life. A large proportion of the congregation were communicants, but the gravity of that holy ordinance was not recognised.

But the faithful Scriptural instruction given by Mr Macleod was the means, through the blessing of God, of opening the people's eyes. As John Bunyan says in his *Pilgrim's Progress*, they were now 'directed by this evangelist to the strait gate and not, as Worldly Wiseman's counsel was, to the town of Morality.' A work of conviction and conversion followed, resulting in the ingathering of a great harvest of souls, so that the wilderness became a garden of the Lord. In the first year of his ministry Mr Macleod deferred the dispensing of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper until his people were better prepared as a congregation for that solemnity. As a proof of the change that had come over them, when his first communion was held only about half-a-dozen came forward to the holy table.

There had been a sifting process going on under the power of the Word, but the result was most salutary. Not a grain of wheat had, however, fallen to the ground.

After labouring for about nineteen years among them, Mr Macleod, to the great grief of his people, was translated to Lochalsh. Many years after, during his ministry at Rogart, he paid a visit to his old congregation at Uig, and had a grand reception. Many welcomed him as his children in the faith. He received quite an ovation. When the hour of parting came it was like Paul's farewell to the elders of Ephesus. A large crowd accompanied him to the steamer. He prayed with them on the shore and

amidst the tears and sobs of his people he got on board. The sound of weeping could be heard after the boat had gone some distance from the pier. So affecting was his parting with his old flock to whom he had been so much blessed. His ministry at Lochalsh was blessed for the awakening and conversion of several who had gone far in the ways of sin.

In the year 1846 he received a unanimous call from the Free Church of Rogart, Sutherland, having been recommended to them by Rev. Gustavus Aird, Creich, who preached and presided at his induction. He had previously come and preached at Rogart on a Sabbath. His ministry at Rogart was blessed for the edification and growth in grace of the Lord's heritage, numbers of whom came from adjoining parishes to his church. There were also several godly men in his session and congregation who highly appreciated the privilege of sitting under his ministry.

As a preacher he was deeply experimental, solemn and faithful as an ambassador of Christ. He would enter with great minuteness, tenderness and discrimination into the cases of the people of God. Living very near the Lord, richly anointed by his Spirit, and thoroughly devoted to his work, he was indeed 'a workman that needed not to be ashamed'. When addressing believers he would say: 'Oh! do you not wonder that Jehovah ever looked upon you, and that he passed by thousands of others!'

In predicting future events he resembled one of the prophets of old. This is no hallucination, but sober fact, as can be certified by some still living who heard him. And in speaking to the cases of exercised hearers he would enter into their difficulties with rare skill.

At the commencement of his first communion season in Rogart, he said publicly that before the close of the communion two persons would be called away to eternity — one to eternal happiness and the other to everlasting misery. A young child and an aged woman were removed by death before the time already stated.

When visiting his people soon after coming to Rogart, he called at the house of a shepherd in an outlying locality called Knockan. The man, whose surname was Waugh, welcomed him very cordially, saying that a minister had never called at his house before. Mr Macleod stayed with him overnight, and it was evident thereafter that his visit was blessed for the conversion of his host. After a period of deep conviction of sin, the shepherd became a new man in Christ.

Some years after, when Mr Macleod was engaged on a Sabbath, he stated that a man who was in Christ had passed away that day. He had not heard the news previously, but the tidings came before the close of the day. On another occasion, as certified by a hearer, he spoke with much emphasis of the great bloodshed that would take place on the continent of Europe and throughout Europe. This has been fulfilled in the Great War. It is upwards of fifty years since the prediction was made.

On a Communion Sabbath, when giving the concluding address to the communicants at a table service, he spoke as follows: 'There is a person present who, while looking on, has said in his heart that these communicants had now made a public profession before men, but that he himself was as good as they, although he had not come to the table. I leave that thought with you,' said Mr Macleod. It was afterwards ascertained that a man from the east coast confessed that he was the person of whom the minister spoke. He was startled to hear his very thoughts publicly announced; and then the thought came to his mind that if all present had acted as he had done there would have been no commemoration of Christ's death there that day. He was led to see his error, and thereafter came forward in obedience to his Saviour's dying command.

When attending a Presbytery dinner, a young minister present maintained that an unconverted preacher might be instrumental in the conversion of others. Mr Macleod said that could not be; but the young man stuck to his point. After discussing the matter and finding that he remained

unconvinced, Mr Macleod called the cook, and asked her before the company: 'Did you taste the dishes you have set before us before putting them on the table?' She replied, 'Yes; I would never have put them down without tasting them to make sure that they were properly done.' Mr Macleod turned to the young man, who was silent, as he saw that this was a practical refutation of his opinion, for if the cook could not tell that the food was properly done without tasting it, how could a man who had never tasted that the Lord was gracious tell his fellow-sinners that he is so?

A person residing in the parish had a dream which alarmed him very much. He was nearly thirty years of age at the time, and in his dream heard a voice call to him that thirty years was to be the limit of his life — that death was near. He felt unprepared to die, and came to consult his minister, and related his dream to him. Mr Macleod asked him to call again in a few days. He did so, and the minister told him that if he would be saved his life would be prolonged. This was the token, and it came to pass. The man lived to a good old age. He was much encouraged by the token given him, and afterwards made a public profession of his faith in Christ.

A godly woman — one Mrs Sutherland, who lived at Faralary, a township whose residents attended Rogart Church — was called home. On the Sabbath upon which she died, Mr Macleod stated in church that a daughter of the King had been taken home that day. This woman, in her early married life, had gone to hear the famous minister of Lochcarron — Rev. Lachlan Mackenzie. On one occasion, when she was about to start for Lochcarron — a journey of over 100 miles — her husband asked her how was she to leave their child, as he could not take care of him. She replied, 'The child will not trouble you,' and, strapping him upon her back, started on her journey.

Another of the fruits of Mr Macleod's ministry was Mrs Mackay, wife of a shepherd at Knockan. Her husband and herself had several miles to travel to church. In the public service Mr Macleod would refer to their conversation by the way, and this so pointedly that the wife remonstrated with her husband, as she supposed he had been telling the minister what she had been saying to him on the way to church. Her husband averred that he had never spoken to Mr Macleod. Mrs Mackay came at length to understand that it was the Lord who spoke to her through the minister, and she was brought to know the Lord. She joined the church, and was well known as a follower of Christ during a long life. Her husband was a man of very retiring disposition, but bore the marks of a disciple of Christ.

During the closing years of his life, Mr Macleod was laid aside entirely from active service, and his pulpit was supplied by assistants. On 13th November, 1869, in the fiftieth year of his ministry, he entered into the joy of his Lord. He was survived by his devoted wife, who had assiduously attended him during his illness. He was buried in the old churchyard of Rogart, where a granite monument, with suitable inscription, was erected to his memory by his attached people. 'They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever.'

Written by drmmm

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## Sermon on John 3:16

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‘For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life’ (John 3:16).

In these blessed words of our Lord we have the sum of the whole volume of inspiration, a most wonderful display of divine love, a most glorious intelligence and glad tidings of joy to all people. Nicodemus, a Pharisee and ruler of the Jews, struck with the indications of supernatural powers and authority which were manifested in our Saviour’s miracles, acknowledged his conviction of His divine mission, and immediately came to Him to receive instruction, and there are two things on which our Lord chiefly insists in this discourse on this interesting occasion. He first teaches him the necessity of regeneration, next the medium through which salvation was to be accomplished, and the indispensable necessity of believing in Him in order to eternal life – and as He was discoursing with a master in Israel, He illustrates this great subject by a fact recorded in their law, and which prefigured the Redeemer’s death, viz., that as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so the Son of Man must be lifted up on the cross, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have everlasting life – and that He might divest Him of that self-righteousness so peculiar to the Jewish people and so congenial to the human mind, and on which he so much founded his salvation. Our Lord further shows him that in the economy of grace every thing of this kind is superseded, for that as the mission of the Eternal Son of God into this world had for its object to bestow eternal life upon those who were ready to perish, so the only way of enjoying the blessing was by faith in the testimony that God has given of His Son, and as this faith is not of ourselves but the free gift of God, so the bestowment of it on men of every character and description corresponds with the grace which appeared in the Father’s sending His only begotten Son into the world that whosoever believeth should not perish but have everlasting life.

In discoursing from these words, I propose, in the first place, to consider the properties of God’s love to a guilty and lost world; secondly, the evidence He gave of His love, He gave His only begotten Son; thirdly, the end or design of this unspeakable gift of love, viz., that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have everlasting life; and, lastly, conclude with a short application.

1. The love of God is the brightest beam of divinity that ever illuminated the creation. There is an unfathomable depth in it which even the penetration of angels cannot reach, an ineffable excellence which even celestial eloquence cannot fully express.

(1) It is pure, unmixed love in its nature, object, and operation. It comprehends the various forms of divine beneficence – goodness, that extends its bounties to innumerable ranks of creatures, and diffuses happiness through the various regions of the universe – grace which so richly showers its blessings upon the undeserving without past merit or further compensation. Mercy, that commiserates and relieves the miserable; and peace, and long-suffering which so long tolerates insolent and provoking offenders. All this divine beneficence in its different forms towards indifferent objects shows the greatness of divine love under various names. It is gracious, merciful, patient, and longsuffering love – love variegated, overflowing, and unbounded. Is not divine love displayed in the creation of this world, so well accommodated and so richly furnished for the sustenance and comfort of its inhabitants, and in rendering them capable of receiving streams of happiness from the immense fountain of divine goodness? It is by the love of God that this universe is preserved in order and harmony from age to age, and its numerous inhabitants supplied with every good thing.

But is it not most conspicuously displayed as an unspeakably great, rich, free, and unmerited love in the gift of His Son to a guilty world? Almighty love, which brought the Lord of Glory from the celestial throne to die upon a cross, an atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world, in order to fit us for the incorruptible inheritance, and then to perpetuate our bliss through an eternal duration. Behold, then, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God, a subject so very grand and so elevating that our limited capacities are quite inadequate to

comprehend it. Who can by searching find it out? who can trace it to perfection ? It is as high as heaven, what can we do? deeper than hell, what can we know? Surely the measure thereof is longer than the earth and broader than the sea. But while this eternal love of God is an unfathomable ocean, we adore the God of our salvation, who sheds it abroad in the hearts of His people by the Holy Spirit, that they with all saints may be able to comprehend in some degree what is the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.

For though creation be replete with evident traces of the goodness and love of God, yet it is the work of redemption that gives the most exalted display of this most animating and delightful truth. Accordingly, when the Lord promised to make a New Covenant with the house of Israel, He intimated that He would therein carry the demonstration of it far beyond whatever could be conceived of it, either in creation or providence. 'I will make an everlasting covenant with them,' says He, 'that I will not turn away from them to do them good. Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and will bring upon them all the good that I have promised them, and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness,' saith the Lord. And He gives us this as the amount of the whole: 'They shall be my people, and I will be their God.' The highest possible display of His love was manifested when He gave His Son to die to procure our redemption, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us unto God. For in this He at once commended His love to us as unspeakable, that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly, in order to redeem them from sin, death, and hell; to teach them the revelations of His will and the declaration of His promises, in His determination to sanctify and to glorify them, in supporting them through life, blessing them in death, and bringing them to glory. When we, therefore, consider the unspeakable highness and holiness of our heavenly Father, and the lowness and wretchedness of those on whom he conferred His unspeakable gift, we are constrained to exclaim with the inspired writer, 'God is Love.'

(2) It is an everlasting love. 'The Lord,' says the prophet Jeremiah, 'appeared of old unto me, saying, "Yea, I loved thee with an everlasting love, and therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee."' 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,' exclaimed the illustrious apostle, 'who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus, according as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.' O the matchless love of our God to a whole world full of ignorance, carnality, and enmity, against His holy perfections, in a state of actual rebellion against Him, and without the least desire ever to know, serve, or enjoy Him. Yet, hear, O! heavens, and be astonished O! earth, God loved this world of perishing sinners. But how much no tongue can tell, for eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it, entered into the heart of man what things the Lord prepared for them that love Him. It is so unspeakable and so unlike anything in human affairs that our text makes no comparison in order to describe it. It has no parallel or similitude among men, and, therefore, it is only said – God so loved the world that He gave us His Son. In most cases human love is expressed by words more than by deeds, but the love of God is such that it cannot be fully expressed by words. It is a divine contrivance which we, while in this tabernacle, cannot fully comprehend.

(3) It is an immutable love, as in Malachi 3:6: 'For I am the Lord, I change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.' He will rest in His love towards His people, for His love is engaged for their everlasting security. Having made them the objects of His free love, a primary fruit of His eternal favour, this love must abate, and His purposes must be rendered void before they are left to themselves. But if the Lord of hosts has purposed, who shall disannul it? If His hands be stretched out to execute His designs, who shall turn it back, before He has accomplished the end He has determined. As He thought, so shall it come to pass. As He purposed, so shall it stand. He has set His delight on the sons of men, and, therefore, He rests. He takes the highest complacency in the exercise of His love towards all His favourite objects. He rejoices over them with singing, and takes a divine pleasure in doing them good. So firmly did the illustrious Apostle believe this salutary truth that he exalted in the contemplation of God's immutable love, expressing himself in the following forcible

and pathetic language:- 'For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'

(4) It is a free love, as nothing out of God Himself can be the cause of it, for then there would be a cause prior to Him. The misery of the creature is not the cause of it, for He is not wrought upon as creatures are, nor are the merits of the creature the cause. Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy, He saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost. It is, therefore, free, as it arises from His sovereign will and pleasure through the merits of our Redeemer. Let us then consider the freeness of this love, and rejoice in the exercise of faith and lively hope that the most glorious day shall soon arrive when our happy anticipations of His immediate presence shall be unspeakably realised, and when we shall see Him as He is.

2. The evidence of God's love to sinners – He gave us His only begotten Son.

(1) Then, we have the clearest evidence of this love in the Incarnation of our Lord. Here the unspeakable gift of God, manifested in the flesh, is most conspicuously displayed to a fallen race. Now, the original promise made to our first parents is fully realised: The God and Saviour of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to the great astonishment of men and angels, condescended to appear in the likeness of sinful flesh; and now the divine predictions are amply fulfilled: 'For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon His shoulders, and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.' How clearly did He manifest His love to us in the humiliation and sufferings of our Lord, in the poverty of His birth, the reproach of His character, the pains of His body, the power of His enemies, the desertion of His friends, the weight of His people's sins, the slow, ignominious, and painful nature of His death, and the hiding of His Father's face – for He hath made Him sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. 'And the Lord hath laid upon Him the iniquity of us all.'

Yet some have impiously asserted that the sufferings of Christ were only in appearance and not in reality. But if hunger and thirst, if revilings and contempt, if condemnation and crucifixion be sufferings, our Lord suffered; if the sinless infirmities of our nature, if the weight of our sins, if the malice of men, if the machinations of Satan, if the hand of God could make Him suffer, our Saviour suffered. If the annals of time, if the writings of His Apostles, if the death of His martyrs, if the confession of Gentiles, if the scoffs of the Jews be testimonies, our Lord suffered. He, therefore, that spared not His only begotten Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him, also, freely give us all things.

This great doctrine, therefore, of the remission of sins through the expiatory sacrifice of our Lord is that in which we can behold the great and mysterious love of God, and is the doctrine which stands as it were in the very face of the divine oracles, and claims our pre-eminent regard. It is this which impresses the Christian dispensation with so gracious and merciful a character, and justly gives it the designation of glad tidings. Though every part of our Lord's obedience was meritorious and tended to magnify the law, yet His death upon the cross was its perfection and consummation; then it was that He exclaimed, 'It is finished.' In that tremendous hour He satisfied the penal demands of Justice, He silenced the thunders of Mount Sinai, He conquered death, he triumphed over principalities and the powers of darkness, and opened the gates of everlasting life to sinners.

Dark and cloudy as that day appeared to the eye of sense, it was the brightest day that ever shone upon a guilty world, for on that day a light above the brightness of the firmament shone through the whole Jewish economy. Types wet with their antitype, shadows were turned into substance, victims no longer bled upon the smoking altars. The veil of the temple was rent in twain, and a new order of things rose before us.

Whilst infidelity triumphed and insulted our dying Lord, saying, 'He saved others, Himself He cannot save,' it spoke indeed the truth. He was enchained and bound, but it was by a love to us and our salvation. Thus. we read He was cut off out of the land of the living, for the transgression of my people was He stricken; for it pleased God the Father to bruise Him and put Him to grief; and in this He commended His love most conspicuously toward us, that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.

3. The end or design of this gift of love was that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have everlasting life. This was God's great object in giving His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. He has not sent Him into the world to condemn the world, as sinners might have expected, but that the world might be saved by Him. In this blessed design of man's redemption we behold the three divine persons moved by sovereign and free love, heartily joining in the most wonderful scheme of our everlasting salvation. The blessed Father to exert the grace, the Son to advance the merit, the Holy Ghost to apply the purchased benefits; the Father to adopt us for His children, the Son to redeem us for His mystical members, and the Holy Ghost to sanctify and renew our hearts.

The design of this unspeakable gift is no less manifested in the resurrection of our Lord, when He secured the union of His people as His quickened and mystical members and their resurrection to everlasting life. It is no less conspicuous in His ascension when He took possession of heaven in their name, prepares them for the heavenly mansions, pours down His Spirit upon them for that end, weans their affection from transitory objects, and attracts them to things above where He is, making continual intercession on their behalf, and securing their exaltation in due time. It was in the consideration of this grand truth that the Apostle Paul spoke of the great Mystery of Godliness – 'God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on the world, and received up into glory.'

All which was intended to adopt us into His family, to sanctify our nature, and receive us into glory. And when we consider the despicable objects on whom this unmerited favour was conferred we are devoutly struck with unspeakable and holy veneration of the Divine Author, from whom all this has originated freely. When men adopt, it is on account of some excellency in the persons adopted, as Pharaoh's daughter adopted Moses because he was exceeding fair; and Mordecai adopted Esther because she was his uncle's daughter and exceeding fair. But man has nothing in him which merits this divine act, as in Ezekiel 16:5: 'None eye pitied thee to do any of these things unto thee, to have compassion on thee, but thou wast cast out in the open field to the loathing of thy person in the day that thou wast born.' It was in this state our Maker found us, when He said, 'Live.'

And when He pours His Holy Spirit on His people they receive Christ by faith as freely offered in the Gospel to this end. His divine grace is imparted to them in order to excite their gratitude and direct their attention to the glory of Him who called them from darkness to His marvellous light, to accomplish the great end of their salvation. They are divinely conducted to run the Christian race with faith, hope, and love; they proceed in their journey towards the heavenly Jerusalem, faith is the foundation and measure of hope. The latter is only the anticipation of those blessings which the former realises and presents to the mind. If faith be strong, hope is full of immortality and glory. Her heavenly prospects vary with the divine principle from which she proceeds. She is associated also with that humility which waits with patience for the full accomplishment of the promises. Hence, as an anchor within the veil, she keeps the soul sure and steadfast amidst all the fluctuating tides and tempests of this lower world. But these graces, however important, beneficial and permanent in their effects, are only instrumental to that grace of love with which we shall ever be filled in everlasting praises of Him who loved us. All other graces are but means to this blessed end.

When we enter into a state of grace the full fruition of God, even eternal life, is ultimately intended. The end of God's unspeakable gift and all the graces of His Spirit through Him are to land us at last in the unfading and incorruptible inheritance. Love should adorn our Christian profession while here

below: 'The end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and faith unfeigned.' 'Now abideth, faith, hope, and charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.' It is of a superior and transcendent nature; without it all other gifts are but as sounding brass and tinkling cymbals. While faith is that primary grace which apprehends and appropriates the salvation of Christ, and while hope ardently looks for the perfect and ultimate fruition of this salvation, divine love is that holy affection which constitutes the health and felicity of the soul. It is the greatest evidence that we can have of being called of God. It is the prize itself, for in proportion to our love we dwell in God and God in us. Of all the Christian graces it is the most general and comprehensive, concentrating every other into its own nature. It suffereth long and is kind, without usurping the place or disturbing the functions of the rest. Love allies itself to them all, regulates their exercise, preserves their simplicity, refers them to their proper end, and by purifying the secret chambers of the soul, keeps up a hallowed flame of devotion which diffuses life and splendour over every part of divine truth, and thus maintains their just empire in the heart with a single eye to the glory of God. It is also eternal in its duration: charity never faileth. Faith ere long will be lost in vision, and hope in enjoyment. Their specific operations do not extend beyond the grave. When they have conducted the Christian to the confines of a better country they consign him over to perfect love, there to arrive at the very fountain of love, from which all the streams run for the healing of perishing sinners, and join the spirits of the just in songs of everlasting praises to the Lamb that was slain and redeemed them by His blood.

I conclude with a short application. Is the love of God therefore from everlasting? Is it the great, the eternal, and absolutely free favour of God in Christ manifested in the vouchsafement of spiritual and eternal blessings to the unworthy, entirely detached from all supposition of human worth and absolutely independent of any such thing as human goodness? O! then, all ye children of want and sons of wretchedness, whether Jews or Gentiles, to this unexhaustible fountain of God's free and unmerited love ye may freely come. Here the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind, with longing hearts and uplifted hands, big with expectations of being healed, may come with the utmost readiness, for the invitation extends to all characters and descriptions of men, and the proclamation (whosoever) is expressive of the freest favour and richest grace, including offenders of the worst characters, publishing pardon for sins of the deepest dye, and all ratified by Veracity itself. It affords sufficient encouragement to the vilest of sinners who is willing to owe his all to divine bounty, to receive the heavenly blessing, and with faith and gratitude to rejoice in the royal donation. Yes, it is the sovereign love of God that raises the poor from the dunghill and the needy from the dust, and sets them on thrones of glory, and numbers them among the princes of heaven.

Happy, then, are they who are taught the infinitely marvellous, pleasant, powerful, and profitable truths of God in a manner that enlightens, draws, renews, ravishes, and sanctifies their heart. Happy they, who being chargeable with every guilt and pollution, have them all washed away through the efficacious and expiatory sacrifice of their Lord, their righteousness and strength. How freely may they come to His throne of grace to receive of His love and sing in the heights of Zion. Happy His subjects who is love itself, whose laws are holy, just, and good – a perfect law of liberty, and whose whole administration is wisdom, righteousness, condescension, kindness, and love.

O! then may that blessed day hasten when time shall give place to eternity, when our transient glimmerings of His glory here issue in our being for ever with the Lord, when our beloved ordinances of His grace shall be exchanged for seeing the God of infinite love as He is, who will acknowledge us in the face of His dear Son, who is the light of the celestial mansions, our everlasting light – our God, and our eternal glory.

Written by drmmm

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Posted in [Sermon on John 3:16](#)

## Memoir of Alexander Macleod by Donald Beaton

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Alexander Macleod, the subject of this sketch, was born at Balachladich, Stoer, in 1786. It would appear that in his boyhood, when he was only fifteen years old, the Holy Spirit dealt with him savingly. And the work begun at this early age was deepened and strengthened by the preaching of the Word and the fellowship of God's people at Communion seasons in Ferintosh.

In reviewing God's goodness to him in the past, Mr. Macleod makes reference in his diary to his early years. 'Give a retrospective view, O my immortal soul,' he writes, 'to Jehovah's wonderful care of thee since you came to the world. When eight, nine, and ten years of age, think of the instances you remember in which the law of nature was checking you then, when you committed any actual sin – Sabbath or week day – though you were then a stranger to grace. Think of how early you were put to school in a remote district of the country, but under the religious instruction of pious parents and teacher. Think how circumspectly they watched over your education and morals during your years of minority, and consider how strictly for your benefit – as well as for their own comfort and salvation – they regarded the laws of God and man, and trained you to pay a reverential regard to the former, and due respect to the latter, as thy Lord commands. Consider, O my soul, the first religious impressions you had under the means of grace, the places in which you felt these impressions so powerful that you could not well command yourself, when between the years of 15 and 18. Remember the time of private prayer in the field at Diminish (1) (Lord Reay's country), also at Ullapool and Reef, in Lochbroom, when you were made as a fountain of unceasing tears and love that could not be stopped in the presence of thy God. Remember the feast you had in Dingwall, on a sacramental occasion, when you could not deny that you got Benjamin's portion of 300 pieces of silver and five changes of raiment, when the rest of the brethren were more scantily supplied.'

On reaching manhood, he entered on the usual course of study in preparation for the ministry. It would appear that about this time he came under the influence of Norman Macleod, who afterwards went out to Cape Breton and became minister of a congregation there.(2) Notwithstanding the fact that Mr. Macleod was strongly recommended by the Rev. John Kennedy (afterwards of Killearnan), the Presbytery of Tongue, when he appeared before them for license, took notice of Mr. Macleod's sympathies with Norman Macleod's views, as the following minute shows: 'They had been informed that he did at one time join a certain party or religious sect in the parish of Assynt, who had openly and avowedly seceded from the Established Church of Scotland, and regarding his having renounced the peculiar tenets of said party. To which he answered, that with a conscience void of offence he was able to declare his firm attachment to the Church of Scotland, and also his having wholly renounced the party which he once joined' (*Tongue Presbytery Register*, 19th October, 1818). On making this acknowledgment, he was licensed by the Presbytery. In the following year (1819) he was ordained minister of the Gaelic Chapel, Dundee, and in 1821 he was translated to Cromarty.

What success his ministry had in these places we are not in a position to say. In his next charge, Uig, Lewis, however, there was an extraordinary blessing on his labours. His induction as parish minister of Uig took place in 1824. This was the first appointment of an evangelical minister in the Island. Prior to this the people of Lewis were in great spiritual darkness, and from the account given by Mr. Campbell in his biographical sketch of Mr. Macleod, in the *Disruption Worthies of the Highlands*, the spiritual state of the people was dark indeed. As an illustration, he writes as follows: 'It may be

stated that the natives of Uig, being located for the most part on the western shore of Lewis, and thus facing the Atlantic, had, in days when lighthouses and Lloyds' agents were unknown, frequent experience of the material benefit accruing to them on the occurrence of a wreck on their dangerous coasts. The writer has never heard them accused of using any positive measures to further such a catastrophe, unless it can be considered that petitions addressed to the Supreme Being might prove to be such. For, however strange it may appear, at the first prayer meeting which Mr. Macleod attempted to hold at Uig, one of the former elders actually offered a request that a wreck should be cast ashore in the neighbourhood; while another elder, referring to the death of our Lord as a misfortune, used strong expressions of deprecation of its having at all occurred.' This is not quoted with the purpose of exposing the nakedness of the land, but to show the state of things before the Gospel appeared marching triumphantly through the Island. Though the Lewis parishes had been supplied with ministers for many generations, yet they were of the 'moderate' type, and vital godliness was unknown. Family worship was not observed, and superstition abounded. All and sundry, when they reached a certain age, became communicants. When Mr. Macleod became minister of Uig, there were eight or nine hundred communicants in the congregation.

Mr. Macleod's own words, as given in his diary, describing the condition of things bring home to a reader better than anything the low moral state of his parishioners. 'The first month I laboured among this people,' he says, 'I observed that they were extremely attentive to the preaching of the Word. But the truth made no visible impression on them. They seemed to be much afraid, and astonished at the truths delivered. You would, at the same time, read in their appearance that they were at a loss to understand what they were hearing. Having commenced to examine several of the parents previous to my dispensing the ordinance of baptism to them, I found that they (with very few exceptions) were grossly ignorant of the truths of Christianity as revealed in God's Word. In questioning them respecting the covenants of work and grace, they acknowledged that they were perfectly ignorant of the origin, nature, and systems of both. There were but few among them that could tell me the names of our first parents, of Noah, or of any of the patriarchs and prophets, and but few could tell of the nature of our Lord's mission, and the names of His disciples and their history. In asking how many sacraments Christ appointed, the answer in general was that He instituted seven. When I enquired their hope of salvation as to its grounds and foundation, good conduct and doing the best we could was the answer, and with regard to their expectation of heaven, they said it would be a wonderful favour to be somewhere else upon the borders of that happy place, though not admitted to the society of the holy. By such interviews, I have at once discerned their consummate ignorance of true religion, and that polluted remains of Popery, since it was the religion in this place, was the only notion they had of Christianity. Swearing, lies, and stealing were very common vices in the land, notwithstanding they were in general kind and obliging, and but few instances of drunkenness and uncleanness among them. After discovering the gross ignorance that universally prevailed in the parish, I found that I would require to begin the very first principles of Christianity with them, and to make it my great care and study how to come to a level with their untutored capacities, so as to render the truths delivered intelligible to them.'

His preaching was very different from that to which they had been accustomed. His activity as a pastor was shown in instituting prayer meetings, and planting schools throughout the parish. The teachers who taught in these schools were men of piety, and some of them became noted ministers in after years. Among these may be mentioned Rev. John Macrae (*MacRath Mor*), Rev. John Finlayson, Rev. Peter MacLean, and Rev. Alexander MacColl.

In view of the spiritual ignorance of the people, Mr. Macleod decided not to administer the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper during the first year of his ministry. And when the ordinance was at length observed, the communicants had dwindled down to six.

This is Mr. Macleod's account of the first Communion held after his settlement at Uig: 'Uig, 25th June, 1827. Yesterday the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was administered in this place, and much of the presence of the Lord appeared in the congregation. There were from 800 to 1,000 communicants formerly in the parish, there being a habit of indiscriminate Communion. This is the first occasion we had the Communion here in my time, and only six individuals have come forward to the Lord's Table. There were no more than twenty communicants in all. The whole of the unworthy communicants kept back, and a great many of our young converts did not take upon them to come forward. The congregation was much impressed through the whole day. When the elements were presented, there appeared as a shower of revival from the presence of the Lord through the whole congregation, and in serving the first and second tables (there being two tables only), the heavenly dew of gracious influences was evidently falling down on the people in so conspicuous a manner that, not only the friends of Christ, but also the enemies of the Lord, cannot forget an occasion and a scene so singularly remarkable, in which all acknowledge that God was of a truth among us.

'But all this might be called the commencement of what happened afterwards, for when our young converts saw the uncommon liberty that was granted to the pastors in addressing those who sat at the table, they were still more impressed and filled, as it were, with new wine and holy solemnity. Much disappointment now appeared among several of them that they had not taken out tokens, and so were not prepared to come forward. Pungent conviction, towards the evening, took hold of some of them for not obeying Christ's command. It was a night ever to be remembered in this place, in which the whole of it was spent in religious exercises, whether in private or together with others, in cases mingled with unusual instances of joy and sorrow.

'While these things were carried on, the ungodly themselves were in tears, and iniquity for a time dwindled into nothing, covered her brazen face, and was greatly ashamed. On Monday, many felt sadly disappointed when they saw that the ungodly had kept back from the table, and when they perceived that the Lord's people were so greatly refreshed in commemorating His death, that they did not timeously prepare for the duty, and that, after the Lord in every way cleared the way for them, they were not ready. This circumstance caused much sorrow, and more so as there is no doubt but some supposed that some of the most promising of the Lord's people would not communicate at this time. But when they saw that those went forward, and that they themselves were not ready, and when they were convinced then in their consciences that they were led to follow the example of men than sincere regard to Christ's command and the commemoration of His dying love, the whole circumstances of the case came home with peculiar force to their consciences, and they were humbled low in the dust. But this prepared their souls for receiving the excellent sermon preached by the Rev. Mr. MacDonald (Ferintosh) on the following day, from John 16:22: 'And ye now therefore have sorrow, but I will see you again, and your hearts shall rejoice.' The Lord's people were greatly impressed and refreshed by this sermon; and they descended from the mount with songs and praises.'

Uig had become a well-watered garden, and the fewness of the communicants was an indication of how completely the people's minds had been changed as to their duty in sitting at the Lord's Table. People gathered from all parts of the Island, and extraordinary interest was awakened in divine things. Four years after Mr. Macleod's induction, it is said, that 9,000 people were present at Uig Communion. The spirit of prayer and supplication was given to the people, and in dispersing from the public means of grace, they met in private, and poured out their hearts to God. This change affected not only the devotional habits of the people, but shaped and fashioned their whole conduct. 'They are an extraordinary people,' is the testimony of a naval officer; 'one cannot but be struck with their honesty, kindness, and sobriety. I think I have never seen a drunk person out of the town. One

*hears* of religion elsewhere, but one *sees* it here in everything.' The Rev. John Macrae (*MacRath Mor*) testified that the finest moral spectacle he had ever witnessed during his whole career was that of the congregation of Uig under the pastorate of the Rev. Alexander Macleod.

The work thus begun by God in so many hearts was not like man's work, for it continued, and through the preaching of Mr. Macleod, Mr. Finlayson, and Mr. Finlay Cook, many souls were awakened to real concern. God opened the windows of heaven, and poured down a rich and abundant blessing on the dried and parched wilderness, and made it blossom as a garden of the Lord.

At the Disruption Mr. Macleod joined the Free Church, and in 1844 was translated to Lochalsh, where he laboured for three years. In 1846 he was translated to Rogart, where he finished his course, after labouring there for twenty-three years. He died 13th November, 1869, greatly beloved and honoured by a people who respected him as a true minister of Christ. Even to this day, notwithstanding the chilling indifference that is spreading over the land, the memory of Mr. Macleod is revered in the parish, where he spent so many years. And if the same success did not attend his preaching in Rogart as in Uig, yet, there can be no doubt of the impression his ministry made on his hearers.

In concluding this brief sketch of this noted preacher of the Gospel, one cannot help expressing regret that we are not in possession of much material to illustrate Mr. Macleod's teaching. Some of the sermons in this booklet, however, will give an idea to those who appreciate deep experimental Scriptural teaching what Mr. Macleod's preaching was like. We especially call attention to two of these – an ordination sermon on 1 Timothy 4:16 and the sermon on the words, 'Cast thou thy burden on the Lord.' In the former the text is: 'Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them; for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee' (1 Tim. 4:16), and the divisions are: (1) The exhortations of the text; (2) The promises by which they are enforced.

In expounding the first exhortation – 'Take heed unto thyself' – he notices six particulars. (1) Take heed that you be a sound believer, that you have been convinced and converted, and that you are making progress in the divine life. (2) Take heed that you be a called and sent minister to witness the things you have seen and felt. If the Lord does not send ministers, they shall not profit the people. The profitable minister is he who can say, 'Lord, thou hast sent me; therefore go with me; bless me and make me successful.' (3) Take heed you be an exercised minister – not satisfied with systematic and orthodox views merely, but coming forth in the fulness of the blessings of the Gospel of Christ, speaking from the heart to the heart, and bringing out of the treasure 'things new and old.' (4) See that there be conscientious diligence in all the means for attaining fitness for this great work. 'Till I come give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all.' (5) See that you will have the glory of God, and the salvation of souls in view. (6) See that you watch in all things; be on your guard against every temptation, every external and internal enemy, that your conversation be such as becometh the Gospel, and that you walk with circumspection, worthy of the vocation by which you are called.

In regard to the second exhortation, he says: 'Under the teaching of the Spirit, he will "give heed to the doctrine"; he will be enabled to declare "the whole counsel of God" and to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints." He will not be carried about by every wind of doctrine, nor teach every kind of doctrine to his people. The ballast of grace and spiritual understanding will enable him to weather out the wintry storms to which he will be exposed from the world, the devil, and the flesh, from external and internal enemies, in the dangerous voyage of human life. Dangers and difficulties, opposition and contempt, he must calculate upon and expect. The very nature of his ministerial functions implies the former, and all the grandeur and dignity of it will not exempt him from the latter. "The truth itself" will offend. He will be regarded as an enemy by some for no other reason but because he tells the truth. The truth condemns the lax conduct of the unconverted, and

their unscriptural creed founded on that conduct. To live in the consciences of such men as a witness against them is all that is desirable as long as they are at enmity with God. By consistency, however, you will command their esteem, for many often deny what they cannot disbelieve, and ridicule what they cannot but silently revere.'

On the third exhortation, 'Continue in them,' he says: 'Continue (1) in thy views; (2) in thy calling; (3) be laborious and diligent. Continue in thy principles and work; you must not abandon either while on earth. "Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel!" Continue to seek after greater fitness for thy work, in prayer, reading, and meditations.'

These are a few quotations from as solemn and searching an ordination sermon as any young minister ever listened to. The zeal it manifests for God's glory, the sober and judicious handling of God's truth, and the searching application of it to the conscience must leave on the mind of every serious reader the impression that he is listening to a judicious counsellor, 'a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.'

In concluding this sketch, we feel it rather a difficult matter to convey to our readers an idea of the extraordinary place Mr. Macleod had in the hearts of God's people. He was esteemed very highly for his work's sake. It was no blind hero worship, but the love of a living people who recognised in him a true servant of Jesus Christ, and gave him the place and respect due to his office. As a preacher he dwelt on such truths as the glory of Christ's person, the virtue and efficacy of His sufferings, the perfection of His finished righteousness, and God's great love to sinners.

(1) Gaelic form of Durness

(2) The Rev. Norman Macleod was a very remarkable man in many ways. In 1851 he sailed in a vessel built by himself and many of his Cape Breton congregation, to Australia, where he remained for two years. He then went to New Zealand, and, finally settled in the district of Waipu, about seventy miles north of Auckland, where he died in 1866, at the age of eighty-six. It is said that the life and doctrine of a certain class of ministers in the Church of Scotland was the cause of his separation from the Church of his fathers. There is a short account of his Cape Breton ministry (with portrait) in the *Presbyterian Witness* (Diamond Jubilee Number, December, 1908), and of his New Zealand ministry in the *History of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand* (pp. 78.80). Mr. Macleod's own ecclesiastical views are set forth in a volume of tractates, *The Present Church of Scotland and a Tint of Normanism, contending in a Dialogue*. A full description of the Waipu settlement is given in a pamphlet entitled *The Idyll of the Shipbuilders*, published in New Zealand. Dr. R. G. Macdonald, Dunedin, wrote two articles on the Rev. Norman Macleod and the Waipu settlement, in the *John O'Groat Journal* (9th and 16th June, 1922).

In 1952, Neil Robinson's book on Norman Macleod, *Lion of Scotland*, was published by Hodder and Stoughton. Flora MacPherson's biography of Norman Macleod, *Watchman Against the World*, was published in 1962 by Robert Hale (it was reprinted by Breton Books in Cape Breton Island in 1993).

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