

Rev Donald MacLellan

Minister of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland:
Born June 4, 1915;
Died August 13, 2010.

THE Rev Donald MacLellan, who has died aged 95, was for 40 years years Free Presbyterian minister of Glasgow and will be best remembered for his part in the censure of Lord Mackay of Clashfern, in November 1988, after the Lord Chancellor – an Edinburgh elder – had attended a requiem Mass.

Mr MacLellan was so vast a figure, and around so long, that his death has shaken his church. He had been a communicant member for more than 70 years and a minister for in excess of 60 – so long that when he began his trade, it was alongside two colleagues ordained in the 19th century.

He was of robust Highland stock: his father was from Coigach and his mother from Raasay. But Mr MacLellan was born in a Gorbals tenement in 1915 and, though a Highlander by blood and a Free Presbyterian by upbringing, he was a Glasgow boy, whose classless ascent and good humour reflected the best of his native city.

He trained for accountancy and talked warmly always of his old boss Thomas Galbraith, later the first Lord Strathclyde and sire of a noted Tory dynasty. Mr MacLellan never shed Galbraith's west end polish or humane Unionist politics and – with such sponsorship and his own talent – might well have become a Glasgow MP, and perhaps more.

But, at the age of 19, he came to an emphatic faith and, in November 1937, was received at St Jude's as a member in full communion.

After war service as a Royal Navy officer – its bearing and unflappability never left him – he trained for the Free Presbyterian ministry. In 1948, he was ordained and inducted to the charge of Portree.

Shortly afterwards, he married Grace MacQueen of Daviot, who died in 2008 after nearly 60 years of serene union; they had four children.

In 1960, he was inducted as minister of St Jude's, Glasgow, and served there for the 40 years. For nearly 30 years, from 1958 to 1986, he was a theological tutor, training dozens of Free Presbyterian ministers and, from 1977 to 1990, he also served as clerk of Synod, the most powerful office in the denomination.

These were gruelling years as the traditionalists battled a progressive faction dominated by laymen who did not appreciate Christian scrutiny as to how precisely they made their money. It was this tension – far more than the issue of the Mass – which in 1989 finally split the church, with the losers peeling away to form the Associated Presbyterian Churches (APC).

It was complicated by Lord Mackay's high office – which made many humble church adherents naturally go weak at the knees – and his own personal popularity. Mr MacLellan, by contrast, like any effective leader, could readily be portrayed as abrasive and bossy.

But Free Presbyterians believe the Mass so blasphemous no Protestant should countenance it with his presence and had for almost a century sent formal protests when any public figure was reported attending one. Lord Mackay, as a past Synod clerk, had personally signed several

and Mr MacLellan was also troubled by a fundamental fairness. Church discipline should apply impartially to all, be the member a Cabinet minister in London or an apprentice-joiner on Lewis. (Part of Mr MacLellan's stature was his unflinching decency to and for little people.)

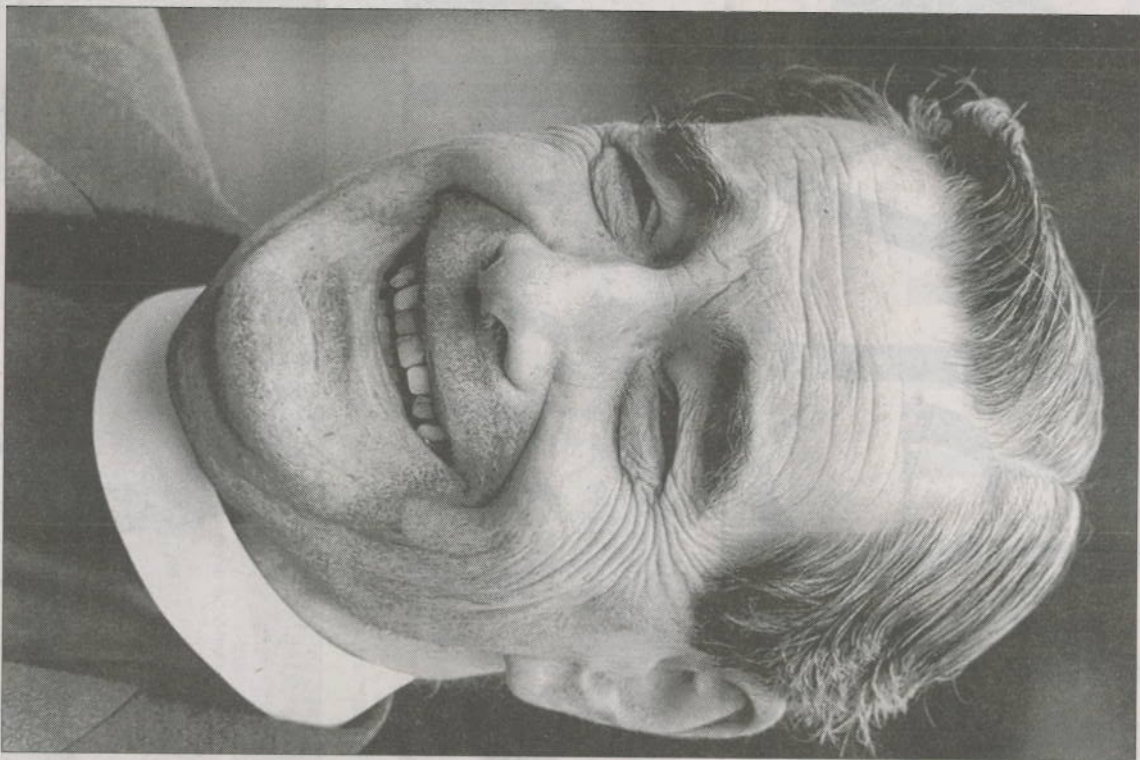
It was on this firm basis that Mr MacLellan led the prosecution at the Southern Presbytery in 1988 and, month later, at the 1989 Synod, starkly defended its position – with journalists hanging out of the pews – in public. "I find it very difficult to believe," he rasped, "that the Lord Chancellor of a Protestant country, with a Protestant Queen on a Protestant throne, has any obligation by reason of his office to go to a Popish Mass." Synod agreed with him – by five votes. Lord Mackay left the Church with the revisionists to launch the APC.

For his resolve, Mr MacLellan – a formidable ecclesiastic – was vilified, to the great distress of Grace and the children.

A man of consummate professionalism – sparing habits, keen organisation and immaculate wardrobe – Mr MacLellan subsequently abandoned all his offices and concentrated on his preaching, only denouncing St Jude's in 2000 when doctors advised he should no longer drive.

But he never really stopped preaching – he took at least one service even in 2010 – and, latterly in the Church's care home at Inverness, he was a sparkling, much-loved presence, retaining all his faculties to the end.

Mr MacLellan was the son of a far more mobile past, when a charitable boy from a Glasgow slum could reach the top of his profes-



Poem of the day

There is a strong poetry component in New Writing Scotland 28, with its enigmatic title, *Stone Going Home Again* (edited by Alan Bissett and Carl MacDougall, Association for Scottish Literary Studies, £7.95). This admirable annual anthology contains work by both established and emerging writers. Here is a sample poem. It's by Donald S Murray, a weaver's son from Lewis, who now lives and works in Shetland – Lesley Duncan

Weaving Song

In remembrance of Angus Murray, 1922-81

Dad used to fill the room with praise these hours spent bowed above his loom, precenting over patterns, weaving belief deep into both weft and warp till wool was flecked with psalm as each song shuffled, threading verse through two-by-two or plain until his finished tweed retained

rhythms of Kilmarnock, Stormorway deep within the tightness of the cloth for a stranger to put on, unaware how faith was sewn within the garment; bright stitch among both checks and herringbone; an active work of worship, prayer with which my father laboured to prepare fabric fit for other souls to wear.

From the archives

25 YEARS AGO

A BREAKTHROUGH in the number of adults learning Gaelic in Scotland was welcomed yesterday by Comann Luchd Ionnsachaidh, the association of adult learners of the language. The number of classes throughout Scotland in 1984-85, doubled to 120 compared with the previous year.

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FAMILY ANNOUNCEMENTS

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● Births

MILLER

Grant and Lisa (nee Boos) are delighted to announce the safe arrival of their son Callum

● Deaths

BUDGE

Peacefully, at the Royal Alexandra Hospital, Paisley on 15th August, 2010, Joan Bennie Hood, beloved wife of Ian Forbes

CORDNER

James Suddenly, on 9th August, 2010, whilst on holiday in Carradale, Dr James Wilson

HUNTER

BERNARD, Gilmerton, Suddenly, at the Royal Infirmary, Edinburgh, on Wednesday, 11th August, 2010, Bernard, aged 62

KERR

MARY (MAV) nee LAWRIE, On 13th August, 2010, at home, Dearest wife of the late Keith, much loved mother to Anne, Janice and

LIDDEL

SARAH WILSON, Peacefully, at Mountview House, Callander, on 13th August, 2010, Sarah, aged 98 years, beloved wife of the late Gavin Harvey

PEEBLES

WILLIAM, Peacefully at Astrigill Nursing Home on Thursday 12th August, 2010, William, beloved husband of Christina, father

SHAW

ELIZABETH, Peacefully, at Wardside House, Muirhill on Friday, 13th August, 2010, Elizabeth (Betty) Shaw, in her 90th

WILKIE

ARCHIBALD ROSS, Suddenly, but peacefully, at Stirling Royal Infirmary, on Friday, 13th August, 2010, Archie, dearly loved and served

● Acknowledgments

MACKEARRON — HARRY, Bunry and Duncan would very much like to thank all relatives and friends for attending the Maryhill Western Necropolis on 12th