
Finlay Beaton (1883–1974)

Exhorter, chronicler, and eschatologist

NORMAN CAMPBELL

Finlay Beaton was an elder and home missionary¹ in the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland who lived in Inverness. He is of wider interest for his godly impact, his independence of mind, and intellectual pursuits. The last included chronicling nineteenth and twentieth-century Highland church life, and an in-depth knowledge of eschatology and prophecy.

In describing aspects of Finlay Beaton's life and thought, this article will attempt comparison with other Reformed and evangelical traditions.² It will also tease out the importance of church friendship and power networks in the mid-twentieth century by briefly describing some of the leading figures in the north with whom he associated. A marine engineer by profession, and self-taught historian, his life story touches on a number of themes in the wider Reformed constituency.

He was memorialised in his denomination's magazine by an obituary published in 1978.³ The author was his minister, Rev. Angus F. Mackay,⁴

¹ In Scottish Reformed nomenclature, a salaried lay preacher usually associated with a specific community. For Church of Scotland and Free Church examples in the Western Isles, see K. J. Smith (ed.), *Air a' Mhisein: A Sower and His Seed* (Stornoway, 1998). See also Frank D. Bardgett, *Devoted Service Rendered: The Lay Missionaries of the Church of Scotland* (St Andrew Press, 2002).

² The writer acknowledges the help of the Rev. John Macleod, retired Free Presbyterian minister of Stornoway and London, as well as that of Rev. Neil M. Ross, retired pastor of the Dingwall and Beaulieu charge; this in addition to a number of others thanked in the footnotes.

³ AFM, 'Mr Finlay Beaton, Inverness', *Free Presbyterian Magazine* (hereafter *FPM*), Vol. 83 (September 1978), pp. 243-246.

⁴ Mr Mackay served as pastor of Applecross Free Presbyterian Church from 1935 until 1947, and then of Inverness from 1947 until 1987. He served as Greek tutor to divinity students, and acted as a Church deputy to Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Zimbabwe.

who described him as ‘this worthy man’.⁵ Among the many tributes paid to Finlay more recently was the following: ‘The abiding impression we had, over many years, was that he was a godly man who put the deep and lasting interests of the kingdom of God first.’⁶ Another person recalled: ‘He was one of the most intellectually gifted and eminent of the “men” of our Church, yet he was easily approachable on any matter of soul concern.’⁷

I. Background and early years

The family roots were in Wester Ross. Finlay understood that in 1651, three Beaton brothers had left Waternish in Skye to work on iron ore at Red Point, Gairloch. A son of one brother subsequently moved to Torridon and reclaimed land. His son, despite being cleared, regained the tenancy on this croft at Corrie near Shildaig. A descendant, Finlay (1811–1901), who was to become Finlay Beaton the FP elder’s paternal grandfather, married an Isabella Macbeath (1814–1892) and was a boat-builder at Badan Mhugaidh. Their son Christopher (1848–1924) married Catherine née MacDonald (1848–1924); Christopher and Catherine were Finlay Beaton’s parents.⁸ They married in 1878 in the Free Church at Lochcarron. Catherine was a domestic servant. Christopher was a fisherman, living in Torridon, near Shildaig.⁹

By 1881, the couple had set up house at 31, The Street, in Shildaig, and Christopher was still earning a living as a fisherman. Their first child, Mary Ann was 18 months old.¹⁰ Finlay was born on March 19th, 1883.¹¹ In 1891, Christopher with his wife Catherine and Finlay were living in St Andrew’s Llanbryd in Moray. He was working as a general labourer.¹² At some point in the 1890s, almost certainly by 1895, the family moved to Inverness.¹³ At the 1901 census, Christopher and Catherine with children

He was Moderator of his Church’s Synod on three occasions and Clerk of the Northern Presbytery for 33 years. See Rev. D. M. Boyd, ‘Rev. Angus Finlay Mackay’, *FPM*, Vol. 101 (October 1996), pp. 304–307.

⁵ AFM, ‘Mr Finlay Beaton, Inverness’, p. 243.

⁶ Rev. John Tallach, 17th November 2022. I wish to acknowledge the extensive help provided by Mr Tallach in this and other parts of the article.

⁷ An office-bearer, email to the writer, 2009.

⁸ The writer acknowledges the help of Annabel Bremner, Inverness, for family information.

⁹ 1878, Marriages in the Parish of Lochcarron, p. 3. The service was conducted by the Lochcarron Free Church minister Rev. Donald Forbes (1821–1898).

¹⁰ Quoad Sacra parish of Shildaig, Village of Shildaig, Census 1881, 058/2 3/ 10, p. 10.

¹¹ Births in the district of Shildaig in the County of Ross, 1883, p. 4.

¹² 1891 Census 142/ 4/ 5, p. 5.

¹³ The valuation roll for 1895 shows ‘Christopher Beaton, labourer’ as a tenant at 14 Gilbert Street, Inverness.

Finlay and Bella were living on Celt Street, Inverness. By that point Finlay was eighteen years old and working as an apprentice engine-fitter.¹⁴

Before apprenticeship, Finlay had become dux of Raining's School in Inverness. From his headmaster there, Alexander Macbain (1855–1907), he learned 'the habits of concentration, clearness of diction and love of books'.¹⁵ An obituarist wrote: 'As Headmaster of Raining's School, Dr MacBain exerted an influence over his students very similar to that of his own old teacher, Dr Dey of Aberdeen. He taught them to think for themselves, to insist on not only having the facts but also, wherever possible, the reasons why these things are so.'¹⁶ Another observer said of Macbain: 'He had the true scientific spirit in his respect for facts, and in the pains he took, and insisted on others taking, to verify them. No statement of his is made at haphazard; he would delay his work until satisfied of the accuracy of every detail.'¹⁷

Raining's School was established by the SSPCK in 1727, because of a bequest by Scots-born Norwich merchant John Raining. Unusually for the organisation, the teachers were permanently based there rather than moved on to another community. Another unusual early feature was dual head-teacher arrangement, one for commercial subjects and another for 'English'; the former for maths, geography, arithmetic, etc., and the latter covering grammar, Bible, history, and other subjects.¹⁸

Most pupils left at the Disruption; one of the headmasters, Thomas Mackenzie, had to leave as he had joined the Free Church. A secondary department was added in the 1880s. Succeeding years saw an expansion into training teachers. There was a wide curriculum, including Gaelic. One historian noted: 'The school's existence as an independent secondary

¹⁴ Census 1901, 098/16/26, Parish of Inverness, School Board District of Inverness (Burgh), p. 26.

¹⁵ AFM, 'Mr Finlay Beaton, Inverness', p. 243.

¹⁶ *The Celtic Review*, Vol. 3 (April 1907), p. 381 *et al.*; quoted at length in Thomas M. Murchison, 'Raining's School, Inverness: a Seed-bed of Talent', *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness*, Vol. 52 (1980–1982), pp. 405–459 (at pp. 427–429). Macbain, a Badenoch native, was appointed as the first Rector in 1880. He composed the Gaelic Etymological Dictionary, and was awarded an LLD by Aberdeen University in 1901. He had edited another Gaelic dictionary (MacEachan), edited two periodicals, written multiple academic papers, and helped compile some Gaelic school materials and provided numerous newspaper articles.

¹⁷ Murchison, 'Raining's School, Inverness: a Seed-bed of Talent', p. 433. A former pupil noted that 'he was a great encourager, and knew when to encourage'. Rev Dr Norman Maclean, *ibid.*, p. 444.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 405–415.

school was to be comparatively brief but very influential.¹⁹ In 1895, the SSPCK was reformed and Raining's School became the secondary section of the Inverness Burgh High School. It was demolished, but its memory lingers as a placename: the Raining's Stairs which run from the end of Ardconnel Street down to Castle Street.²⁰ It also remains through the adjacent Raining's Court block of flats.

In August 1895, Finlay won one of the bursaries tenable for three years to attend the secondary department of the High School in Inverness. This was under the auspices of the Clark Bequest Fund. Finlay had won the prize for dux of Nairnside School that year.²¹ In the High School, Finlay was soon coming in the First Class section of exam results, such as in Science and Mathematics.²² The apprenticeship seems to have led to his having been awarded a certificate in Machine Construction by the Scottish Education Department.²³

An interesting comparison can be made between Finlay's family and another Shieldaig family living in Inverness, that of Colin and Josephine MacKintosh. Colin was to become the owner of a fruit and vegetable shop in Castle Street. His daughter Elizabeth MacKintosh (1896–1952) was to become a national literary figure, better known through her pen-names: Josephine Tey as a crime novelist, and Gordon Daviot as a playwright.

Colin had been a labourer initially, with the family living in the Maggot area of the then town, but moving physically and socially to Midmills Road and Crown Terrace and then Greenhill Terrace. Elizabeth's biographer stresses the class-dominated outlook of the town and the fact that Gaelic had low social status. Elizabeth attended the Inverness Royal Academy. It is probable that Finlay's family knew Colin, Josephine, and Elizabeth, with Finlay probably meeting the father on Raining's Stairs on his way to school.²⁴

Finlay's conversion was as the result of a frightening experience as a teenager. In July 1897, when fourteen years old, he slipped from logs floating on the Caledonian Canal in Inverness, into the water. Rev. Angus Mackay wrote that Finlay believed that he was about to die and 'the whole

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 419–421.

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 424–425.

²¹ Nairnside is on the current B851 between Leanach and Daviot. 'Success of Nairnside School Pupils', *Inverness Courier*, Tue. 13th August, 1895, p. 4.

²² 'Secondary Department of High School', *Inverness Courier*, Tue. 30th August 1898, p. 6.

²³ 'Burgh Technical and Art School', *Inverness Courier*, Tue. 16th September 1902, p. 5. The Burgh Technical and Art School was housed in the High School Annexe.

²⁴ Jennifer Morag Henderson, *Josephine Tey: A Life* (Dingwall, 2015), pp. 15, 25–35, 317.

past of his life came vividly before him; in a swift panorama all the sins of his life came flooding in. “My sins stood between me and heaven”, he says, “the sky was blood-red and all my sins were written in letters, some large and some small, but I read them all, quicker than lightning.” His conscience told him that these were his sins. He was pulled to safety by the other boys he had been playing with. ‘Looking back years later, he could see that the black writing against a blood-red sky typified the blood of Jesus Christ which lay between his sins and God. He had to wait many years before he obtained the relief which he sought; but at length the words in John 16:24 came with power and convictions: “Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.” These words were blessed to his soul and brought the deliverance of the Gospel. His joy was indescribable, accompanied by a profound sense of sorrow...The words of this passage which brought such consolation were confirmed to him about this time in a sermon preached by the late Rev. N. Cameron.’²⁵

By 1911, Finlay was lodging in Cowcaddens, Glasgow, with a Lewis lady, Janet Smith from Lochs, and was working as a motor engineer.²⁶ It seems that after a few years at sea, he returned to Inverness ‘sometime around the outbreak of the First World War’.²⁷

II. World War I

The assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, on 28th June 1914, led to Austria-Hungary declaring war on Serbia on the 28th July. Russia and France supported Serbia. Austria-Hungary’s ally Germany declared war on Russia and France in early August. Germany’s invasion of neutral Belgium led Britain to declare war on Germany on 4th August. By the end of the war, around 8.5 million soldiers and up to 13 million civilians had been killed.²⁸ Figures vary but a recent estimate puts the number of UK service-men and women who died at around 886,000.²⁹ The main war memorial in Inverness at Edith Cavell Gardens states that 717 of the 5000-plus men from the burgh and parish of Inverness who served in the conflict, died as a result. A memorial plaque in the Inverness Town House names 366 of them.

²⁵ AFM, ‘Mr Finlay Beaton, Inverness’, pp. 244–245.

²⁶ 1901 census, Census 644/9 2/ 15, p. 15.

²⁷ AFM, ‘Mr Finlay Beaton, Inverness’, p. 244.

²⁸ *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 14th March 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/question/How-many-people-died-during-World-War-I>. Accessed 12th April 2023.

²⁹ Commonwealth War Graves Commission, Annual Report 2014–2015.

The declaration of war in August 1914 saw the greater part of the British churches support the step, whether ideologically or practically. By October 1914, the Free Presbyterian congregation in Stornoway were holding a special war-focussed prayer meeting every Monday evening.³⁰ The Inverness congregation were not idle in the war effort. In October 1914, they donated 80 pairs of socks and 12 woollen belts for British troops at the front.³¹ In early December 1914, it was reported that 12 blankets, 18 shirts and semmits, and 10 pairs of socks were donated for the Inverness-shire HRA unit based at Huntingdon, by the 'Free Presbyterian Church Work party per Mrs Mackay, FP Manse'.³² Early in 1915 the Inverness FP minister Rev. John R. Mackay left for the Midlands, to preach to Highland soldiers at Bedford, and also to hold Gaelic services at Chatham, Portsmouth, and Huntingdon.³³

It was in this context that it emerged in 1916 that one of the Inverness congregation's own, Finlay Beaton, was refusing war service. His obituarist wrote: 'He suffered much during the war years for his conscientious scruples over the lawfulness of armed conflict as a means of settling international disputes.'³⁴ As we will see, this was not an entirely unusual position for Christians to take.

Finlay appeared before the Appeals Tribunal for Inverness on Friday 14th April, 1916. It refused his request for his case to be heard in a civil court.³⁵ After failing to report for military service, Finlay appeared before a Police Court in Inverness on Monday June 12th, 1916. He was fined £3 and 10 shillings, as well as being handed over to a military escort.³⁶

Finlay's prison record then seems to be as follows. He was court martialled on 14th June 1916 and incarcerated in Inverness Civil Prison from 8th July 1916. A further court martial in Inverness on 28th November 1916 resulted in a sentence to hard labour; he was in Wandsworth Civil Prison from 13th December 1916 until 28th April 1917. A court martial the following month in Inverness saw him sentenced to two years' hard labour. He was in Aberdeen Civil Prison from 14th November 1917 until

³⁰ 'The War', *Highland News*, 3rd October 1914, p. 7.

³¹ *Northern Chronicle*, 21st October 1914, p. 4.

³² *Northern Chronicle*, 9th December 1914, p. 5.

³³ *Highland News*, 27th February 1915, p. 5.

³⁴ AFM, 'Mr Finlay Beaton, Inverness', p. 244.

³⁵ 'A Covenanter's Appeal, Views of an Inverness Engineer', *The Aberdeen Daily Journal*, 15th April 1916, p. 3.

³⁶ 'Inverness Covenanter Fails to Report', *The Courier*, 16th June 1916, p. 4.

19th May 1918. He was subsequently sent to Wormwood Scrubs, not being discharged until 9th April 1919.³⁷

For conscientious objectors sentenced to hard labour, jail meant a bed made of a wooden board, with a blanket and pillow; a mattress was only provided after a month. Solitary confinement with ten hours' work per day sewing mail-bags was the normal pattern. A strict code of silence prevailed. After a few months in prison on a restricted diet, conscientious objectors often looked emaciated, developed skin conditions, had respiratory problems and suffered from a damaged digestive system. During the first three months, only one letter could be received, and one written, by the prisoner. The only reading materials permitted at first were Bibles and hymn books, although newspapers were allowed subsequently.³⁸

There is some evidence that the regime in Wormwood Scrubs was harsher than in other prisons. One conscientious objector wrote later of 'constant fears for his sanity; the permanent feeling of hunger on a reduced diet'. Others believed that youth, previous healthy eating, and their mental approach had helped them cope with the harsh conditions.³⁹

Why did Finlay resist war service? At his initial court-hearing in March 1916, he had said that he was a 'Covenanter' and that adherence to deeds such as the National Covenant 'made impossible the taking of oaths for the maintenance and defence of the present complex Constitution'. He admitted under questioning by the Sheriff that as a Covenanter he would have fought at the Battle of Drumclog.⁴⁰ Another mechanical engineer, Finlay Graham, had sought exemption from all military service at the Inverness Burgh tribunal on Thursday March 16th, 1916. He claimed to be a Reformed Presbyterian. His stance was one of loyalty to the National Covenant, the Solemn League and Covenant, as well as the dissent from the Revolution Settlement by the Reformed Presbytery in their Testimony issued in 1761. These made it impossible for him to take military oaths

³⁷ Imperial War Museum, Lives of the First World War website, record ID 8465927. The website includes 'The Pearce Register of British WW1 Conscientious Objectors', a database compiled by Cyril Pearce, former Senior Lecturer at the University of Leeds. It lists around 18,000 people 'who refused conscription to the British armed services during the First World War on grounds of conscience – known as "Conscientious Objectors".'

³⁸ Robert Duncan, *Objectors and Resisters: Opposition to Conscription and War in Scotland, 1914–1918* (Common Print, 2015), pp. 88–89.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 92–93.

⁴⁰ 'A Covenanter's Appeal, Views of an Inverness Engineer', p. 3. The article states that Finlay adhered to the Revolution Settlement but this appears to be a mistake by the reporter.

which would involve swearing loyalty to the current constitution of the country which he described as ‘immoral, atheistic and anti-Christian’. Under questioning, he admitted that he would defend Inverness in the event of a German invasion, but that he declined to be ‘identified with a corrupt constitution’.⁴¹ One man from Skye who gave his beliefs as a ‘Covenanter’ as a reason for not serving in the forces was to receive three sentences over two years including hard labour. Another Skyeman who claimed ‘Presbyterian’ as his motivation, did accept non-combatant corps service from October 1916.⁴²

The ‘use’ made of the RP constitution by these men differed from the Church’s own actions. In May 16th 1916, the Scottish Synod of the RP Church came to the following conclusion:

Synod did recall the fact that the law of the Church has always been against the members of the Church taking military service because of the oath to the Crown that was required of every private in the army, and it learns that the members of the Church who at this time have taken the military oath have done so in the belief that that oath pledged them simply to take up arms for their country without involving them in any obligation to own the Erastian supremacy of the king of things ecclesiastical.

In the absence of any official authoritative information limiting in this way the content and bearing of the military oath, Synod contents itself with acknowledging the desire for consistency on the part of those who have joined the forces and their patriotic courage, reserving for them their places and privileges as members of the Church, and at the same time takes this opportunity of affirming anew the Church’s adherence to its historical position of political dissent, maintained since the beginning of its history, and upheld at the disruption in 1863, according to which her members are required to refrain from taking any oath that pledges the swearer to the present complex Constitution of these lands.⁴³

In World War I, the RPs in Scotland provided 164 people to the armed forces, 64 of whom died. The Irish RP Synod saw 242 of their denomination serve in the forces, with 48 losing their lives. Their American Synod lost 15 of the 604 who fought for their country and its allies.⁴⁴

⁴¹ ‘Inverness Burgh, An Extraordinary Case, Reformed Presbyterian’s Claim’, *The Aberdeen Journal*, 17th March 1916, p. 3.

⁴² <http://smothpubs.blogspot.com/2016/08/first-world-war-conscientious-objectors.html?m=1>. Viewed 20th February 2023.

⁴³ John W. Pritchard, *Soldiers of the Church* (New York, 1919), pp. 142-143.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 163.

A man from Lewis had given similar reasons as Finlay Beaton, but with an extra element, claiming allegiance to the stance taken up by the former FP divinity student Peter Chisholm. His original application for exemption read: ‘I had accepted the testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland, previous to the outbreak of this war, as published in the years 1761, 1777, 1842; and published and adopted in 1913 by that body of men with whom I identified myself, in a book *Defence of Reformation Principles*. The aforementioned position is against any part in this war. This attitude had been taken up by us before any word was heard of this war.’ At a further stage in the appeals process, the same individual was to write: ‘On grounds of my constitutional relation to “Second” Reformation in (1638–1649), overthrown at the Revolution Settlement, for which reasons, principally, we as a body are dissenters from Settlement, which testimony was issued by the Reformed Presbytery, first in 1761 renewed in 1777, and again in 1842, and publicly adhered to in Chisholm’s *Defence of Reformation Principles* (1913) with which I identify myself.’ The individual was then enrolled in the Royal Army Medical Corps but he remained firm and by January 1919 had served four sentences and two years including hard labour in Wormwood Scrubs.⁴⁵

The claimed justification for conscientious objection via support for Peter Chisholm is strange. Mr Chisholm (1884–1957) had left the Free Presbyterian Church after he was removed from the list of divinity students for making aspersions about the practice of elders addressing the people while conducting public worship.⁴⁶ His book *Defence of Reformation Principles* (Glasgow, 1913) indicated that at that point he had taken up a separate stance. He held separate services for some time.⁴⁷ He subsequently studied in the Original Secession divinity college and became a highly prized preacher in the Free Church of Scotland. Neither of his autobiographical books support conscientious objection.⁴⁸ Those

⁴⁵ <http://smothpubs.blogspot.com/2016/07/conscientious-objectors-from-lewis.html?m=1>. Viewed 20th February 2023.

⁴⁶ Petitions supporting Peter Chisholm had called for the denominational Synod to ban musical instruments and photographs from the homes of communicant members of the Free Presbyterian Church, a step which the court described as ‘absurd’. See N. Campbell, ‘The Chisholmites of Achmore’, *Scottish Reformation Society Historical Journal*, Vol. 2 (2012), pp. 275–291.

⁴⁷ A. MacPherson (ed.), *History of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, 1893–1970* (n.p., 1970), p. 117.

⁴⁸ Peter M. Chisholm, *Defence of Reformation Principles in Relation to the Free Presbyterian Student Case* (Glasgow, 1913); idem, *Wandering in Fields of Dreams* (Inverness, 1952).

who heard him preach cannot recall such a belief being expressed.⁴⁹ Given that Finlay Beaton's sister Mary Ann married Peter Chisholm in 1919,⁵⁰ it would seem likely that the two men knew each other in Glasgow prior to Mr Chisholm's departure from the Free Presbyterian Church; and it is therefore significant that Finlay did not cite Chisholm's quasi-RP stance of 1913 as a justification for his own conscientious objection.

An instructive comparison with the position of Finlay and those of a similar outlook is possible through the case of an Open Brethren preacher in Glasgow, Hunter Beattie. He took an absolutist position against anything which might further war aims. The leaders of the Open Brethren in the city either supported the war or maintained a position of neutrality towards pacifism. Towards the close of 1917, two hundred and ninety-seven Brethren men were serving in the armed forces. Beattie issued a periodical aimed at his fellow Brethren in which he presented conscientious-objection arguments, including opposition to a Christian taking oaths. In one issue he stressed that his position was not that a nation should not fight a war of self-defence but that it was 'absolutely, unutterably wrong' for a Christian to do so. Brethren historian Neil Dickson points out: 'Beattie is here articulating an established Brethren position', and adds: 'it has its genesis in the dispensational theology of John Nelson Darby⁵¹ which sees the church as a heavenly people unconcerned with earth's affairs'.

Following two military tribunals, Beattie appeared in Glasgow Sheriff Court in February 1918, charged with being a military absentee. The Sheriff accepted evidence that in effect he was exempt from military service as his ecclesiastical activities in preaching, conducting meetings, visiting the sick and the poor all amounted to his being a minister of the gospel. At that stage the Open Brethren did not have pastors and the finding raised theological questions and stimulated further published debate among them.⁵²

Some Strict Baptists were conscientious objectors but of the kind who agreed to serve on the front line as stretcher-bearers with the Royal

⁴⁹ I have spoken to two natives of Lochs familiar with his home community and who heard him preach on a number of occasions.

⁵⁰ 1919. Marriages in the District of Renfrew in the County of Renfrew, p. 9. Mary Ann Beaton married Peter Chisholm on February 13th at Porterfield Road, Renfrew. The ceremony was performed by Rev. Robert Morton of the Original Secession Church.

⁵¹ Timothy C. F. Stunt, 'Darby, John Nelson (1800–1882)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed 11th April 2023.

⁵² Neil Dickson, 'Hunter Beattie (1876–1951): A Conscientious Objector at the Margins', *Scottish Church History*, Vol. 50.2 (2021), pp. 145–163.

Army Medical Corps. One of these, John H. Gosden, later a well-known pastor in the Gospel Standard section of the tradition, was decorated with the Military Medal. This was for bravery in going alone under heavy fire to attend to a wounded soldier and being himself injured.⁵³

III. Finlay's Church roles

At the time of the 1921 census, Finlay was living with his parents and sister Bella in 11 Greig Street, Inverness, and was working for the Albion Motor Company.⁵⁴ His mother Catherine died on 22nd January 1924.⁵⁵ Finlay's father Christopher died in April 1924.⁵⁶ Finlay was elected as an elder in the Inverness congregation in 1925.⁵⁷ By 1929 he had been appointed as missionary (salaried lay preacher) for the Stratherrick congregation. He travelled there on Saturday evenings and returned to Inverness on Mondays.⁵⁸

One hearer brought up there recalls: 'We had Finlay Beaton as a Missionary supplying the Stratherrick Congregation for many years, including the Second World War, and many a very severe winter he didn't let us down, travelling up and down from Inverness in the bus, having on occasion to help push the bus through the deep snow drifts. Thinking back to the Stratherrick Church in wartime, when the black-out started, in order to continue the evening services, Finlay constructed suitable window blinds to fit all the windows. As far as I know, he did this single-handed. He was a very resourceful man.'⁵⁹ He continued to act as the congregation's missionary for decades, even after it gained a minister in 1960 as part of a united charge with Daviot and Tomatin.⁶⁰

He first attended the supreme court of his denomination, the Synod, as a member, in May 1934.⁶¹ At his first Synod meeting he moved the

⁵³ Matthew J. Hyde, *With Mercy and with Judgement: Strict Baptists and the First World War* (Gospel Standard Trust Publications, 2016), pp. 20-23.

⁵⁴ Census 1921, 098/6/7 Parish of Inverness, Burgh ward of Muirtown, Inverness, p. 7.

⁵⁵ Register of Corrected Entries of the District of Inverness in the County of Inverness, 1924, p. 211.

⁵⁶ Finlay's father died on 16th April 1924. Statutory Registers Deaths, 098/A 157. Deaths in the District of Inverness, county of Inverness, 1924, p. 56.

⁵⁷ AFM, 'Mr Finlay Beaton, Inverness', p. 244.

⁵⁸ 'Tabular View for Sustentation Fund etc. for year ending March 1928', *FPM*, Vol. 33 (August 1928), p. 140.

⁵⁹ Donald Fraser kindly provided these reminiscences.

⁶⁰ Following a remit from the Northern Presbytery, the three 'Straths' had been united by Synod in 1944. *Proceedings of Synod*, May 1944, p. 28.

⁶¹ 'Meeting of Synod', *FPM*, Vol. 39 (July 1934), p. 81.

adoption of the Loyal Address to the King, as well as seconding motions for the adoption of the Training of the Ministry Committee report, and the 'Mixed marriage' question.⁶²

In 1938 the Inverness congregation – which was around 500 strong – split.⁶³ The minister, Rev. Ewen Macqueen was unhappy at a decision of the Northern Presbytery to refer a disciplinary case in the Inverness congregation to the Synod. He also disagreed with the decision of the June 1938 meeting of Synod to overturn the Inverness Kirk Session's original decision in the case. He tabled a protest at the June meeting of Synod.⁶⁴ He began to hold services in the Old High Church Hall in the town attended by many of the Inverness congregation.⁶⁵ He and his supporters retained the manse but not the church. Mr Macqueen died in 1949; a few years later a legal dispute about the manse reached the Court of Session.⁶⁶

Finlay's obituarist commented that he had played 'a prominent part' in the dispute and added: 'That the congregation of Inverness, though sadly reduced, emerged from this trial with no greater loss or damage was largely due to the work of Finlay Beaton who encouraged the Session and people till a minister was settled over them'.⁶⁷ A divinity student, Malcolm Macsween, was sent to Inverness to lead the services for a time in 1938.⁶⁸ Mr Macsween was later to become a much-loved pastor and Old Testament tutor.⁶⁹

From 1940, Finlay became involved in the later stages of preparing a catechism to teach Church principles within his own denomination. The work had begun in 1937. It was serialised in the *Young People's Magazine* between August 1942 and October 1943. A republication with some editing was issued in a booklet form in 2013. Essentially a potted church history in question and answer form, it highlighted the Declaratory Act's

⁶² Ibid., pp. 84, 85, 94-95.

⁶³ A Presbytery discussion saw Finlay Beaton state that forty-nine people, who had attended a meeting to sign a petition protesting against the treatment of the minister, made up only around 'a tenth' of the congregation. 'Free Presbyterian Controversy', *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, Wednesday 27th April 1938, p. 9.

⁶⁴ *Proceedings of Synod*, May and June 1938, pp. 39-42.

⁶⁵ See D. W. B. Somerset, 'The Macqueen Relief Church, Inverness, 1938-1980', *Scottish Reformation Society Historical Journal*, Vol. 12 (2022), pp. 250-255.

⁶⁶ *The Reverend Angus MacKay and Others v. The Reverend A. D. MacLeod and Others* (First Division), 10th January 1952.

⁶⁷ AFM, 'Mr Finlay Beaton, Inverness', p. 244.

⁶⁸ Archie McPhail, 'Introduction', *Select Sermons of Malcolm Macsween*, ed. John M. Brentnall, (Swanwick, 2016), p. 5.

⁶⁹ See 'The late Rev. Malcolm Macsween, MA', *FPM*, Vol. 85 (March 1980), pp. 85-89.

undermining of loyalty to the Westminster Confession of Faith. The catechism also dwelt on the reasons for remaining separate from the larger body of Constitutionalists in the old Free Church, who remained in her in 1893 but had become separate in 1900 by refusing to join the union with the United Presbyterians to create the United Free Church.⁷⁰

Finlay was prepared to work with people outside his own denomination in defence of the Lord's Day. Rev Angus F. Mackay wrote: 'He was a man of wide sympathies. His interests were not confined to the service of his own Church but he was ready to aid the cause of the Redeemer on all occasions. For some years he acted as Secretary of the old Scottish Sabbath Observance Committee covering the North of Scotland.' Mr Mackay went on to recount how Finlay would organise rallies at Inverness at which 'well-known speakers' were invited to speak.⁷¹

It is not clear how long Finlay felt free to continue this specific cooperation. A key moment may have come in 1938. In that year, the denomination had been invited to appoint a representative to the General Council of the Lord's Day Observance Association of Scotland. A new constitution had seen ten Church of Scotland representatives and two from smaller churches appointed to the General Council but the Association wished a Free Presbyterian representative to join too. The Synod approved of the decision by its Sabbath Observance Committee not to comply with this request.

The Committee stated that this was because they 'owed their existence to the difficulty the church had experienced in the past of maintaining, in association with other bodies, a full-orbed witness on the subject of Sabbath observance'. The Committee were concerned that the new constitution of the Association gave 'a large measure of influence' to Churches who 'were proving unfaithful to the cause of the Sabbath'. When these Churches professed the 'moral and perpetual' obligation of the Fourth Commandment, and declared that Sabbath desecration was sin, and that 'the wages of sin was death', as well as exercising Church discipline, then the Committee 'would be glad to associate with them'.

⁷⁰ *A Catechism of the History and Principles of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland* (Free Presbyterian Church Religion and Morals Committee, 2013), pp. 7-9, 21-26. The catechism also underlined the Act's 'erroneous doctrines' in fields such as the Fatherhood of God, the merit of good works, and the teaching of a universal atonement, as well as serious weaknesses in the fields of Bible inspiration and the doctrines of grace. Further sections dealt with worship, exclusive psalmody, Church government, Church and state relations, etc.

⁷¹ AFM, 'Mr Finlay Beaton, Inverness', p. 246.

The Committee's letter to the Association had, however, committed to considering 'how, and to what extent, they could independently support action promoted by the Association' and welcomed any information the Association might give them.⁷²

The final breach may have come in 1947 when the Free Presbyterian Church's association with the Scottish branch of the Lord's Day Observance Society was 'terminated' by the Synod, according to a recent denominational publication. 'The resolution of 1947 courteously stated that the reason for withdrawal was the credibility gap between words and practice.'⁷³

IV. Finlay as chronicler

Finlay was from Sheildaig and familiar with people who revered the memory of the Rev. Lachlan Mackenzie (1754–1819) of Lochcarron. MacKenzie was from Knockbain, Easter Ross. He had been an assistant in the parish of Stornoway before becoming minister of Lochcarron. He presided over large sacramental gatherings. He opposed the Clearances from his pulpit and in other situations. Professor John McIntosh states that he 'had a reputation as a minor prophet in the Highlands'.⁷⁴

Finlay worked with Rev. Neil Cameron to gather anecdotes for the second of two books about Mr Mackenzie.⁷⁵ They were published by the Inverness businessman and FP Church elder, James Campbell.⁷⁶ Most of the main material in the two volumes was sermon notes. The first included 43 sermons and lectures and significant amounts of other material.⁷⁷

The 'Reminiscence and Anecdotes' which Finlay and Mr Cameron gathered for the second gave a picture of Lachlan Mackenzie as a shrewd man of action with closeness to God and a sense of his own weakness. They ranged

⁷² *Proceedings of Synod*, May and June 1938, pp. 11-12.

⁷³ *One Hundred Years of Witness* (Free Presbyterian Publications, 1993), p. 106. For more on the LDOS in the early part of the century, see D. W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain* (Routledge, 1999), pp. 210-211.

⁷⁴ J. R. McIntosh, 'MacKenzie, Lachlan (1754–1819)', N. M. de S. Cameron, *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology (DSCHT)* (Edinburgh, 1993), p. 522.

⁷⁵ Argyllshire-born Mr Cameron was one of the leading figures among the Constitutionalist divinity students of the early 1890s. He provided intellectual firepower and organisational energy in the events leading up to the formation of the Free Presbyterian Church in 1893. Ordained and inducted to the St Jude's charge on the north side of Glasgow in 1895, he contributed to the stabilisation and separate stance of the denomination until his passing in 1932. See A. Morrison, 'Cameron, Neil (1854–1932)', *DSCHT*, p. 124.

⁷⁶ 'The late James Campbell, Builder, Inverness', *FPM*, Vol. 37 (August 1932), pp. 176-179.

⁷⁷ James Campbell (ed.), *The Rev. Mr Lachlan of Lochcarron: Lectures, Sermons, and Writings of a famous Highland Minister of the Old School* (Inverness, 1928).

from tales of his being led to go to certain places just in time to avert disaster for other people, to his outwitting Moderate ministers on the Presbytery, composing a short verse about the sin of drunkenness which was blessed to one of two young men to whom it had been directed, and standing up to tourists of the gentry class who wished to break the Sabbath. He was also to predict many future events. These



Finlay Beaton at his home in Inverness.

COURTESY OF DONALD FRASER

included that a baby boy he baptised would one day be a preacher of the gospel. The child grew up to be Rev. Alexander MacColl of Lochalsh, part of whose early ministry was in Applecross parish.⁷⁸

A selection of lectures, sermons, and brief passages from both volumes were reprinted by the Banner of Truth in 1979 under the title *The Happy Man*.⁷⁹ Twelve anecdotes from the section by Finlay and Mr Cameron were used in Iain H. Murray's 'Biographical Introduction' to this book.⁸⁰ Four sermons from an unrelated 1849 publication were republished in 2017.⁸¹

Finlay was also part of a group who helped research an Annals-style account of all the ministers in the denomination. While never published in book form, the material was later used on the Church's website history sections.

Another rich source of historical material by Finlay is the contribution he made to denominational history through obituaries in its magazine. These are also of wider relevance as they provide valuable

⁷⁸ James Campbell (ed.), *The Rev. Mr Lachlan of Lochcarron: Additional Lectures, Sermons, and Writings* (Inverness, 1930), pp. 11-24. Mr MacColl (1815–1889) became a leader of the Constitutionalist party in the Highlands.

⁷⁹ Iain H. Murray (ed.), *The Happy Man: The Abiding Witness of Lachlan Mackenzie* (Banner of Truth Trust, 1979).

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 11-33.

⁸¹ Lachlan Mackenzie, *The Rock of Our Salvation* (Reformation Press, 2017). This republished most of *Sermons Preached at Lochcarron, Ross-shire, by the late Rev. Lachlan Mackenzie, Minister of That Parish, with Memoir by his Sister and Preface by the Rev. W. Mackenzie, Free Church, North Leith* (Edinburgh, 1849).

material about Highland spirituality in the late nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth. Of the eight people commemorated in this way by Finlay, five lived in Inverness and three in Stratherrick. Of the five Inverness people, three were from Wester Ross, one from Strathnairn, and another from Fort William but with at least one Strathnairn-born parent. Two were women. Five of the six men were elders.⁸²

Wisdom in highlighting the variety of conversion experiences was one feature of these obituaries. George Mackenzie became concerned at his own neglect of his soul, felt keenly the loss of a young friend, and found preaching blessed to him.⁸³ The death of two siblings and an awakened conscience, as well as encouragement by an elder in the Free North Church, and eventually a sermon by Dr Kennedy of Dingwall,⁸⁴ were all part of Angus Stewart's experience.⁸⁵ Another man found the liberty of the gospel when a verse of Scripture came strongly to his mind while ploughing a field.⁸⁶ While lying in bed, the words 'I know that my Redeemer liveth' came with saving power to Margaret Fraser of Stratherrick.⁸⁷

Some of the values Finlay held were shown in his obituary writing. Elizabeth Fraser took a tactful approach to guests in her boarding house unfamiliar with the benefits of keeping the Lord's Day holy: 'In a wise and kindly yet firm manner, she put before her guests the claims of the Lord's Day, and reminded them of the peace, and the rest, and refreshment of mind and body with which the Sabbath blesses those who keep it.'⁸⁸

⁸² 'George Mackenzie, Elder, Inverness', *FPM*, Vol. 44 (August 1939), pp. 145-149. 'The late Mr Angus Stewart, Elder, Inverness', *FPM*, Vol. 44 (October 1939), pp. 223-227. 'The late Mr Donald Macrae, Elder, Inverness', *FPM*, Vol. 50 (March 1946), pp. 217-219. 'The late Mr Angus Fraser, Elder, Inverness', *FPM*, Vol. 51 (November 1946), pp. 133-135. 'The late Mrs Angus Fraser, Inverness', *FPM*, Vol. 51 (November 1946), pp. 135-137. 'The late Mr John Fraser, Lyne, Stratherrick', *FPM*, Vol. 51 (February 1947), pp. 191-193. 'The late Mrs Fraser, The Cottage, Stratherrick', *FPM*, Vol. 58 (August 1953), pp. 116-118. 'The late Mr. John Fraser, Elder, Stratherrick', *FPM*, Vol. 62 (July 1957), pp. 85-88.

⁸³ 'George Mackenzie, Elder, Inverness', p. 146.

⁸⁴ John Kennedy's family roots were in Kishorn near Lochcarron. Minister of the Free Church in Dingwall from 1844 to 1884, his preaching was blessed to many. He led the Highland support for verbal inspiration and exclusive psalmody and against theological liberalism within the Free Church of his day. He tended to cast the declension in terms of its being a Lowland phenomenon. He was awarded a DD by the University of Aberdeen in 1873. See A. P. F. Sell, 'Kennedy, John (1819-84)', *DSCHT*, pp. 455-456. This year (2023) has seen the publication of the first monograph on Kennedy – see Alasdair J. Macleod, *John Kennedy of Dingwall, 1819-1884: Evangelicalism in the Scottish Highlands* (Edinburgh University Press, 2023).

⁸⁵ 'The late Mr Angus Stewart, Elder, Inverness', pp. 223-224.

⁸⁶ 'The late Mr Donald Macrae, Elder, Inverness', p. 217.

⁸⁷ 'The late Mrs Fraser, The Cottage, Stratherrick', p. 117.

⁸⁸ 'The late Mrs Angus Fraser, Inverness', p. 136.

Margaret Fraser ‘was gifted with remarkable calmness of mind in the midst of trying circumstances...Submission under the afflicting hand of the Lord, she said, was a duty.’⁸⁹ George Mackenzie kept his troubles to himself: ‘He had many trials but these he wisely kept to himself, concealing them as far as possible behind a pleasant smile and a kind word.’⁹⁰ Similarly, John Fraser of Lyne, Stratherrick ‘was no stranger to the assaults of the great adversary, but with these he wisely went to the mercy-seat while he presented a pleasant countenance to the world.’⁹¹

An elder ‘was blessed with an amiable and energetic disposition, and with sound judgement, steadfastness in the truth, and a clear perception of the path of duty which he followed without wavering, through good report and through evil report.’⁹² A man who had a public-facing job and occasionally faced ‘problems’ requiring ‘judgement and tact’ had ‘the rare faculty of always putting the best construction on a situation’. The result was: ‘before sympathetic treatment, difficulties yielded. His helpfulness was recognised. This prompted confidence and cordiality and he was universally esteemed as a friend...’⁹³

Ever aware of Church history, Finlay also used obituaries to underline the origins of his own denomination. Two themes emerge: Finlay’s emphasis on the Declaratory Act as allowing teaching which rejected God’s sovereignty in the doctrine of election, and the sense of freedom and spiritual blessing felt by those who separated from the old Free Church once the Declaratory Act was passed.⁹⁴

Finlay was interested in the widely differing impressions made on people through having attended churches outside Scotland. Donald Macrae heard ‘the joyful sound’ in a Baptist Church in Dublin.⁹⁵ Angus Stewart ‘searched in vain’ for ‘the pure gospel’ while working in Nottingham in the 1880s.⁹⁶

This sweeping verdict on Nottingham’s churches would have benefitted from clarification of the term ‘pure gospel’. Mr Stewart’s residence there

⁸⁹ ‘The late Mrs Fraser, The Cottage, Stratherrick’, pp. 117-118.

⁹⁰ ‘George Mackenzie, Elder, Inverness’, p. 147.

⁹¹ ‘The late Mr John Fraser, Lyne, Stratherrick’, p. 193.

⁹² ‘The late Mr Angus Fraser, Elder, Inverness’, p. 134.

⁹³ ‘The late Mr John Fraser, Lyne, Stratherrick’, pp. 192-193.

⁹⁴ For the Act’s doctrinal impact, see ‘The late Mr Angus Stewart, Elder, Inverness’, p. 224. For the freedom experienced after the division of 1893 by those leaving to form the FP Church, see ‘The late Mrs Angus Fraser, Inverness’, p. 136 and ‘The late Mr Angus Stewart, Elder, Inverness’, p. 225.

⁹⁵ ‘The late Mr Donald Macrae, Elder, Inverness’, p. 218.

⁹⁶ ‘The late Mr Angus Stewart, Elder, Inverness’, p. 224.

appears to have been in the 1880s. He was at that stage an old-school Free Church man, for whom it may have meant the doctrines of grace preached on a doctrinal and experimental basis. Given the worship debates in Scotland at the time, he may also have meant that this be within an unaccompanied psalmody context in public worship. That precise combination of doctrine and worship would have been difficult to find in England, if indeed that is what the term meant. That the gospel was preached in Nottingham in the period is certain. At least two Particular Baptist causes existed at the time. The Gospel Standard Strict Baptists also had a presence there. The Strict Baptist evangelist William Gadsby had given an address to a new pastor in their Zion Chapel, Nottingham in 1824.⁹⁷ The eminent J. C. Philpot preached regularly in the city in the 1860s.⁹⁸ Alfred Coughtrey served as pastor of Chaucer Street chapel from 1878–1900, also editing the *Gospel Standard* magazine from 1891–1898.⁹⁹ If he did attend there, Angus Stewart may have met some of the families whose sons were among the 23 men from the congregation to serve in the First World War.¹⁰⁰

The wider Baptist constituency in the Nottingham area was mixed theologically. Methodists also existed in the area.¹⁰¹ A Brethren assembly was to be found at the city's Great Alfred Street.¹⁰² The Castle-Gate Chapel in the city had a Calvinistic constitution and Congregational church government in the 1870s.¹⁰³ The famous writer A. W. Pink was born in the city in 1886. He

⁹⁷ B. A. Ramsbottom, *William Gadsby* (Gospel Standard Trust, 2004), p. 152.

⁹⁸ S. F. Paul (ed.), *The Seceders (1829–1869), Vol. Three* (St Christopher Press, Letchworth, 1960), p. 240.

⁹⁹ H.T.S., 'Obituary', *Gospel Standard*, (November 1991), pp. 518–520. See also B. A. Ramsbottom, *The History of the Gospel Standard Magazine* (Gospel Standard Trust, 2010, 2nd edn.), pp. 176–180.

¹⁰⁰ Hyde, *With Mercy and With Judgement, Strict Baptists and the First World War*, pp. 430, 439–441.

¹⁰¹ Several of the city's Baptist ministers had studied liberal German theology and some leaned to weak views on verbal inspiration. Very little support was given locally to Spurgeon in the Downgrade controversy; two of the city's ministers opposed him in print, and another seconded a resolution at a meeting of the Baptist Union Council criticising him. F. M. W. Harrison, 'The Nottinghamshire Baptists, Church Relations: Social Composition: Finance: Theology', *The Baptist Quarterly*, Vol. 26 (1975–1976), pp. 169–190.

¹⁰² *The Nottingham and Midland Counties Daily Express*, Tuesday 5th March 1878, p. 2. Reprinted as 'The Churches and Chapels of Nottingham: Their Ministers and Congregations, "Criticus" Amongst the Plymouth Brethren', available on <https://www.brueckerbewegung.de/pdf/criticus.pdf>

¹⁰³ 'The Churches and Chapels of Nottingham: Their Ministers and Congregations, No. 8 – Castle-Gate Chapel', Criticus, *Nottingham and Midland Counties Daily Express*, Tuesday 21st August 1877, p. 2.

appears to have attended an evangelical church – possibly Congregational – and found fellowship and spiritual profit in the area.¹⁰⁴

Finlay, in writing obituaries, was also open to recounting unusual spiritual experiences while neither making these a true sign of conversion or necessary in the life of believers. A ‘bright light shone around’ Margaret Fraser when she received the liberty of the gospel while lying in bed, ‘as if to convey visible assurance that the Lord had made her darkness to be light’.¹⁰⁵ George Mackenzie had a vision of an uncontrolled horse charging at him on a bridge, but which ‘vanished’ when he cried to the Lord for help.¹⁰⁶

Finlay’s minister until 1938, Rev. Ewen Macqueen had an unusual experience on his native island of Skye. This was described as ‘a vision’ in his obituary: ‘One night, on the road between Sligachan and Sconser he was stopped in his tracks; the heavens opened before him and there appeared to him a heavenly vision of effulgent splendour which made him call out his complete faith in the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. Ewen Macqueen, supported in his mind by the rich promises, yielded his whole being to the services of his Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.’¹⁰⁷ Finlay was not the writer of the obituary. He may have been affected by hearing of this experience before he and Mr Macqueen parted ecclesiastical company.

Of Elizabeth Fraser, Finlay wrote: ‘A pleader on behalf of the spiritual and temporal good of the nation, the Lord, by His Word, often revealed to her coming events.’¹⁰⁸ A man who regularly helped his congregational treasurer to count the weekly collections had a premonition through words of Scripture that the treasurer was soon to pass away.¹⁰⁹ The phenomenon of ‘getting a text’, where a Bible portion was impressed powerfully on a person’s mind as being relevant to their everyday providence, and the expected outcome being fulfilled, had been defended by the Highland conservative Calvinist Dr John Kennedy of Dingwall.¹¹⁰ It was also to be found in the Gospel Standard Strict Baptist tradition.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁴ Iain H. Murray, *The Life of Arthur W Pink* (Banner of Truth, 2004), pp. 3-6, 14-16. There is no record of which precise church Pink attended.

¹⁰⁵ ‘The late Mrs Fraser, The Cottage, Stratherrick’, p. 117.

¹⁰⁶ ‘George Mackenzie, Elder, Inverness’, p. 146.

¹⁰⁷ ‘The late Rev. Ewen Macqueen’, *Free Presbyterian Witness*, Vol. 2 (March 1950), p. 3.

¹⁰⁸ ‘The late Mr Angus Fraser, Elder, Inverness’, p. 136.

¹⁰⁹ ‘The late Mr Angus Stewart, Elder, Inverness’, p. 225.

¹¹⁰ John Kennedy, *The Days of the Fathers in Ross-shire* (Christian Focus Publications, 1979), pp. 201-215.

¹¹¹ B. A. Ramsbottom, *John Kershaw and Blessing Over the Moors* (James Bourne Society, 2018), p. 188. Drs Catherine and Matthew Hyde (eds.), *Entering Through Much Tribulation: Life and Writings of John R. Broome (1931–2013)* (2020), pp. 20, 25, 53, 63, 66, 78, 113.

However, there were dangers in making such phenomena the yardstick, or a replacement, for normal guidance in the Christian life. Dr Kennedy himself urged caution.¹¹² The issue was sufficiently important in eighteenth-century England to be the subject of a lecture in a series on spiritual difficulties given by a London preacher and his colleague in 1754/1755. Samuel Pike stated: 'Others will make a random application of a passage of scripture (which suddenly occurs to, or is strongly impressed on their minds) to their present case or difficulty; never looking into, or attending to the proper meaning of the text, but straining and applying it to something very foreign from the intention of the Holy Spirit.'¹¹³

C. H. Spurgeon stressed the need for a person seeking divine guidance about everyday life to pray about the matter, and that guidance could come via doors opening or shutting in providence, or further understanding being gained of the right and wrong of each course of action. However, he also stated that some 'stress' could be laid on the soul to take a particular step.¹¹⁴ While emphasising that the Word of God provides all that is necessary in all situations, and that direct new revelation is not to be looked for, John Murray of Westminster Theological Seminary stresses that the Holy Spirit works through means. He adds that in seeking divine guidance in life's decisions, people may experience valid impressions and feelings through the prayerful consideration of the principles of God's Word, but can also be mistaken in this.¹¹⁵

None of the obituaries directly reference dreams. Finlay believed in their occasional relevance to spiritual matters but urged caution. He once said: 'It is really remarkable that there is so much said about the birth and what happened to the Saviour; and God the Father made that known to different individuals by way of dreams. Of course, if a dream does not answer to the Scriptures, leave it where it is; but if it is sent by the Lord, he'll

While preaching one day, the independent High Calvinist preacher William Huntington (1745–1813) was once persuaded that his text (Psalm 45:10) was meant specifically for a member of another denomination present in the church building, and this turned out to be the case. *Gospel Standard* (July 1840), p. 152.

¹¹² J. Kennedy, *The Days of the Fathers in Ross-shire*, pp. 213–215.

¹¹³ S. Pike and S. Hayward, *Religious Cases of Conscience* (New York, 1808), pp. 107–108. The preachers were Samuel Hayward (1718–1757) and Samuel Pike (c. 1716–1773). Pike gave the lecture – Case 11 – quoted from. Two years after giving the lectures he became attracted to Sandemanian thought. The book ran to many editions, including Free Presbyterian Publications in 1968.

¹¹⁴ *Spurgeon's Sermons*, Vol. 13 (1867), 'A Happy Christian', Isaiah 58:11, Sermon 736.

¹¹⁵ Iain H. Murray (ed.), *Collected Writings of John Murray*, Vol. 1, *The Claims of Truth* (Banner of Truth, 1976), pp. 186–189.

give the meaning of it in his own Word. It is the key to open up everything – the Scriptures – no matter what it may be. That is surely the case.’¹¹⁶

Rev. Donald Macfarlane¹¹⁷ spoke in a sermon of how his colleague Rev. Donald Macdonald of Shieldaig¹¹⁸ recounted a dream to him. In it, he had spoken a few words at a Question Meeting about the text for discussion being ‘dark’ and that he would go to Christ instead.¹¹⁹ Rev. Neil Cameron told in an obituary of how a man asleep in a boat dreamed that it was in danger of collision with another vessel and woke just in time to prevent that very event.¹²⁰

In a paper about his old friend Archie Crawford, leading figure in the Kames FP congregation in Argyll, Rev. Neil Cameron stated: ‘He had dreams which were wonderful and worth recording, however little credit may be given to some dreams.’ Mr Cameron described one in which Archie saw the stars gather in the shape of a horse, then disappear, the last sight of it being a tail like a ray of light which itself then vanished. This Archie interpreted as foretelling a time ‘when there would not be one true minister of Christ left’ in Scotland. He told the minister that he was afraid that he (Mr Cameron) was the lighted tail. Mr Cameron commented: ‘He was not, in general, a believer in dreams but he did believe there was a real meaning in this particular dream.’¹²¹

Cautious openness to the concept that some dreams might possibly provide occasional clarity on spiritual or providential matters was also a result of respected ministers in the more distant past having taken that approach. A dream of the famous eighteenth-century Highland minister, Rev. Hector MacPhail¹²² is still told from some pulpits.¹²³ A minister of

¹¹⁶ Audio recording of conversation, July 1974, provided by kind permission of Robert Dickie (owner of the recording).

¹¹⁷ Mr Macfarlane, Free Church minister in Raasay, tabled a protest against the Declaratory act at the Free Church of Scotland’s 1893 General Assembly, and with others formed a Presbytery that summer which became the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. A. Morrison, ‘Macfarlane, Donald (1834–1926)’, *DSCHT*, p. 513.

¹¹⁸ Rev. Donald Macdonald was inducted to Shieldaig Free Church in 1872 and led it into the new Free Presbyterian Church in 1893. He had been Finlay’s minister in his childhood. A. Morrison, ‘Macdonald, Donald (1825–1901)’, *DSCHT*, p. 509.

¹¹⁹ *Sermons by Rev. Donald Macfarlane* (Glasgow, 1986), p. 220.

¹²⁰ Neil Cameron, ‘John Maciver, Scorraig’, *Ministers and Men of the Free Presbyterian Church*, ed. Roy Middleton (Cheshire, 1993), pp. 91–92.

¹²¹ Rev. Neil Cameron, ‘Anecdotes Relating to Archibald Crawford’, *SRSHJ*, Vol. 2 (2012), p. 269.

¹²² D. E. Meek, ‘MacPhail, Hector (1716–1774)’, *DSCHT*, p. 535.

¹²³ Mr MacPhail imagined himself lying dejected at the gates of heaven, unable to join the patriarchs or New Testament heroes or Knox or his own former godly acquaintances as

the Victorian era, Rev. Alexander Cook of Stratherrick Free Church had written of a dream which helped a lady in spiritual depths. The account was republished in the *Free Presbyterian Magazine*.¹²⁴ Rev. Kenneth Macrae of Stornoway¹²⁵ edited a volume of historical material and edifying anecdotes entitled *Records of Grace in Sutherland*, which was published in 1953. Premonitions of future events and significant dreams featured in it.¹²⁶ The material had been compiled by the Rev. Donald Munro, D.D. (1860–1937) of Ferintosh and Rogart, a leading Free Church constitutionalist of 1900.¹²⁷

This approach cannot be described as an exclusively Scottish Highland phenomenon. The rich Covenanting history of Lowland Scotland had its examples.¹²⁸ George Whitefield, in a sermon on Jacob's

they entered triumphantly, but then successfully gaining entry as he held onto the hem of the king Manasseh's coat. This, Mr MacPhail felt, was interpreted to him after he woke up, in the words of Paul to Timothy: "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief". J. Kennedy, *The Days of the Fathers in Ross-shire*, pp. 53–54. The text is 1 Timothy 1:15.

¹²⁴ 'She continued two years in the grip of Giant Despair, but when she and others thought all was gone forever, the words came for her deliverance: "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord. The Lord has chastened me sore, but He hath not given me over unto death" (Ps. cxviii. 7). This was the first streak of heaven's light piercing the Egyptian gloom and darkness. Soon after this signal deliverance she dreamt about a minister whom she held in high esteem, but who had been removed to his everlasting rest during her distress. She thought she saw him in the pulpit singing praise. After a long time, she asked, with surprise: "Are you not to begin the sermon?" "Oh," he said, "there is nothing here but praise." This mental glimpse of heaven, says Mr Cook, though in a dream, tended further to loose her bonds. The full tide of everlasting consolation began to flow into her weary soul, and the brackish waters of seemingly settled melancholy ebbed quickly away. If her distress was profound, her consolation now was of no ordinary kind.' 'Mrs Elizabeth Fraser (Ealasaid Ruadh), Stratherrick: A Noted Christian of Other Days', *FPM*, Vol. 30 (May 1925), p. 18.

¹²⁵ J. J. Murray, 'MacRae, Kenneth Alexander (1883–1964)', *DSCHT*, p. 537. MacRae held pastorates in Lochgilphead, Kilmuir (Skye), and Stornoway on the island of Lewis. He also provided leadership to the ecclesiastically conservative wing within the Free Church of Scotland, while expressing social concern, advocating outreach, and practising ecumenicism within Reformed circles. See also his diary: Iain H. Murray (ed.), *Diary of Kenneth A. MacRae: A record of fifty years in the Christian ministry* (Banner of Truth, 1980).

¹²⁶ Rev. Donald Munro, Rev. Kenneth A. Macrae, and others (eds.), *Records of Grace in Sutherland* (Edinburgh, 1953), pp. 18, 42, 51, 60–61, 63, 73, 139–140, 201. This was republished with additional material as *Records of Grace in Sutherland* (Scottish Reformation Society, 2015). The corresponding pages in this republication are 33, 57, 68, 78–79, 81, 90, 162–163, 230–231.

¹²⁷ *Records of Grace in Sutherland* (Scottish Reformation Society edn.), pp ix–xii.

¹²⁸ The covenanting hero Alexander Peden (c. 1626–1686) made a number of predictions which were seen to come true. Captain John Paton (d. 1684) and friends once narrowly escaped capture by fleeing from a house after the elderly head of the house, who had gone

ladder from Genesis 28:12-15, said: ‘there may have been, and possibly be still, dreams that have no manner of dependence on the indisposition of the body, or other natural cause; but seem to bring a divine sanction with them, and make peculiar impressions on the party, though this was more frequent before the canon of scripture was closed than now.’¹²⁹ C. H. Spurgeon was open to dreams being used by the Holy Spirit but not as an infallible sign of conversion.¹³⁰ The biographer of the Lancashire-born and transatlantic revivalist Henry Moorhouse (1840–1880) – the ‘English Evangelist’ – believed that dreams had been ‘helpful’ and ‘strengthening’ to him.¹³¹ Another writer believed that Moorhouse communed with the Lord in his sleep.¹³² A lady in the Gospel Standard Strict Baptists wrote of having had her assurance of salvation strengthened through a dream.¹³³

Another smaller strand in Finlay’s obituaries was ecclesiastical politics. Unfortunately, there was a note of rancour about his own congregation’s troubles in some of them.¹³⁴ There is no doubt that situations had

to bed early, had repeated dreams of the enemy’s approach. The preacher Robert Bruce (1554–1631) had been spurred on to earnest prayer by a dream in which black crows were struck dead if they touched a flying book, which a voice told him was God’s wrath on pastors who deserted God’s truth; John Howie of Lochgoin, *Scots Worthies* (New York, 1853), pp. 326–327, 549, 574–582.

¹²⁹ *The Revived Puritan: Select Works of Rev. George Whitefield AM* (Lewes, Sussex, 1829), p. 666.

¹³⁰ ‘A dream, ay, and a vision, may often bring men to Christ; I have known many who have been brought to him by them, beyond a doubt, though it has been a mystery to me how it was; but when men bring these forward as a proof of their conversion, there is the mistake; because you may have fifty thousand dreams and see fifty thousand visions, and you may be a fool for all that, and all the bigger sinner for having seen them.’ ‘Sermon XXXIII, Particular Election’, *Sermons of the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon* (New York, 1857), p. 350. The text was 2 Peter 1:10–11.

¹³¹ George C. Needham, *Recollections of Henry Moorhouse, Evangelist* (Chicago, 1881), pp. 23–25. Moorhouse was a friend of Dwight L. Moody and affiliated with the Plymouth Brethren. See also the Henry Moorhouse section at the Brethren Archive web-site (<https://www.brethrenarchive.org/>)

¹³² Rev. John MacPherson, *Henry Moorhouse: The English Evangelist* (London, 1881), pp. 142–143.

¹³³ *From Death Unto Life: Diary and Letters of Mary Grace Banfield* (London, 1906), pp. 47–48. This includes a preface by her pastor, J. K. Popham. Miss Banfield dreamed of Christ clothing her in the robe of his righteousness and filling her heart with his love. Despite awaking with a feeling of being in his hands, it declined but she later that day felt a passage of Scripture applied to her soul to the extent that she believed that God ‘blessed me and assured me of His love’.

¹³⁴ For examples, see ‘George Mackenzie, Elder, Inverness’, p. 148; ‘The late Mrs Angus Fraser, Inverness’, p. 136.

arisen, which were distressing to all.¹³⁵ In 1938 he had been among six elders accused of having broken their ordination vows by accepting a petition to the Kirk Session; this was a charge from which they were exonerated by the Northern Presbytery in March of that year.¹³⁶

V. Prophecy and the end times

Finlay's last minister, Rev. Angus F Mackay wrote: 'His interest in unfulfilled prophecy was well known for, having made a careful, lifelong study of the prophetic books of the Bible, he was at times inclined to dwell inordinately in his public exercises upon the calculations of Daniel or the highly symbolically language of Revelation. On the doctrines of the faith, however, he was always fresh and full...'¹³⁷ Several of those consulted for this article have underlined that this interest in prophecy did not overshadow Finlay's zeal for souls and his earnest presentation of the gospel to them. However, he may also have over-estimated his hearers' appetite for his own special interest. While complex to most people, Finlay would say of unfulfilled prophecy: 'It's there in Daniel. Work it out for yourselves. It's simple and straightforward.'¹³⁸

Premillennialism sees Christ returning to earth to inaugurate the thousand years of blessing in which he will personally reign over mankind. (A variant – dispensationalism – divides history into seven time-periods, in each of which God deals with the human race on the basis of a new principle).¹³⁹ Postmillennialism teaches that through preaching and the activity of the Holy Spirit, the world will be Christianised. Christ's return to earth, followed by the resurrection and judgement, will occur after a long time (either a literal millennium of a thousand years or undefined era) in which 'righteousness and peace' predominate, the vast majority of people are converted, and the Christian world-view prevails worldwide. Amillennialism teaches that there is no such long period of blessing and that millennium is the period from the cross to the return of Christ; some

¹³⁵ At one juncture during a congregational meeting in December 1935, called by Rev. Ewen Macqueen to explain his recent actions, Finlay had risen to read out a statement on behalf of the Kirk Session, 'but immediately there was uproar, his remarks being drowned by the vigorous stamping of feet'. Despite the minister's efforts to calm the situation, the stamping started again when Finlay attempted again to read it. 'Uproar Breaks Out in Highland Church', *Dundee Courier and Advertiser*, Tue. 26th November 1935, p. 6.

¹³⁶ His minister appealed the Presbytery decision to Synod. 'Matters Going to Synod', *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 30th March 1938, p. 9.

¹³⁷ AFM, 'Mr Finlay Beaton, Inverness', p. 245.

¹³⁸ Rev. George Macaskill recalls him saying this.

¹³⁹ D. W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain* (Routledge, 1999), pp. 86, 192.

sections of this viewpoint can be optimistic in outlook, while not reaching the fuller measure seen in postmillennialism.¹⁴⁰

The thousand years are the subject of Revelation 20:1-9. Some of the most able Biblical commentators had baulked at definite statements about the key passages involved. John Collinges (1623–1690), one of the continuators of the *Annotations* of Matthew Poole (1624–1679), said of the chapter that it was ‘the darkest part of the whole revelation’. Of the millennium itself he added: ‘What is meant by the thousand years ... is very hard to say.’ Of verse four he admits: ‘I shall freely confess that I do not understand this and the next two verses.’¹⁴¹ The *Westminster Confession of Faith* takes no explicit stance on the millennium.¹⁴² The Westminster Assembly’s *Larger Catechism* leans towards the postmillennial view at one point although not matching every leading feature.¹⁴³

David Bebbington points out that after the Evangelical Revival of the eighteenth century, postmillennialism became the normal viewpoint among evangelicals. However, its dominance began to fade as the nineteenth century wore on. In some circles it mutated into secular optimism about human progress against injustice.¹⁴⁴

Nick Needham argues that the postmillennial understanding filtered into the Reformation generation in Britain via marginal notes in the Geneva

¹⁴⁰ Loraine Boettner, *The Millennium* (P&R Publishing, 1969), pp. 4-9, 15, 29, 64. Dispensationalism also includes the concept of rapture, a removing of the Lord’s people to heaven leaving behind the unsaved who face a tribulation period. This is now strongly believed in evangelical circles, particularly in the USA, and is the subject of a Christian fiction genre read by millions. See Crawford Gribben, *Writing the Rapture: Prophecy Fiction in Evangelical America* (Oxford University Press, 2009).

¹⁴¹ Matthew Poole, *A Commentary on the Holy Bible, Volume III: Matthew-Revelation* (Banner of Truth, 1963), pp. 1001-1002.

¹⁴² Donald Macleod, *A Faith to Live By: Studies in Christian Doctrine* (Christian Focus, 1998), p. 270.

¹⁴³ Q. 191. What do we pray for in the second petition? A. In the second petition, (which is, Thy Kingdom come,) acknowledging ourselves and all mankind to be by nature under the dominion of sin and Satan, we pray that the kingdom of sin and Satan may be destroyed, the gospel propagated throughout the world, the Jews called, the fullness of the Gentiles brought in; the church furnished with all gospel officers and ordinances, purged from corruption, countenanced and maintained by the civil magistrates; that the ordinances of Christ may be purely dispensed, and made effectual to the converting of those that are yet in their sins, and the confirming, comforting, and building up those that are already converted: that Christ would rule in our hearts here, and hasten the time of his second coming, and our reigning with him for ever: and that he would be pleased so to exercise the kingdom of his power in all the world, as may best conduce to these ends.

¹⁴⁴ David Bebbington, *The Dominance of Evangelicalism: The Age of Spurgeon and Moody* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2005), pp. 130-2.

Bible as well as the writings of Theodore Beza, Martin Bucer, and Peter Martyr Vermigli. Predominating among the Puritans, and Covenanting divines such as Rutherford and Dickson, it was supported in the eighteenth century by Thomas Boston and later by the Haldane brothers, and then in the Disruption era by luminaries such as Thomas Chalmers, ‘Rabbi’ Duncan and Robert Murray McCheyne. Needham also argues that it reached a high point of influence in the mid-nineteenth century. The ‘classic’ analysis was David Brown’s book, *Christ’s Second Coming: Will it be Premillennial?* (1846).¹⁴⁵ Subsequently, Dr Needham argues, the influence of the Free Church ministers Horatius Bonar (1808–1889),¹⁴⁶ his brother Andrew (1810–1892),¹⁴⁷ and the Brethren movement, led to versions of the premillennial understanding gaining the upper hand, with postmillennialism lingering in the Free Church of Scotland and the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland.¹⁴⁸

David Brown’s book was sufficiently important for the premillennial author and early Brethren leader, John N. Darby (1800–1882)¹⁴⁹ and a number of others to critique it.¹⁵⁰ It may have become a

¹⁴⁵ This ran to a number of editions.

¹⁴⁶ J. S. Andrews, ‘Bonar, Horatius (1808–1889)’, *DSCHT*, pp. 84–85.

¹⁴⁷ K. R. Ross, ‘Bonar, Andrew Alexander (1810–1892)’, *DSCHT*, pp. 83–84.

¹⁴⁸ N. R. Needham, ‘Millennialism’, *DSCHT*, pp. 562–564. Horatius Bonar was to promote a version of pre-millenarian teaching in his *Quarterly Journal of Prophecy* from 1849 and 1873. David Bebbington, *The Dominance of Evangelicalism, The Age of Spurgeon and Moody*, p. 182.

¹⁴⁹ Darby may have been well-placed to interact with Brown’s Reformed theological stance. That Darby held to substantial parts of the doctrines of grace, while eschewing systemising his theology, has been shown in a recent minute study of his writings and that of other early Brethren leaders. Mark R. Stevenson, *The Doctrines of Grace in an Unexpected Place: Calvinistic Soteriology in Nineteenth-century Brethren Thought* (Pickwick Publications, 2017). See also Harold H. Rowdon, *The Origins of the Brethren* (London: Pickering and Inglis, 1967). Darby remains the subject of much scholarship; see C. Gribben, ‘John N. Darby, dispensational eschatology, and the formation of trans-Atlantic evangelicalism’, *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Religions- und Kulturgeschichte*, Vol. 110 (2016), pp. 99–109; Donald Harman Akenson, *Exporting the Rapture: John Nelson Darby and the Victorian Conquest of North-American Evangelicalism* (OUP, 2018). Another recent paper by Crawford Gribben has suggested that his shift from Church of Ireland’s ‘exact churchmanship’ to a clearer evangelicalism can be dated to the winter of 1827–1828. Crawford Gribben, ‘Dating Darby’s Addresses to Roman Catholic Brethren’, *Brethren Historical Review*, Vol. 18 (2022), pp. 1–14.

¹⁵⁰ These included the Bonar brothers, the Duke of Manchester, and a number of leading pre-millennial thinkers. J. N. D[arby], *Brief remarks on the work of the Rev. D. Brown ... entitled, ‘Christ’s Second Coming: Is it Pre-millennial?’* (London: G. Morrish, n.d). Also in *The Collected Writings of the late J. N. D.*, Vol. 11 (London: G. Morrish, n.d), pp. 513–597. See also Iain H. Murray, *The Puritan Hope: Revival and the Interpretation of Prophecy* (Banner of Truth, 1975), pp. 198–9.

bulwark in preserving the postmillennial position. The survival of the postmillennial outlook in the Free Church can be seen in the 1940s in the writings of the Free Church minister and devotional writer, Rev. Murdoch Campbell. He was to write in 1945: ‘As it happened long ago, her light is to arise, and to spread upon the mountains and from land to land, till the whole earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord ... Let us therefore be glad, even in the midst of our fears, in that sure prospect of a glorious revival and millennium during which the barren woman shall again become “a mother full of sons”.’¹⁵¹ He added: ‘Oh what a happy world this shall be! A world full of prayer and holy song. A world without noise or fear.’¹⁵²

By the late 1950s and early 1960s, the Amillennialist view was gaining the ascendancy among younger Free Church ministers.¹⁵³ In 1969, Rev. Wallace Bruce Nicholson of Plockton commented: ‘The difference between Post and A-millennarianism is not of serious import although the latter has made considerable ground in Reformed circles of late.’¹⁵⁴ The postmillennial view was vigorously promoted by the retired principal of Free Church (Continuing) Seminary, Rev. William Macleod in a recent lecture.¹⁵⁵

The Free Presbyterian Church maintained the post-millennarian stance in its publications. In a 1903 biography of its co-founder, Rev. Donald Macdonald, he was quoted as saying in a sermon: ‘It shall yet be the case, when the glorious days that are promised shall come, that thousands shall go forth to preach the Gospel and millions shall be converted.’¹⁵⁶ Another example was in a sermon by the Glasgow minister Rev. Neil Cameron published in 1908. The text – ‘and let the whole earth be filled with his glory’ – was from words in Psalm 72:19.

What is noticeable about the sermon is its essential optimism about the spread of the gospel at that time. Mr Cameron took a plenary

¹⁵¹ Murdoch Campbell, *Thy Own Soul Also, or The Crisis of the Church* (Glasgow, 1945), pp. 60-1.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 68.

¹⁵³ The writer was told this by a minister who trained in that era, who emphasised the influence of Amillennial American writers.

¹⁵⁴ Wallace Bruce Nicholson, *Evangelical Theology* (Plockton, 1969), p. 221.

¹⁵⁵ Rev. W. Macleod was principal from 2002–2014 and has served as lecturer in Systematic Theology in the seminary from 2017. The lecture, entitled ‘A Bright Future for the Church’, was delivered on 29th May 2020 and focussed on Revelation 20. It is available on the sermonaudio.com web-site.

¹⁵⁶ Rev. Donald Macfarlane, *Memoirs and Remains of the Rev Donald Macdonald of Shildaig, Ross-shire* (Glasgow, 1957), p. 86.

view of the extent of the gospel's reach in post-millennial blessing: 'The knowledge of the glory of Christ as the only Mediator between God and guilty men shall fill the hearts and understandings of all the peoples of this earth. I don't mean mere speculative and brain knowledge, but true saving knowledge....He will have the heart-love of everyone you will meet with when His glory shall fill the whole earth.... Christ as the Mediator, in His offices will be then believed in by all men... Nothing will be done in Church or State but in accordance with the perfect rule set forth in the Old and New Testament Scriptures. All the subjects in every kingdom of the whole earth will become the willing vassals of the Lord.'¹⁵⁷

One reason given by Mr Cameron for great optimism in his own day was the distribution of the Scriptures by several Bible Societies. He added: 'There is a very promising thing taking place in our day – the Word of God is being spread among the heathen with extraordinary diligence and success. The heathen are also being taught to read God's Word for themselves. This is true in every part of the inhabitable earth. Great pains are being taken to translate the Bible into the languages of the heathen; and what is very extraordinary, this is done, in many instances, by men who hold unsound views on inspiration. In any case the Word of eternal life is being put into the hands of our fellow-sinners in Africa, India, China, etc., with great diligence. This is especially the case with the Bible Societies, who are doing great good. Their Colporteurs go from village to village, and from house to house, spreading the Word of God among the people. This is particularly true in India. This is very hopeful, for God says of His own Word – "It shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." So we may expect the rich harvest of the millennium to be reaped from the sowing of the seed of the kingdom of heaven in the earth.'¹⁵⁸

This positive attitude to Bible translation and Bible Societies continued to be echoed on a number of occasions into the 1950s. For instance, the 1955 report of the Church's Religion and Morals Committee stated: 'There are 25 national Bible Societies in the world, and last year the American Bible Society alone distributed more than 15 million Bibles. Much new ground is broken in the form of translation into languages and

¹⁵⁷ 'A Sermon, by the Rev. Neil Cameron, St Jude's, Glasgow', *FPM*, Vol. 12 (January 1908), pp. 332-333.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 333.

dialects where, until recently, the written Word was unknown. This points to the coming of the “last days”.¹⁵⁹

The post-millennial viewpoint was the one supported in the ‘Catechism of the Free Presbyterian Church principles for Young People’ serialised in the 1942–1943 issues of its youth publication.¹⁶⁰ A series of articles on the theme of the latter-day glory appeared in the *Free Presbyterian Magazine* in 1976. These included two editorials and a separate article sourced from a treatise by Rev. Lachlan Mackenzie of Lochcarron on religious and doctrinal error which would in his view precede the Millennium.¹⁶¹

Mr Cameron’s sermon of 1908 was published in its entirety in an anthology volume of Free Presbyterian preaching in 1961.¹⁶² A slightly edited version of it appeared in the January 2000 edition of the *Free Presbyterian Magazine*.¹⁶³ This number of the magazine sought to draw readers’ attention

¹⁵⁹ *Proceedings of Synod, May 1955*, p. 56. The name of Rev. John Colquhoun of Glendale, convenor of the committee, was appended to the report.

¹⁶⁰ Q 197: Do you believe He is to come before the Millennium? A: No; he is to come after the Millennium to raise the dead and to judge the world...Q 205: Does the Bible promise brighter days? A: Yes, there is no cause in the world that has such a bright future promised. *Young People’s Magazine* (October 1943), pp. 70-71. I thank Roy Middleton, Cheshire for locating this rare number of the publication. The updated and revised version of 2013 added the Amillennial viewpoint to the two mentioned in the 1942–3 original.

¹⁶¹ ‘The Promise of Better Days’, *FPM*, Vol. 81 (July 1976), pp. 241-243. ‘The Darkest Hour Before the Dawn’, *FPM*, Vol. 81 (August 1976), pp. 281-282. Rev. Lachlan Mackenzie, ‘The Delusion before the Millennium’, *FPM*, Vol. 81 (September 1976), pp. 330-335. The Rev. Lachlan Mackenzie extract had a brief note of context signed ‘DM’, presumably Rev. Donald Maclean, Glasgow.

¹⁶² *Free Presbyterian Pulpit* (Inverness, 1961), pp. 31-43.

¹⁶³ The reference to multiple Bible Societies and colporteur work in India was omitted from the sermon in the January 2000 magazine. Between the sermon’s initial publication in 1908 and its January 2000 republication came a Free Presbyterian shift away from supporting several Bible Societies. Instead there was an emphasis on solely backing organisations – increasingly the Trinitarian Bible Society – which had an exclusive focus on the Authorised Version in English and its cognates in other languages. In 1947 the Synod ‘found it painfully necessary’ to part company with the National Bible Society of Scotland. This was due to the Society preparing an abridged version of the Bible for schools, a step which caused ‘grave misgivings’. It was felt that the resulting omissions ‘betrayed a decided leaning to higher critical teaching’. *One Hundred Years of Witness* (Free Presbyterian Publications, 1993), pp. 106-7. In 1948 a notice in the Church magazine stated: ‘The Synod of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, May, 1948, records with sorrow the fact that the National Bible Society of Scotland has changed its constitution. Hitherto it was under obligation to publish the Authorised Version of Scriptures only, but corrupt and modernistic versions may now be published as a result of this change. Those who have been the Society’s loyal supporters within and without the Free Presbyterian Church earnestly desire its return to the old constitution and until then we cannot support it. After due consideration the Synod decided to advise our

from the calendar millennium to the spiritual one, and to pray for the future blessing hoped for in the post-millennial viewpoint. An editorial urged prayer and a renewed focus on personal holiness, as well as underlining the comfort to be found in the teaching. A short article summarised the three main views of the second advent. An edited extract from New England preacher and theologian Jonathan Edwards was also published.¹⁶⁴

Some, but not all, ministers in Finlay's denomination expressed the expectation that if certain conditions were met, the denomination would survive until the Millennium. Rev. John Colquhoun of Glendale wrote in its magazine: 'False prophets have often prophesied its utter extinction, but instead of their prophecies being fulfilled, it grows, and spreads its branches to the furthest away corners of the globe, and if it continues having Christ on board it will exist to the Millennium.'¹⁶⁵ Rev. William Maclean, Ness took the same position in a sermon published in 1977: 'Several of those eminent in godliness and who had the mind of the Lord above many, made it known that they were fully persuaded that the witness raised in 1893 was of the Lord and that He would preserve it until the latter-day glory.'¹⁶⁶

However, a comment in a New Year message in the following year was more typical of the nuanced way in which the topic could appear from time to time. The theme was 'The Year of my Redeemed has Come'.¹⁶⁷ Speaking of the joy with which the exiled Israelites greeted their liberation from Babylon in the words of Psalm 137, a magazine editorial stated: 'Will it not be the same, too, when the promised days of millennial blessing for the Church come? At that time this word will also find its fulfillment – the year of my redeemed is come. We do not know how long the Church may

people to purchase their requirements from the Scottish Bible Society, 45 George Street, Edinburgh. This is a small independent body having no official connection with any other Society. It was formed in 1809 and adheres to the publication of the Authorised Version only.' As the Scottish Bible Society only operated in Scotland, the Synod advised those further afield to buy from the Trinitarian Bible Society. See 'Synod Advisory Statement Anent Bible Societies', *FPM*, Vol. 53 (July 1948), p. 49. For the shift over decades, see *History of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, 1893–1970*, pp. 198, 241–242, 265–268. The Scottish Bible Society merged with the National Bible Society of Scotland in 1985. See F. Macdonald, 'Bible Societies', *DSCHT*, pp. 71–72.

¹⁶⁴ The Jonathan Edwards section was from his book *The History of Redemption*. The material can be found in Jonathan Edwards, *A History of the Work of Redemption* (Banner of Truth, 2003), pp. 369–397.

¹⁶⁵ 'Sermon by the late Rev. John Colquhoun, Glendale, Isle of Skye', *FPM*, Vol. 81 (May 1976), p. 166. Text, Mark 4:35–40.

¹⁶⁶ W.M., 'The Banner Displayed', *FPM*, Vol. 85 (February 1977), p. 52.

¹⁶⁷ The phrase is from Isaiah 63:4.

have to wait for that year to dawn. We cannot tell whether this year will see the beginning of millennial glory for the Church of God or whether the Church will have still to pass through a season of tribulation and trial before the promise is fulfilled.’¹⁶⁸

Finlay was to go further than wistful longing references to post-millennial blessing; he believed that the revival ushering in the latter day glory would actually begin in 1970.¹⁶⁹ His friend Alex MacLennan noted in his diary: ‘Wednesday 6th December 1967. First snow of winter. We visited Finlay Beaton. I was agreeably surprised. He is confident a revival will begin in 1970 and expects to see it himself.’¹⁷⁰ In an unpublished manuscript, for which he unsuccessfully sought publication, Finlay wrote: ‘In the new Reformation to begin with the outpoured Holy Spirit in 1970, Christ will thoroughly purge his floor – the visible Church – to prepare her for the glorious period, the portal of which she reaches in 2015... This period, the latter-day glory, in contrast to the church’s suffering lot during the times of the Gentiles, is to her as a heaven on earth.’¹⁷¹

Finlay’s prediction of a precise year seems to have been made in company in people’s homes, rather than from the lectern at church services. That great events were imminent did feature in his public exhortations, however. He is recalled as referring to world history and the Millennium while addressing an Inverness prayer meeting, and stating: ‘the next great event in history is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.’¹⁷²

Finlay may have been unusual within his own circles in naming a specific year, but this was not unknown in Reformed circles. The seventeenth-century Scottish divine James Durham believed that the thousand years of Revelation 20 had begun in 1560, though at his time of writing they were yet to come in their vigour.¹⁷³ The Cameronian Alexander Shields (1660–1700)¹⁷⁴ predicted a date – 1710 – for the fall of

¹⁶⁸ ‘The Year of my Redeemed is Come’, *FPM*, Vol. 82 (January 1977), p. 3.

¹⁶⁹ A senior FP minister told the writer this. He made the prediction on at least one occasion that year itself in company at a communion.

¹⁷⁰ This entry was not published in the edited version of the diaries.

¹⁷¹ Typed MS, ‘The Time of the End’, p. 379.

¹⁷² This is recalled by a young hearer who is now a retired minister.

¹⁷³ James Durham, *Commentary on Revelations* (Old Paths, 2000), p. 925.

¹⁷⁴ S. Isbell, ‘Shields, Alexander (1660–1700)’, *DSCHT*, pp. 772–773. Alexander Shields was a preacher, political thinker, and theologian who argued for a line of connection from the medieval Lollards down to the Cameronians. He was a one-time aide to the Puritan John Owen, and friend of Covenanter leader James Renwick. After the accession of William III he argued against continued separation from the Church of Scotland.

Anti-Christ.¹⁷⁵ John Wesley (1703–1791) calculated that the destruction of the beast in Revelation chapters 19 and 20 would come in the year 1836.¹⁷⁶ John Brown of Haddington¹⁷⁷ predicted in his *Self-Interpreting Bible* that in the year 1866 or 2016, the two witnesses of Revelation 11 would be raised, i.e. the cause of Christ would be revived greatly, his enemies defeated, and the nations converted to Christianity.¹⁷⁸

The independent High Calvinist preacher in London, Rev. William Huntington (1745–1813) had predicted that the enemy of the two witnesses would be destroyed in the year 1866. From May until November 1854, the *Gospel Standard* magazine had run a series of articles in which the leading Strict Baptist Joseph Charles Philpot had analysed this and more recent publications on the prophetic sections of Scripture. (This was republished as a booklet in 1913, when war had loomed and religious explanations were becoming popular among the general public.)¹⁷⁹ Intriguingly, given the esteem in which Philpot held Huntington, in these 1854 articles he was to disagree with him on the date and about the identity of the eighth king of Revelation 17:11, and believed that the figure represented Infidelity.¹⁸⁰ In a 1799 sermon, Huntington had promoted a postmillennial position and stated that some of his hearers would live to see the commencement of Christ's personal reign on earth, which he defined as being within his

¹⁷⁵ Shields based this on 42 months, i.e. 1260 days or prophetic years being added to the date 450 A.D. See Alexander Shields, *Hind Let Loose* (1687), p. 10.

¹⁷⁶ Jonathan Downing, 'Prophecy and Revivalism in the Transatlantic World, 1734–1745', in *Prophecy and Eschatology in the Transatlantic World, 1550–1800*, ed. Andrew Crome (Palgrave MacMillan, 2016), p. 249.

¹⁷⁷ John Brown was a minister, polymath, divinity tutor to the Associate Synod branch of the Secession Church, and writer. His fame rested on *The Self-Interpreting Bible*, said to have been as commonly owned as Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* or Thomas Boston's *Fourfold State*. D. F. Wright, 'Brown, John (of Haddington) (1722–87)', *DSCHT*, pp. 99–100.

¹⁷⁸ John Brown, *The Self-Interpreting Bible* (Edinburgh, 1831), pp. 1311–1312. The exact date would depend on whether the 1260 months – i.e. years – of the chapter began in 606 or 756 A.D.

¹⁷⁹ Mr J. C. Philpot's Review of "Apocalyptic Sketches", "Signs of the Times" and "The Coming Struggle" (London: Farncombe and Son, 1913).

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., pp. 58–69. In 1994 Huntington was the subject of strong criticism in a leading Reformed magazine. See Iain H. Murray, 'William Huntington', *The Banner of Truth*, No. 373 (October 1994), pp. 9–21. Several responses have been made, notably Henry Sant, *A Vindication of William Huntington* (The Huntingtonian Press, Southampton, 2006, 3rd edn). For more on Huntington's influence, see Matthew J. Hyde, *The 200 Years since William Huntington's Death: Where are the Huntingtonians Today?* (The Huntingtonian Press, Southampton, 2013); Henry Sant, *William Huntington and J. C. Philpot: Was J. C. Philpot a baptised Huntingtonian?* (The Huntingtonian Press, Southampton, 2013).

people's hearts.¹⁸¹ He was quoted by a hearer as saying that 'before 1870' the Lord would defeat two powerful forces, and 'rise to reign in Mount Zion; when he will collect the fulness of the Gentiles'.¹⁸²

Strict Baptist writings were also read in Scottish Highland homes which valued experimental Calvinism, particularly J. C. Philpot.¹⁸³ He believed in a long period of blessing but was to be ambiguous about whether Christ would come to inaugurate it, or to follow it and usher in the Judgement Day. Another leading Strict Baptist, Septimus Spears (1819–1877), wrote in favour of a premillennial perspective. James Wells of Surrey Tabernacle, London (1803–1872) strongly promoted an Amillennial position. Some Strict Baptists in 1918 formed the premillennial Sovereign Grace Advent Testimony, which held meetings and published a magazine. However, Dr Ian Randall notes that most Strict Baptists were focussed on 'present experience' and so were less likely to give minute scrutiny to eschatology.¹⁸⁴

The orthodox German commentator, Ernst Wilhelm Hengstenberg (1802–1869), had calculated the beginning of the millennium to the year 800 A.D., when Charlemagne became emperor.¹⁸⁵ The leading Free Church layman and promotor of missions to the Jews, Robert Wodrow (1793–1843) believed that the year 1843 was to mark the completion of the 2300 days

¹⁸¹ Huntington explained: 'And when Christ comes, he will not come in a visible way to the bodily eyes, for this kingdom "cometh not with observation"; it is not anything to be seen. Behold it is "within" his people. It stands in power, and is set up by the inward working of the Holy Spirit in believing hearts.' 'An Unpublished Sermon by Mr Huntington, Preached Feb. 27th 1799, being the day appointed for a General Fast', *Gospel Standard* (April 1854), p. 109. Mr Philpot published this sermon over the March and April 1854 issues and mentioned it with approval in the May 1854 article subsequently republished. See Mr J. C. Philpot's Review of "Apocalyptic Sketches", "Signs of the Times" and "The Coming Struggle", p. 8.

¹⁸² William Stevens, *Recollections of the Late William Huntington* (London, 1868), pp. 37–38.

¹⁸³ For connections between the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland and the Gospel Standard Strict Baptist churches, see Matthew J. Hyde (ed.), *According to Mine Heart: The Collected Letters of James Kidwell Popham* (Gospel Standard, 2010), pp. 415–417. For the similarity between the Gospel Standard Strict Baptist and the Free Presbyterian positions on the wider evangelical spectrum, see D. W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain* (Routledge, 1999), pp. 56–57. For the most recent scholarship on these links, see Roy Middleton, *Jonathan Ranken Anderson, the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, and the Gospel Standard Strict Baptists* (James Bourne Society, 2023).

¹⁸⁴ Dr Ian Randall, 'The things Which Shall Be Hereafter: Strict Baptist Views of the Second Coming', *The Strict Baptist Historical Society Bulletin*, No. 27 (2000), pp. 3–4, 5–6, 12–15, 20. I thank Dr Matthew J. Hyde, Brighton, for drawing my attention to this paper.

¹⁸⁵ Patrick Fairbairn, *Prophecy Viewed in Respect to Its Distinctive Nature, Its Special Function, and Proper Interpretation* (Edinburgh, 1865), p. 442, footnote 1.

and the cleansing of the sanctuary found in Daniel 8:14.¹⁸⁶ The Harris evangelical leader, John Morrison, also took an interest in the topic.¹⁸⁷ He implied in a poem called 'Am Mellenium' that it was imminent, stressed the importance of Bible distribution for reaching it, and the blessings including freedom from stipend-focussed ministers, as well as the abolition of hunger, associated with the period.¹⁸⁸

At one point in 1914, two Free Presbyterian leaders believed that World War One marked the battle of Armageddon, which would usher in the millennium. An editorial in the *Free Presbyterian Magazine* by Rev. James S. Sinclair¹⁸⁹ in September 1914 stated: 'the present struggle is regarded by sound interpreters as the beginning of the great Battle of Armageddon, spoken of in the Book of Revelation. If this be so, it is matter of thankfulness that the end of that Battle is the beginning of millennial peace and prosperity.'¹⁹⁰ The Inverness minister, Rev. John R. Mackay, wrote in a separate article in that number of the magazine; 'For my own part – although I should like to say it with great submission and deference – I feel strongly persuaded that this is none other than that War of Armageddon, concerning which, in substantially the same sense, prophets under the Old Testament and apostles under the New Testament have forewarned us, and to which the directest reference is made in Revelation xvi. 16.'¹⁹¹ Mr Mackay was to publish a pamphlet which ran to at least four editions expanding on this viewpoint.¹⁹² As Nigel Anderson's thesis points out, the Free Church minister in Gairloch, Rev. William Mackinnon, was to challenge Mr Mackay's interpretation in print, particularly on the meaning of the river Euphrates running dry.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁶ Wodrow interpreted this as the beginning of a mass conversion of the Jewish people to Christianity. Robert Wodrow, *The Past History and Future Destiny of Israel* (Blackie and Son, 1844), p. 79; see also pp. xiv, xvii, xxxvi-xxxvii.

¹⁸⁷ K. D. MacDonald, 'Morrison (or Morison), John (c.1796–1852)', *DSCHT*, p. 609.

¹⁸⁸ George Henderson (ed.), *Dain Iain Ghobha: The Poems of John Morison* (2 vols., Glasgow, 1896), Vol. 2, pp. 38-60, particularly pp. 55-56, 59-60. The poem appears to have been composed immediately after another which focussed on his dispute with the Original Secession Kirk Session in Strond some years before the Disruption.

¹⁸⁹ J. L. Macleod, 'Sinclair, James Steven (1868–1921)', *DSCHT*, p. 777.

¹⁹⁰ 'The War', *FPM*, Vol. 19 (September 1914), p. 167.

¹⁹¹ Rev. John R. Mackay, 'A Note on the Great European War', *FPM*, Vol. 19 (September 1914), pp. 196-7.

¹⁹² John R. Mackay, *Armageddon : two discourses on the Great European War* (Inverness: Northern Counties Newspaper, 1915).

¹⁹³ *The Monthly Record of the Free Church of Scotland*, January 1915, p. 8. I owe the Armageddon material to Nigel Anderson's research: 'The response of the Free Church

In 1917, Rev. Donald Macfarlane thought that it was ‘very probable’ that the millennium would begin in the year 2000 (as predicted by some ‘students of unfulfilled prophecy’), the end of the third two-thousand-year period of world history. He hoped that the end of World War One would mark the beginning of an increasing revival moving towards that point, until ‘all the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ.’¹⁹⁴ A recently rediscovered sermon of Mr Macfarlane’s from 1925 saw him predict that ‘the children’ of those who had joined the United Free church in 1900 would adopt the Free Presbyterian creed in the Millennium.¹⁹⁵ In 1928 a composition with a rich postmillennial flavour was published in a poetry collection by a Free Presbyterian layman, Ronald Connor.¹⁹⁶

The focus on Armageddon had been pervasive in World War One. Professor Philip Jenkins argues that Biblical and spiritual images coloured the rhetoric of the war, and that there was a ‘consistent strain of holy war ideology’ throughout its duration. He also recounts how the success of General Edmund Allenby against the Ottoman Turks in the Middle East, particularly in September 1918 at Megiddo – site of the Biblical Armageddon – fitted this approach in the imaginations of many.¹⁹⁷

However, it was not entirely unknown for a general stage or period in history, rather than a precisely estimated year, to be given for the postmillennial blessing. The great American preacher Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758) had written that the revivals of his day could be the forerunner of greater blessing, but under pressure clarified that he did not identify them with the beginning of the millennium.¹⁹⁸

It is recalled that in the 1960s at least one FP layman gave an interpretation of world history based on there being seven days in the week. On the assumption that the world was around six thousand years old, he reasoned that as God appointed six days for the creation and then appointed a day of rest, so it was not unreasonable to think that

of Scotland to the First World War, 1914–1919’ (MTh(R) thesis, University of Glasgow in partnership with Edinburgh Theological Seminary, 2017), pp. 51–4.

¹⁹⁴ *Sermons by Rev. Donald MacFarlane* (Glasgow, 1986), pp. 174, 185–6.

¹⁹⁵ ‘Christ and His Sheep’, *FPM*, Vol. 128 (March 2023), pp. 69–71.

¹⁹⁶ *Gaelic Poems by R. D. Connor with some Translations* (Stirling, 1928), pp. 39–43. For biographical details, see D. W. B. Somerset, ‘Ronald Connor (1855–1938), Gaelic poet’, *Scottish Reformation Society Historical Journal*, Vol. 12 (2022), pp. 243–249.

¹⁹⁷ Philip Jenkins, *The Great and Holy War: How World War I Changed Religion For Ever* (Lion, 2014), pp. 4, 7, 177–181.

¹⁹⁸ See George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards, A Life* (Yale University Press, 2003), pp. 266–267. See also Jonathan Downing, ‘Prophecy and Revivalism in the Transatlantic World, 1734–1745’, pp. 249–250.

the Millennium would come during the world's seventh period of one thousand years, that beginning in the year 2000 AD. This view of the symbolic importance of a seven-day week was held by Finlay.¹⁹⁹

This seven days/seven millennia explanation of history had an old pedigree. There was a strong rabbinical tradition that 'as the world was created in six days and in the seventh God rested, so there would be six millenary periods, followed by a sabbatical millennium'.²⁰⁰ The early Chiliasts (premillennialists) had universally adopted the concept of a sabbatical millenary from Jewish tradition, and identified it with the reign of Christ and his saints in the millennium.²⁰¹ Figures such as Theophilus of Antioch promoted it. Two centuries later Augustine was to condemn the premillennial position, which he had held in his younger years, favouring rather the view that the millennium had begun with the resurrection of Jesus.²⁰²

Finlay's approach could be summarised as an emphasis on three periods of Biblical time found in the Old Testament book of Daniel. He believed that in some of these periods of time, prophetic days signified years – 1260 day/years, 1290 days/years, and 1335 days/years. Finlay used the year 679/680 A.D. as his starting point. Adding the first period of 1260 days/years took him to the cataclysmic events of the outbreak of World War Two. The second, 1290 days/years, took him to the year 1970, which he described as the beginning of a great Reformation which would take the church and world to 'the portal of the millennium'. A 45-year transition period marked by 'violent change, shocks and turmoil' would then complete the 1335-year-long period around 2014/15. The latter would mark the 'era of blessedness'. The Millennium would be marked by the 'abundant effusion of the Spirit' resulting in mass conversions, the gospel being preached in 'pristine purity' and unity, but also by churches 'maintaining the government, worship and discipline of the church by conforming to the New Testament pattern'.²⁰³

He took the year 679/680 A.D. as his starting point because he believed transubstantiation (as a concept, if not theological term) became

¹⁹⁹ The lay preacher was John Mackenzie, Kishorn, who gave this view when conducting a service in Dingwall FP Church in the 1960s. Source: Rev. John Tallach, e-mail to the writer, 20th January 2023.

²⁰⁰ 'Revelation 20', Jamieson Fausset Brown, *Commentary Practical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible* (Zondervan, 1974), p. 1583.

²⁰¹ David Brown, *Christ's Second Coming: Will it be Pre-millennial?* (Edinburgh, 1849), p. 47.

²⁰² John M. Court, *Approaching the Apocalypse: A Short History of Christian Millenarianism* (IB Tauris, 2008), pp. 56-61.

²⁰³ Typed MS, 'The Time of the End', pp. 347-352, 359.

generally accepted at that period. He did not give a reference for that assertion apart from saying ‘as a good Church history shows’.²⁰⁴

The nineteenth-century Free Church professor Patrick Fairbairn’s book on prophecy is likely to have been on Finlay’s bookshelves. He would not have found support in it for his literal interpretation of the timescales in the book of Daniel. Professor Fairbairn had written: ‘A much greater obscurity, however, must necessarily have hung over the mystical notes of time in some of Daniel’s own visions ... Such indications of time obviously bear obscurity and indistinctness upon their very front.’ On the timescales in Revelation he commented: ‘neither their starting-point, nor their termination is sharply defined ... the periods mentioned, in accordance with the general character of the book, are to be chiefly, if not exclusively, understood in a symbolical manner, as serving to indicate the times of relevant length or brevity which the operations described were destined to occupy’. He applied the same conclusion to the thousand years reign of the saints, stating that ‘it must be taken, like the others, symbolically’.²⁰⁵

From where did Finlay take this specific interest in prophecy, in addition to general postmillennial optimism? As we have seen, he and Rev. Neil Cameron gathered anecdotes for the second volume about Rev. Lachlan Mackenzie published by James Campbell. Mr Mackenzie did make predictions and these may have stimulated Finlay’s studies.

One such came at a Lochcarron communion. The large numbers attending communion seasons meant that the elements would be served to communicants in successive groups, one ‘table’ at a time. On one occasion after multiple ‘tables’ had been served, only one person, a notable convert called ‘Muckle Kate’ had sat at the last ‘table’. Mr Mackenzie had predicted that there would be another such single-person table in future, but that it would be a sign of the impending spiritual ‘delusion’ of which he had warned them often. This was said to have happened around the year 1880. The officiating ministers miscalculated the numbers who would partake of the elements at the first two ‘tables’, leaving a solitary man at the third.²⁰⁶

Mr Mackenzie had also ‘stated that as a proof that he had never delivered to the people but what he had received from the Holy Spirit’, two very unusual trees would grow at the sides of his pulpit, that they would intertwine, and then fall to the ground. ‘All this would be a sign

²⁰⁴ Ibid., pp. 347, 379.

²⁰⁵ Fairbairn, *Prophecy Viewed in Respect to Its Distinctive Nature*, pp. 177, 441–442.

²⁰⁶ *Additional Lectures, Sermons, and Writings*, p. 21.

that the apostasy of the latter says had already begun.’ This was taken as fulfilled when a new parish church was built, trees grew at the pulpit of the old building, intertwined and fell to the ground. Finlay described the trees as ‘two witnesses’ (a probable metaphorical reference to Revelation 11:3) and that they were still decaying on the ground. The book was published in 1930.²⁰⁷

Mr Mackenzie had composed two poems in English which touched on the topic. A section of a poem entitled ‘Redemption’ and published in James Campbell’s first volume, touched briefly on the theme.²⁰⁸ ‘Prophetical Poem’, a more sustained piece of work, appeared in the second volume published by James Campbell.²⁰⁹ This outlined the main events leading up to and during the post-millennial blessings. Neither poem was included in the Banner of Truth’s 1979 volume of Mr Mackenzie’s writings.²¹⁰

A key outside influence on the Highlands was the English Baptist Charles H. Spurgeon. Finlay would have been familiar with his printed sermons. Iain H. Murray has claimed that Spurgeon had a ‘fundamental uncertainty’ about the topic but this has been contested.²¹¹ Supporters of the three main eschatological positions have claimed him for their own. One minute analysis places him as a historical pre-millennialist.²¹²

Religious changes in Finlay’s lifetime stimulated his end-times interest. They were another reason that Finlay himself gave for the view that a reformation was dawning. On one occasion in the 1950s, in a domestic setting, he spoke of unbiblical practices in the visible Church:

All that is to be swept away in the coming reformation ... All that will have to go overboard. I believe, whatever may be the opinion of others, that that is one of the reasons why the Lord is allowing things at the present day to be somewhat as they were at the time of the Westminster Assembly.

Isn’t it remarkable: almost every error that ever was heard of, and most false practices, were found in England at the time of the Westminster Assembly. The Lord saw fit that it should be so. And I believe one of the reasons for that was that he would have the divines of the Westminster Assembly to examine every one of those errors and false practices and to give the Scripture truth on the positive side, shutting out these things.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., pp. 23-24.

²⁰⁸ *Lectures, Sermons, and Writings*, pp. 454-462. The millennial stanzas are on pp. 461-462.

²⁰⁹ *Additional Lectures, Sermons, and Writings*, pp. 336-342.

²¹⁰ *The Happy Man*.

²¹¹ Murray, *The Puritan Hope*, p. 263.

²¹² Dennis M. Swanson, ‘The Millennial Position of Spurgeon’, *The Master’s Seminary Journal*, Vol. 7/2 (Fall 1996), pp. 183-184, 192, 211.

And he's doing the same again today, because he's going to purify his cause and people, purer than it and they ever were in the world's history. And he's allowing all this to come up because in the near future, when he revives his cause, positive truth must be stated in such a way as to shut out the error. The Lord's cause is advancing in every generation. A new witness needs to be borne in every generation, bearing on the errors of the generation. When he revives his cause, now his people will be afraid of these evils and the preacher will find, 'I must state the positive truth that shuts out that error and that false practice.' That's the only way.

A negative method is the method of defeat. Positive truth is the way of victory and that's the great lack of today. There's far too much negative, hitting at this and hitting at that. You state the positive truth and your hearers will soon find out what it bears on and what it shuts out. But you can hit at the error as long as you like but if you don't state clearly the positive truth, you'll make no progress. It's most important. It is the whole method of the Confession of Faith from the beginning to end.²¹³

VI. Finlay's exhorting

Finlay was regarded by his hearers as 'a very capable person' and one who 'knew the Bible inside-out'. His exhorting 'would have a lot of teaching for those who were converted but he was also very considerate of those seeking the Lord, he was very mindful of them'.²¹⁴ Another person commented: 'Finlay was a clear, logical, lawyer type, an excellent speaker.'²¹⁵

He was also sensitive to seeking souls. One friend recalls: 'He was a spiritually minded man who was very earnest in prayer. I recall one particular situation which brought a reaction from him. During one time in Dingwall, he noticed that there was one individual in the congregation who, in the course of several services, was deeply affected by what was being said. Finlay said afterwards that, in the "old days", praying people would not ignore a situation like this. They would rather unite in prayer for her, asking that she would be led to a place where she enjoyed deliverance through faith in Christ.'²¹⁶

Finlay was described as 'particularly dear' to Ewen Fraser (1926–2010), an elder in Stratherrick. His obituarist wrote: 'Ewen had from childhood

²¹³ Recording, around 1957.

²¹⁴ Rev. George Macaskill provided this information.

²¹⁵ A person familiar with the church scene of that era.

²¹⁶ Rev. John Tallach, email, 17th November 2022.

attended the services taken by Finlay and felt a strong personal attachment to him, believing his spiritual counsel had made a lasting impression on him.²¹⁷

A brief note of Finlay's exhortation shows his practical earnestness. Delivered in 1954 at Beaulieu, his text was 'Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it' (Ps. 81:10). He expanded on the topic as follows:

God delivered his people from the spiritual Egypt. There is nothing in God for a creature apart from Christ. The One speaking is the Covenant God of Israel.

You are here today, the Lord speaks to you. The One that has this Covenant God hath all things – man in the fall put God away from him. He is now without God like the Egyptians. Are you not here professing God took you out of Egypt, delivered you from the hand of Satan – from the curse of broken law, the guilt of sin?

He is the portion of his people – now he gives them command: 'Open thy mouth' – this shows there is a fullness in God to fill it, he hath not left this to any creature to do this. This is the least one can do, 'to open his mouth'. If you refuse, you show ingratitude – that you have no needs to supply.

What is it to open the mouth? It is to have saving faith. It means the mouth is empty, that one has nothing. No one is so empty as the one who has faith in Christ. Faith is a receiving grace like the Publican.

You have nothing today that you can bring to God. It is good that is how things are – what will he fill it with? He will give himself that will be enough for you. That is the command he gives you today. You have only to open your mouth.²¹⁸

A taste of Finlay's themes and doctrinal grasp can also be seen in the following passage from his writing:

At the ninth hour, the hour of the evening sacrifice, – the hour at which Gabriel made the great revelation to Daniel – Christ cried with a loud voice 'It is finished'. The cup of the curse was drained to the dregs; the ransom price was paid; justice was satisfied; the wrath of God against sin was propitiated; God's justice towards the sinner was reconciled; God was glorified and the covenant of grace was confirmed; the whole election of grace was redeemed and for them the blessings contained in the promises were purchased; the way was open for mercy to come down to a sinful world, and for the Holy Spirit to apply redemption more abundantly to sinners. For Christ has become the Author of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him. The loud voice showed physical powers unimpaired to the end.

²¹⁷ Rev. G. G. Hutton, 'Mr Ewen Fraser', *FPM*, Vol. 117 (August 2012), p. 244.

²¹⁸ MS note in the handwriting of Elizabeth MacLennan, held in Alex MacLennan papers, Free Presbyterian Archive.

It indicated that the light of the Father's countenance again shone on Him making Him exceeding glad, and bringing Him as the Great High Priest the full conscious knowledge that, in the words of Gabriel, He 'finished the transgression, and made an end of sins, and made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness' and thus abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.²¹⁹

Finlay believed that faith always preceded evangelical repentance. On one occasion he gave an extended explanation of his views:

Faith is always first. It is the great working and saving grace, but evangelical repentance more or less always comes at its heels. It may be very slight or it may be very great. 'The heavenly twins' they are always called.

Many's a one has great difficulties and they wonder what's going on in their own minds, and whether they are right or wrong – how can they have such terrible thoughts? 'Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.' In the moment they are justified they get a title to heaven. 'Whom he justified, then he also glorified.'

Without holiness 'no man shall see the Lord'. They are to be made holy, that's their nature. Justification looks to the state. The righteousness of Christ is the basis of that justification, and therefore they are perfectly justified.

We read about 'the perfect man'. Who is he? I never met a perfect man. All the Lord's people I ever met, they said they felt sin within them. So who's the perfect man? The justified man. He's perfect in his justification. You see in Psalm 37:37 – 'Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace.' The perfect man is the justified man. 'And behold the upright' – that's another way of presenting the same person, of course.

He's only perfect in his justification...he's aiming at perfection in regard to his nature but he still has sin in it as long as his old nature, and that's the last thing to be cast out. He may be perplexed as to his nature. Christ casts it out. He makes his own perfect in righteousness, but until then they are never fully free of trouble. Some have it more than others.²²⁰

Finlay was prepared to concede that the Lord blesses the preaching of the Word by people outside a Reformed confessional framework. He believed that before the new reformation leading to the latter-day glory there would be 'unobtrusive preparatory work'. This would take place among 'steadfast' churches – both sound denominations and individual 'evangelical congregations of some of the retrograde Churches'.²²¹ He added:

²¹⁹ Typed MS, 'The Time of the End', p. 89.

²²⁰ Audio recording of conversation, July 1974, provided by kind permission of Robert Dickie (owner of the recording).

²²¹ Typed MS, 'The Time of the End', p. 354.

Religious campaigns too, in some respects unorthodox in form and defective in doctrine, helped; the most prominent among them being that conducted by Mr Billy Graham, which came to Britain in 1954–55 ... Dr Graham preached evangelical Arminianism. Multitudes flocked to hear him. Christ crucified as the only Saviour for sinners was preached; the new birth was insisted on; sinners dying in their sins were told they were going to hell. The preaching of these truths; the statement that the Bible is the divinely inspired Word of God; and the preacher's reiterated 'The Bible says, the Bible says', roused many of his hearers to whom the Bible was a closed book, to read it. Some of them found it to be 'quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword'. It convinced them of their sins, and that they had to do with an angry God. Their guilt and condemnation became to them solemn realities, making them pray for mercy. They sought and obtained salvation, having found their inability to believe of themselves.

Thus, despite defects and misstatements of doctrine, God who says of His word 'It shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it' (Is. 55:11), sovereignly, graciously, condescendingly blessed the reading of the Word and what was preached in accordance with it.²²²

Finlay's view was not entirely in line with the main official Church pronouncement on the Billy Graham question. A resolution on the issue was passed at the 1955 Synod. This had stated that the Church's initial caution about the Billy Graham crusades was correct and 'in strict accordance with our Ordination vows, in not associating ourselves, and our people, with that movement or any similar movement'. The resolution described the preaching at the Billy Graham crusades as resembling 'Wesleyan and D. L. Moody's Arminianism', adding that the Synod 'reject the soul-destroying teaching of Arminians'.²²³ The Free Church of Scotland adopted a more open stance to the Billy Graham crusades although a strong minority led by Rev. Kenneth Macrae opposed this position.²²⁴

VII. Later life in church circles

As seen earlier, Finlay was a chronicler of Church history going back to the days of Rev. Lachlan Mackenzie. He also met older believers whose own memories were of gospel blessing in the Highlands. One had been a

²²² Ibid., pp. 354–355.

²²³ 'The Kelvin Hall Crusade, Resolution of Synod', *Proceedings of Synod, May 1955*, pp. 28–29.

²²⁴ *Diary of Kenneth MacRae*, pp. 450–459.

regular hearer of Rev. Archibald Cook, Daviot.²²⁵ Another had known the greatly respected catechist Donald Duff.²²⁶ Another had been a hearer of the Rev. George Mackay of the Free North Church.²²⁷

Finlay was able to see the lessons of the past in his own day. On returning a borrowed book to a friend in 1957, he said that he ‘trusted’ that he had ‘profited a little by it’. He added: ‘We see what is written on page 75...sadly fulfilled – spiritual desolation in Ferintosh; and zeal going beyond knowledge the chief cause, added to boasting of privileges. This is not confined to Ferintosh, sad to relate. How many men imagine that they show great faithfulness by denouncing men and churches, and boast of their own privileges, when they ought to concentrate on the evil of sin, its fearful consequences, and the need to guard against and shun it, giving warning simply and soberly that if sin be not guarded against by a constant looking unto Jesus, privileges will but increase condemnation and then may be withdrawn. The extreme denunciations of the Established Church and boasting by Free Church ministers of their privileges was the beginning of Free Church declension just after 1843.’²²⁸

In the opinion of a person who knew him, Finlay was ‘one of the best-read elders in the church’.²²⁹ His knowledge of books was put to practical

²²⁵ ‘The late Mr Angus Fraser, Elder, Inverness’, p. 134. Cook (1789–1865) was an Arran-born revival-era convert whose experimental preaching attracted much interest. The North Church in Inverness was built for him; he and the congregation entered the Free Church. He ministered in Daviot later. Norman Campbell, *One of Heaven’s Jewels: Rev. Archibald Cook of Daviot and the (Free) North Church, Inverness* (Stornoway, 2009).

²²⁶ ‘The late Mrs Fraser, The Cottage, Stratherrick’, p. 116. Mr Duff was a Free Church lay missionary in Alvie and Rothiemurchus until 1853/1854, then in Dingwall, and afterwards in Stratherrick. From 1863 until 1877 he led a Separatist gathering until the dispute with the local Free Church minister was resolved. W. Ewing (ed.), *Annals of the Free Church of Scotland, 1843–1900* (2 vols., Edinburgh, 1914), Vol. 2, p. 210, cited in Alasdair J. Macleod, ‘John Kennedy and the Development of Evangelicalism in the Scottish Highlands, 1843–1900’ (PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2018), pp. 66–7. Duff composed a Gaelic elegy for Rev. Archibald Cook; see *FPM*, Vol. 43 (January 1939), pp. 385–7. See also Alexander Macpherson, *Glimpses of Church and Social Life in the Highlands in Olden Times* (Kingussie, 1893), p. 178; Campbell, *One of Heaven’s Jewels*, pp. 183–4.

²²⁷ ‘The late Mr John Fraser, Lyne, Stratherrick’, p. 194. Born in Reay parish, Caithness, Dr Mackay (1799–1886) served in Clyne before the Disruption and became minister of the Free North in 1845. See Ewing, *Annals of the Free Church of Scotland, 1843–1900*, Vol. 1, p. 234.

²²⁸ MS letter to Mrs Maclellan [Elizabeth, wife of Alex Maclellan, the home missionary], 17th October 1957. The book was John Sinclair, *The Christian Hero of the North; being the traditional life of David Ross, Braefindon of Ferintosh, one of the ‘Men’ of Ross-shire* (Edinburgh and Aberdeen, 1867). The volume recounts two visions which David Ross was reputed to have experienced. It is sensational and lurid in tone, while making important points about the need for an irenic spirit.

²²⁹ The person wishes to remain unnamed.

use by his Church. After the divinity tutor, Rev. Donald Beaton, had retired from the post in 1952, the 'small but valuable' Church library was removed from Oban to Inverness.²³⁰ Finlay was appointed Librarian for the library in 1954, with an annual payment of £30 for the work. It was no longer to be for the sole use of divinity tutors; other ministers now having the opportunity to borrow books not needed meantime by tutors.²³¹ In 1959 a Church Library Committee was set up. It was given power to purchase books for the use of ministers and divinity students, and to find a suitable location for the collection.²³² By 1962, funding and planning permission were being sought for a building next to the St Jude's (Glasgow) Church.²³³ The construction was completed in December 1965.²³⁴ The library moved with the congregation to Woodlands Road in 1975.

Finlay was to take an interest in the case of a young Englishman, Edward Greene, who was unsuccessful in applying for the Free Presbyterian ministry in 1961 and 1964. Finlay provided him with advice about procedure, as well as a draft petition and supporting memorandum should he ever apply again. Mr Greene, however, came to view the Synod's rejection of his applications as wise.²³⁵

Finlay's erudition was legendary. His obituarist wrote: 'He was an inveterate and steady reader of books, rising at an early hour in the morning that the first hours of the day might be given to uninterrupted study. He gathered information from every source, the Press, Commentaries, Church History, books of Economics, Local History, of which he was an expert, but mainly he made the daily prayerful study of the Bible his chief business.'²³⁶

He liked to discuss the offices of the mediator. The role of each of the Persons of the Trinity in the salvation of a sinner was another subject he liked to talk about.²³⁷ He had a huge fund of stories, especially from the spiritual history of the Highlands, and many of his stories highlighted various aspects of the gospel or of the life of faith in a way that could be very enlightening and edifying. Also, he had read the works of John Owen

²³⁰ *History of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, 1893–1970*, pp. 260, 291.

²³¹ *Proceedings of Synod, May 1954*, p. 19.

²³² *Proceedings of Synod, May 1959*, p. 27.

²³³ *Proceedings of Synod, May 1962*, p. 20.

²³⁴ *History of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, 1893–1970*, p. 291.

²³⁵ D. W. B. Somerset, 'Mr Edward Greene (1937–2018)', *FPM*, Vol. 125 (August 2020), p. 247.

²³⁶ AFM, 'Mr Finlay Beaton, Inverness', p. 245.

²³⁷ I acknowledge the assistance of Rev. Neil M. Ross, minister emeritus of Dingwall and Beaully Free Presbyterian congregation, who kindly provided these memories. Email, 13th April 2023.

extensively, and was able to quote Owen's views on different questions which came up in conversation.²³⁸

He was also not given to necessarily connecting, or expecting a connection, between new breaches of the Ten Commandments, and open afflictions in people's lives. The possibility had been raised when farmers in a nearby area had begun for the first time to harvest crops on the Lord's Day. Finlay said that obvious judgements were sometimes seen in the lives of the perpetrators of such actions but that after a while they were not, and those involved were effectively left to themselves by the Lord.²³⁹

His general knowledge was immense. A friend recalls that whatever the topic was, 'Finlay seemed to not only had a photographic memory but an encyclopaedic type of mind'. At a communion in Thurso, the lady of the house had brought Finlay and the young man a cup of tea and a plate of Rich Tea biscuits. 'He started talking about the production of the biscuit and the treatment given to the ingredients.'²⁴⁰

On another occasion, Finlay asked the divinity student Fraser Tallach²⁴¹ what he had been studying recently and was told it had been the walls of Jericho. An eyewitness to the conversation recalled: 'Fraser said something about it and my recollection is that Finlay stopped him and said: "That's not correct". Finlay started talking about the lay-out of the walls, so far along to this corner etc, and how they fell outwards. The amount of information he had was unbelievable.'²⁴²

A regular at communions around the Highlands and Islands, he was often first to be asked to speak at the Question Meeting on the Fridays of communion seasons. His comments were pithy and edifying. One such comment was noted by a hearer at the Tomatin communion season in July 1974 as follows: 'Mr F. Beaton said that the desire was one grace which Satan cannot imitate.'²⁴³ Fragmented notes of some of these remarks made on different occasions are given in Appendix 1 to this article. Fuller notes of remarks

²³⁸ Rev. John Tallach, email, 17th November 2022.

²³⁹ Dr Robert J. Dickie, Stornoway was a witness to the conversation.

²⁴⁰ My source is the Rev. Calum Macinnes.

²⁴¹ Samuel Fraser Tallach (1938–1998) was a Free Presbyterian minister in Winnipeg, Broadford, and Kinlochbervie. He joined the APC in 1989 and pastored their Wick-Thurso-Strathy charge. Fraser Tallach, with John and David Tallach, *Fraser: Not a Private Matter* (Banner of Truth, 2003). See also John M. Macleod, 'Rev. S. Fraser Tallach', *Herald*, 7th November 1998. <https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/12250226.rev-s-fraser-tallach/> (downloaded 23rd April 2023).

²⁴² Rev. Calum Macinnes is the source for this.

²⁴³ Typed MS 'Tomatin Communion July 1974'. I am grateful to Hugh Mackenzie, Stornoway FP congregation, for this reference.



This picture is believed to have been taken at a communion in Wester Ross. Back row: Finlay Beaton, Drs Peter Aulay Macleod and Neil R. Gillies, both of Stornoway. Front row: Duncan Macrae, Lochcarron with his son Derick.

made by Finlay and others at a Question meeting were published in 1996.²⁴⁴

Finlay would travel far and wide for communions. He is known to have attended at Wick. He often came for that purpose to Stornoway and then travelled on to the Breasclete preaching station for the sacrament held there. In Stornoway he would often be the guest of two sisters, Chrissie and Maggie Macdonald,

who lived in a house called 'Inglewood' on Matheson Road.²⁴⁵ In Breasclete he would stay with a church office-bearer Donald Maclean, or at the Carloway doctor's house with Dr Peter Aulay Macleod, an elder in the Stornoway congregation.²⁴⁶

²⁴⁴ 'Notes at a Fellowship Meeting', *FPM*, Vol. 101 (October 1996), pp. 295-304. The meeting took place at a Dingwall communion season in February 1962. The text for discussion was Matthew 28:5. Eight men spoke.

²⁴⁵ Maggie was the older sister and ran Inglewood as a lodging house. Her sister Chrissie worked in an office in the town. Their mother Donaldina was a sister of John Bain, a Stornoway man who made his fortune in Chicago and donated to good causes in Stornoway including a heating system for the FP Church, and contributing to the building of the Town Hall. In old age, Chrissie and Maggie sold Inglewood and with the proceeds built a smaller house next to it. I owe this information to Hugh Mackenzie and a person familiar with the family. Their maternal grandmother Catherine Bain (1838-1930) was the subject of an obituary in the Church magazine by Rev. Malcolm Gillies. MG, 'The late Mrs Catherine Bain, "Englewood" (sic), Stornoway', *FPM*, (May 1931), pp. 26-28.

²⁴⁶ Dr Macleod was converted while reading a sermon by C. H. Spurgeon on the cripple at Lystra. Based as a rural GP at the doctor's house in Carloway, he was also a precentor, Sabbath School superintendent, lay preacher, and Synod elder in the Stornoway congregation. HG, 'The late Dr Peter A. Macleod, Stornoway', *FPM*, Vol. 78 (February 1973), pp. 45-47. 'Synod Tribute to the Late Dr P. A. Macleod, Elder, Stornoway', *Proceedings of Synod*, May 1970,

Among many friendships, Finlay Beaton was ‘a lifelong friend’ of William Mackenzie, who had grown up on Kenneth Street, Inverness and had been a treasurer and deacon in the FP congregation there. They visited Israel together in 1971 as part of a tour led by Rev. Donald Maclean, Glasgow.²⁴⁷

Finlay was open to the use of new technology to spread the gospel. Mrs Isabella ‘Bella’ Grant and her daughter Isabel often recorded short devotional talks given for the purpose by elders and ministers, either at the Grant home at 4 Millburn Road in Inverness or at other people’s homes. This was done using a reel-to-reel recorder. These were forwarded to Mrs Grant’s sister in New Zealand, Mrs Mary Macpherson, for distribution and playing on a similar device for the benefit of church people there.²⁴⁸ Isabella and Mary were among the eleven children of James Campbell, compiler of the two volumes on Rev. Lachlan Mackenzie with which Finlay had been involved. Another sister was Mrs Helen MacQueen, whose daughter Grace was married to Rev. Donald Maclean, Portree and Glasgow. Mrs Grant’s husband John was a long-standing treasurer of the denomination.²⁴⁹

Three weeks before his death in December 1974, Finlay conducted the service in Stratherrick. His text was in Revelation 7:12-17, particularly the last two verses: ‘They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.’ His minister added: ‘The liberty and unction with which he spoke impressed the hearers with the conviction that his own soul was enjoying the foretaste of the heavenly blessedness and glory which awaits the saints’. Finlay passed to glory on 5th December 1974. He had been preparing to move into the

p. 122. See also C. MacLeod, ‘Lines in Memory of Dr Peter Aulay Macleod, Lewis’, *Young People’s Magazine*, Vol. 41 (May 1976), pp. 191-193.

²⁴⁷ AFM, ‘William Mackenzie, Deacon, Inverness’, *FPM*, Vol. 82 (September 1977), pp. 335-337.

²⁴⁸ The work widened out to recording church services, particularly those conducted by the Rev. William Maclean, and swapping reels with congregations in Scotland also using the technology. A number of the tapes were taken to Oxford and digitised by a volunteer in Scotland, and some of reels were deposited at the Glasgow church building, 133 Woodlands Road, in 2022.

²⁴⁹ AFM, ‘John Grant, Inverness’, *FPM*, Vol. 76 (October 1971), pp. 309-312. John and Isabella’s daughter Isabel helped them in selling Reformed literature for the Church. She served in the Inverness FP congregation’s Sabbath School. She was born in Inverness in 1927 and died on 6th September 2018.



John Maclellan, Muir of Ord, (right) with Finlay Beaton. John was a much-respected elder in the Beaully congregation, who with his brother Alex Maclellan, the missionary, gave many years' service to the cause in the area.

COURTESY OF MAARTEN SCHOUTEN

Church's care home for the elderly, Ballifeary House in Inverness.²⁵⁰

When his friend Neil M. Ross visited him when he was on his deathbed, Finlay feelingly quoted, 'The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him.'²⁵¹

VIII. The wider circle

A shrewd observer told the writer several years ago that Finlay was part of a group of elders who 'lived for the Lord' and had a great measure of discernment. He felt that their passing had

consequences. The circle included Finlay, his Inverness fellow-elder Robert Watt, Alex and John Maclellan of Beaully, Hector Campbell in Ullapool and Sandy Maclean, Gairloch. Asked what made them stand out, another man who knew them explained: 'They were exercised. If you were going to speak about a difference, they were always speaking about the Truth. There was a stamp about these people, an air of godliness.'²⁵²

There is a small amount of literature on local leadership networks in Scottish Highland ecclesiastical life. In his *The Days of the Fathers in Ross-shire*, first published in 1861, Rev. John Kennedy provided in-depth material on seven leading 'men' in Ross-shire and their acquaintances. He emphasised their personal piety, unity, usefulness, and interactions.²⁵³ In his *Ministers and Men in the Far North*, the Rev. Alexander Auld recounted the godly of Caithness and adjacent pockets in Sutherland as individuals rather than by area.²⁵⁴ A collection of anecdotes illustrating the contribution made by the leading figures of Skye evangelicalism throughout the nineteenth century was issued in 1902 and republished in 2013.²⁵⁵ In his 1924 publication, *The Men*

²⁵⁰ AFM, 'Mr Finlay Beaton, Inverness', p. 246.

²⁵¹ Nahum 1:7. I am grateful to the Rev. Neil M. Ross for this memory. Email, 13th April 2023.

²⁵² Rev. Donald A. Ross, Laide.

²⁵³ See particularly Kennedy, *The Days of the Fathers in Ross-shire*, pp. 74-125.

²⁵⁴ First published in 1869, there were new editions in 1891, 1956, and 2000.

²⁵⁵ Roderick MacCowan, *The Men of Skye* (Scottish Reformation Society, 2013).

of the Lews, Norman Macfarlane described prominent believers in separate chapters either as individuals or ‘groups’, e.g. ‘The Cromore Group’.²⁵⁶

A godly woman in Dingwall, and her inter-locking friendships with others, was described in Rev. Donald A. Macfarlane’s 1941 biography *Miss Harriet Macdonald, Dingwall, and her Father*.²⁵⁷ As seen earlier, Rev. Donald Munro gathered a vast amount of material on the men who spoke regularly at communion season Friday fellowship meetings in Sutherland, or acted as leading elders and catechists. This was published as *Records of Grace in Sutherland* in the early 1950s. One late twentieth-century study of the Free Church in Glenurquhart, Glen Moriston, and Fort Augustus highlighted the role of elders, women, and a particular family over several generations, as well a listing ministers and missionaries from the area.²⁵⁸ Congregational



A Tomatin communion scene. L-R: Mrs Cameron; her father Robert Watt; Alex James Cameron-Mackintosh; Miss Mary Urquhart, Inverness; May Cameron-Mackintosh; and Mrs Campbell, Inverness.

COURTESY OF THE LATE LILIAN CAMPBELL

histories, such as that for Shawbost Free Church in Lewis, usually include short biographical summaries of elders.²⁵⁹ Several anthologies of

²⁵⁶ Norman Macfarlane, *The Men of the Lews* (Stornoway, 1924). This was republished by the late William Murray as *The Men of Lewis* (Dornoch, 2015). In 2022, a new edition of Mr Murray’s republication was issued by Reformation Press, with added explanations of historical and literary references as well as short biographical accounts of ministers.

²⁵⁷ Inverness, 1941. This was republished with additional obituary-sourced material, in 2020, as *Harriet: A Highland Christian and Her Circle* (Reformation Press, 2020).

²⁵⁸ Ian M. Allan, *West the Glen, A History of the Free Church just west of the Great Glen* (Glenurquhart, 1997). The family, MacDonalds of Buntait, are described at pp. 169–178.

²⁵⁹ Calum Macleod, *Echoes of an Era: Shawbost Free Church of Scotland, Its Origins and History* (Shawbost, 2014).

obituaries from the *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, grouped by geographical area have appeared more recently. The friendships between the people involved are usually clear.²⁶⁰

Robert Watt (1885–1966) was, by any measure, part of such a network with Finlay. Brought up in Lybster, Caithness, his parents had left the Free Church some years before 1893 and aligned themselves with the Reformed Presbyterian congregation in Wick. Given the long distance, they held services in their own home, reading a Spurgeon sermon. Robert's parents died when he was eight years old. His maternal grandfather, Captain Robert Ross, then came to Lybster to look after the family. He continued the services under the auspices of the Free Presbyterian Church. Robert Watt came to live in Inverness and also served as missionary in Tomatin for twenty years.²⁶¹

Noted for 'a spirit of deep and genuine humility', Robert 'could not brook any word of praise lest the worthiness of the Saviour be obscured by any suggestion of human merit'. It was also noted that 'his cheerfulness and imperturbable good humour made him a most pleasant companion, and he had a friendly word even for the openly ungodly'.²⁶² A lady from a nearby congregation said that every time she met him working on the streets of Inverness, the words which came to mind were: 'Though ye have lien among the pots,/ like doves ye shall appear,/ Whose wings with silver, and with gold/ whose feathers covered are.'²⁶³ It was said that he retained the love and zeal of his early Christian life.²⁶⁴

A person familiar with the church scene of the 1950s and 1960s described Robert and Finlay as 'two choice elders'. He added that Robert Watt prayed loudly, and had a Wick accent. 'His special gifts were his prayers – and you could hear them in every corner of the church.'²⁶⁵ A regular hearer of Robert Watt described him as 'very popular, his own man, a very likable person'.²⁶⁶ Another who knew them commented: 'They were lovely men,

²⁶⁰ Neil Cameron, *Ministers and Men of the Free Presbyterian Church* (Settle Graphics, 1993). A second edition, in hardback, was issued by Free Presbyterian Publications in 2011. See also Norman Campbell and Robert Dickie (eds.), *Witnesses in the Far North* (Stornoway: Reformation Press, 2017); and Ruth Daubney (ed.), *Trees of Frankincense: Free Presbyterians of East Sutherland and North-East Ross* (Glasgow, 2023).

²⁶¹ AFM, 'The late Mr Robert Watt, Elder, Inverness', *FPM*, Vol. 72 (December 1967), pp. 233–237.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 236.

²⁶³ Psalm 68:13, metrical version.

²⁶⁴ AFM, 'The late Mr Robert Watt, Elder, Inverness', p. 236.

²⁶⁵ The person does not wish to be named.

²⁶⁶ Rev. George Macaskill.

characters, one-offs in many ways'. Another remembers him as 'a bright Christian' although he could have times of being low in his feelings.²⁶⁷

The meetinghouse in Tomatin in those days was the lower level in a large house built on a hill. On the first Sabbath that he was no longer able to take services there, the divinity student Malcolm Macinnes read a letter on Robert's behalf to the congregation which urged on them the gospel message.²⁶⁸

On Monday evenings, if the minister was absent, Robert and Finlay would discuss at the Inverness church door which of them should take the English prayer meeting. Finlay would occasionally claim that his stomach complaint was good reason for his not conducting it that evening. Robert Watt teased him on at least one occasion by saying that there was no better cure for a bad stomach than taking a prayer meeting. On another occasion, when meeting an undertaker to make arrangements for a funeral in the building, Robert teased Finlay: 'Keep an eye on him, he's measuring you'.²⁶⁹

Every Wednesday three elders – Finlay, Robert Watt, and Roderick Mackenzie – would visit Raigmore and other Inverness hospitals. They were held in affection by many who would meet them. Dressed in black suits with white shirts and black ties, some who saw them nicknamed them 'the penguins'. Another Inverness elder was Murdo Campbell who taught in the Sabbath School, 'a very meek and mild man'.²⁷⁰

On one occasion Robert Watt was reminiscing about a communion in Wick which he had attended in the distant past. It was obvious that he had very warm memories of blessings received over this weekend. When it came to Monday morning, he had to get back to Inverness for work. In order to be sure that he was back in Inverness in time, he left Wick in the middle of the night. He was riding a motor bike and he was giving a lift to Willie Sim.²⁷¹ The journey was not that easy because of the dark, because there was a problem with his headlamp, and because of heavy rain, but one person who heard him reminisce, recalled him saying: 'But we were happy, weren't we Willie? We were happy.'²⁷²

²⁶⁷ Rev. Donald A. Ross, Laide.

²⁶⁸ Mr Macinnes provided this information.

²⁶⁹ I owe the undertaker anecdote to a person who knew the elders.

²⁷⁰ Rev. George MacAskill.

²⁷¹ Mr Sim professed faith in 1921, and was an avid visitor to communion seasons, often 'at great inconvenience to himself'. He served as a deacon in Inverness and later as an elder in Glasgow. He became an elder in the Lairg-Bonar, Tain, and Dingwall congregations. AEW, 'Mr William Sim, Elder', *FPM*, Vol. 99 (November 1994), pp. 339-340.

²⁷² Rev. John Tallach, email, 17th November 2022.

Robert's wisdom could be seen among friends at a communion season in Stratherrick. After a time, Robert indicated in a mild way that he did not feel entirely at home with what was being said by Finlay. However, he went on to say something along the lines: 'But we'll not fall out. We'll stick close together. In fact, we'll stick that close to one another, Finlay, that the Devil will not get between us.'²⁷³

IX. Alex and John MacLennan

The brothers Alex and John MacLennan were elders in the Dingwall and Beauly joint charge. Close friends of Finlay, Alex died in 1972 and John in 1979.²⁷⁴ They were brought up on the island of South Rona, just north of Raasay in the Inner Hebrides.²⁷⁵ Their father had been a respected home missionary with the West Coast Mission. He had helped form the Free Presbyterian cause on South Rona.²⁷⁶ Most of their adult lives were spent in Muir of Ord near Beauly. Their family got a small-holding there after a large farm was broken up. John was a ganger on the railway, responsible for keeping the tracks clear and the surrounding verges free from flammable material which stray sparks from steam trains might ignite.

Alex was appointed as a home missionary in 1936, initially holding services in Beauly and Daviot alternate weeks but soon entirely focussing on Beauly and Dingwall.²⁷⁷ He had a positive tone in preaching. A hearer recalls: 'Alex would be talking about some dark sombre subject and then say "Cheer up, friend" and go into some gospel matter.'²⁷⁸ Another friend recalls that people made allowances for Alex's forward style in domestic or public conversation. He also had no compulsion about evangelising people without preliminaries. 'Do you know the Lord Jesus?', he would sometimes ask strangers he had just met travelling on public transport. 'After family worship while visiting, or when in company, he would sometimes almost conduct a fellowship meeting of his own. He'd talk about a text they'd

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ Norman Campbell and Robert Dickie (eds.), *He Led Me: Autobiography, Diaries and Meditations of Alex MacLennan* (Reformation Press, 2018). See also 'Tribute to the late Mr Alexander MacLennan, Elder, Dingwall and Beauly', *Proceedings of Synod, May 1972*, pp. 32-33. For John, see 'Synod tribute to the late Mr John MacLennan, Elder, Beauly', *Proceedings of Synod, May 1979*, p. 104.

²⁷⁵ See Rebecca Mackay (ed.), *South Rona: The Island and its People* (Raasay Heritage Trust, 2016).

²⁷⁶ Neil Cameron, 'The late Alexander MacLennan, Rona, Raasay', *FPM*, Vol. 25, (January 1921), pp. 268-271.

²⁷⁷ *He Led Me: Autobiography, Diaries and Meditations of Alex MacLennan*, p. 24.

²⁷⁸ Rev. Donald A. Ross, Laide.

just read and ask others what they thought about it. And he might ask you what your favourite verse in the passage just read had been – and then ask you why.’²⁷⁹

Alex had a natural gift for making friends and had a self-confidence which allowed him to speak to people in a way that did not necessarily come naturally to many other office-bearers of the era. One blind spot was his occasional comment on the colour of people’s clothes.²⁸⁰ However, he had an eye for a good photograph and encouraged a young artist in his denomination. A letter he wrote shows that he was not opposed to art. This letter is published as Appendix Three to this paper.

On one occasion he was commissioned by a Wester Ross teacher to write a letter to her pupils, presumably as a fresh way of providing religious education. He wrote to the Kenmore children:

If a kind gentleman told you he was going on a cruise (with a fine yacht) round the British Isles, and would call in at Kenmore on a certain date any time after 10 am – I feel sure you would be exceedingly joyous. You would be up early in the morning, dress and have everything in order ready against the appearance of the yacht. The matter would absorb all your thoughts. You would be, as we say, ‘full of it’, looking forward to the fine sights to be seen and the experience of ‘life on the ocean wave’, having the best entertainment and choicest company and food.

Now, God tells us in his word the Bible, that he has prepared a glorious place in Heaven where people will live in endless happiness, in the best of company, and seeing beautiful sights such as no one ever saw here on this earth. This is from One who will keep his promise – ‘Who cannot lie’. He says also that he is coming soon and will bring with him all who will be ready. You may ask me: ‘When will he come?’ I say: ‘Anytime.’ You may also ask me how you can be ready. Ask God every night as you lie down to sleep: ‘God be merciful to me a sinner and wash me in the blood of Christ, Amen.’ (Don’t forget now). Your loving friend, Alex MacLennan²⁸¹

²⁷⁹ I owe these recollections to Rev. Calum Macinnes.

²⁸⁰ He was reprimanded by several Church ministers including Rev. Angus F. Mackay and Rev. Fraser MacDonald (1924–2013) for criticising any Christian man who wore a red neck-tie. This aversion to the colour red, and occasional references to the colour of other items of clothing, was well beyond his denomination’s understanding of Scriptural dress code. He also believed that men should wear a hat when going to church, in order to show respect to the Lord by taking it off at the church door.

²⁸¹ The teacher was the late Miss Mary Margaret (Marie) Campbell who taught in Kenmore in the 1950s and early 1960s. She belonged to the Pulteney Street, Ullapool, family of that name, who had lived in the Scoraig peninsula. Miss Campbell gave permission for the publication of this letter a number of years ago. She passed away on 3rd April 2023.



Hector Campbell; Catherine Mackenzie and her sister Johan MacKenzie (both of Clashnessie); Catherine Ross; Hector MacKenzie, Clashnessie. It is thought the picture was taken at a Stoer communion.

COURTESY OF THE LATE MARIE CAMPBELL

Alex and John MacIennan had the privilege of a living ministry in Dingwall, that of Rev. Donald Alexander Macfarlane²⁸² (not to be confused with the congregation's first pastor, Rev. Donald Macfarlane). They assisted him by holding services but also benefited from his preaching and example. Mr Macfarlane would often stop while preaching and say: 'Will you have Christ? If you won't, I will.' A practical and thoughtful kindness also pervaded his pulpit style. On wet days he would call to people whose clothing had been soaked on the way to the services to come down to dry and warm themselves

²⁸² Rev. Donald Alexander Macfarlane (1889–1979) became minister of the Dingwall and Beaulie congregations in 1930 and retired from that pastorate in 1973. Previously he had served in the joint charge of Lairg, Bonar, Dornoch, and Rogart (1914–1927). He was a much-loved preacher, a tutor of divinity students in Greek and Hebrew, respected for his intellectual abilities, and known for his kindness. His first wife was Catherine née Cameron from Oban; sadly she died in 1955. He married his second wife Ella née Finlayson in 1957. She outlived him by many years, passing away in 2015. He suffered several nervous breakdowns, the first in 1927 and another in 1955. He often suffered from depression. His elders, including Alex and John MacIennan, conducted public worship when he was unable to. See John Tallach, *I Shall Arise: The life and ministry of Donald A. MacFarlane* (Faro Publishing, 1984).

in pews near the open stove at the front of the church.²⁸³

Alex and John MacLennan would visit households together. ‘John was a lovely man’, says a friend, ‘he was still and quiet. John could be there and just say something and that would clarify the point well.’ Rev. D. A. Macfarlane was known to highly respect John. It was rarely that John took services.²⁸⁴ One listener felt that John was more experimental (experience-focussed) in his preaching but not well-ordered like Alex.²⁸⁵

Another friend recalls that in addressing a congregation, John ‘had good material and was very nice to listen to but had more of a monotone than Alex and less inflection in his voice.’ The friend adds: ‘Alex was more gripping; but now, looking back on my life, there was a weight about John and substance about his spirituality.’²⁸⁶ A young man walking along the road with John MacLennan spoke of how blessed the latter-day glory of the Millennium would be. ‘Oh well’, replied John, ‘the believer has a millennium in his heart already.’²⁸⁷

The circle of elders in Inverness and Ross-shire in Finlay’s later years also included Hector Campbell of Scoraig and Ullapool, as well as Sandy Maclean in Gairloch. Mr Campbell had been an elder in the Lochbroom congregation, while living in the roadless peninsula of Scoraig.²⁸⁸ When the local population were leaving the area, he



Sandy Maclean, Gairloch, pictured here with his wife Katie, was a highly-respected home missionary in nearby Laide.

COURTESY OF ONIE MACKENZIE

²⁸³ Rev. Donald A. Ross provided this information. This would take place in the old Dingwall building, across the main road from the current premises on Hill Street.

²⁸⁴ Calum Macinnes was the friend.

²⁸⁵ Rev. Donald A. Ross, Laide.

²⁸⁶ Rev. Calum Macinnes provided this material.

²⁸⁷ This person does not wish to be named.

²⁸⁸ Mr Campbell was the father of the teacher Mary Margaret Campbell, who had commissioned the letter from Alex MacLennan.

moved in 1963 to Ullapool where he worshipped with that section of the congregation. His obituarist, Rev. Alfred MacDonald,²⁸⁹ wrote: ‘He was abundantly blessed with gifts suitable to the word of preaching. In listening to him, one was easily convinced that the Lord was most real to him – he preached a Christ whom he knew...That generation were much given to the habit of secret prayer. Hector was no exception...His desire was to converse on the things of God, and in particular to talk of the work of the Holy Spirit in the souls of God’s people.’²⁹⁰ Sandy Maclean was an elder in Gairloch. He served for thirty years as home missionary for Laide. This village is fifteen miles from Gairloch and he cycled there in all weathers.²⁹¹

X. Conclusion

Finlay Beaton was a self-taught scholar as well as marine engineer. Isolated as a conscientious objector in World War One, his stance was not unknown in some parts of the churches in Scotland. Soon afterwards active in ecclesiastical life, his historical and doctrinal abilities gave depth to his exhorting others from the Bible during church services. He chronicled Highland spirituality but did not avoid unusual phenomena which it shared with other Reformed and evangelical traditions in the UK. His wide reading and his cooperation with Christians outside his own denomination gave him insights and perspective. Nevertheless he helped in a small way to clarify his denomination’s mid-twentieth century identity. Few in it necessarily shared his close interest in end-times prophecy but respect for his erudition and post-millennial position allowed him space to promulgate it. His naming a specific year for the dawning of the millennium was unusual but not completely unknown in his own denomination or Christendom down through the ages. Most important of all, he and the network of similar office-bearers modelled compassionate zeal for souls and spiritual discernment.

²⁸⁹ Born in Oban in 1926, Mr MacDonald taught in Wick and Stornoway before divinity training. He was licensed as a minister in 1959 and spent six years in the FP Church’s Zimbabwe mission field. He was pastor of Gairloch from 1965 until May 2021. He served as assistant clerk to Synod and as a divinity tutor on several occasions. Mr MacDonald passed away in October 2022.

²⁹⁰ AEW, ‘Hector Campbell, Scoraig and Ullapool’, *FPM*, Vol. 81 (February 1976), pp. 54-56.

²⁹¹ Alfred E. W. MacDonald, ‘Alexander Maclean, Gairloch’, *FPM*, Vol. 81, (June 1976), pp. 216-218.

Appendix 1.

Finlay Beaton remarks at Question Meetings

[Each paragraph records remarks made at a different Question Meeting.²⁹² The text and place are often not supplied. The same applies for Appendix Two.]

Their thoughts are much on Christ even when not engaged in public worship. They seek to the word of God – they are the only people who believe it. They are not satisfied with any teacher without Christ. They are pleading in secret that they would meet with him in public. They know something of joy in the means.

This people live in time and eternity. They know that it is with God they have to do. They know the cause of all their troubles is sin, and are convinced of its nature. They seek to be sprinkled with the blood of Christ. They are the only people that believe in the depravity of the heart. They are a praying people, though they have to seek pardon for them [i.e., their prayers]. They go to the means with expectation. The more they read the Scriptures, the higher their regard for them. They are emptied from vessel to vessel. They know ‘He scourges every son he receiveth’. They are afraid of the rod. Their religion centres on a crucified Redeemer.

This people have many changes but they are driven to Christ by them. They tried to free themselves from condemnation. They seek to Christ’s death. No matter how low they come, they have the hope that he will visit them in mercy.

This people live in two worlds. They have joys and sorrows the world knows nothing of. They know it was their sins that crucified Christ. Others blame the Jews. They feel they will make no headway in the spiritual conflict apart from Christ.

The text at this Question meeting was Ephesians 2:13. The older this people grow they feel they know nothing unless taught from Heaven. They are made tender. They believe God will be in the means, but their concern is ‘Will He meet with me?’.

The text was John 3:3. (Possibly Dingwall, Friday 3rd August 1956). This people are emptied from vessel to vessel, concerned about their heart.

²⁹² They were recorded by Mrs Elizabeth MacLennan and stored among MS documents in her husband Alex MacLennan’s papers held in the Free Presbyterian Church Archive.

They praise God for his sovereignty; the unregenerated take nothing to do with that. One day this people cared not for Christ. Another day came; they fell in love with him. When is a man afraid he may not get a certain lady? It is when he falls in love with her. So it is when a man is afraid he will not get Christ, it is because he loves Christ.

The text was I Peter 1: 18-19. (Possibly Stratherrick, Friday 10th August 1956). This people realised God is high and holy and will bring all their conduct to judgment. They realised the being of God. They feel they have more reason to fear themselves than Satan; others have not this mark. This people learn more and more their dependence on the Holy Spirit, and are grieved without the Spirit. They feel their need of being kept watchful, meek and lowly. They are sometimes driven from their knees by the carnal mind.

A mark of this people is that they are crying for light. They saw a beauty in Christ and desire to see and more. Their thoughts centre around Christ. They know God has a people. Whatever their condition, their desire is towards him. They are exercised regarding the judgment. They desire to run in the way of God's commandments. They know salvation is of the Lord. They complain their heart is cold towards Christ.

Dated 1951, the text was John 8:51. A mark of this people – their thoughts are often in eternity. They feel under law to Christ. They value the word of God.

A mark – they have: 'In our low state who on us thought'. They seek to draw near to God. Christ is the great object they seek to. They are learning that their day and night is from the Lord. Their complaint is against themselves. They are a praying people. The awe of the Most High is upon them. They feel their pollution. They are more afraid of themselves than of others.

Beaulieu Question Meeting, 1954. The text was John 17:3. They are a praying people. They are taught to make use of the Three Persons of the Godhead in prayer. The awe of the Most High is upon their spirits. They know they have destroyed themselves and found out that they cannot keep their hearts. Their religion centres on Christ. It is to Christ crucified they seek. They live in two worlds. The older they grow, the more conscious they are of their ignorance of the 'mystery of Godliness'. They feel the old nature is strong. They know the value of the promises, therefore they plead them in prayer. They desire to walk in the footsteps of the flock.

They seek to him who is the light of the world. They pity those in a state of nature. They long for the Lord's appearing to build up his Sion.

The text was Colossians 1:21. They can say: 'I sat down under his shadow with great delight.' They know it is with God they have to do. This people are not satisfied with anything short of seeing the glory of Christ. Their life is largely made up of backsliding and recovery.

The text was Psalm 130:5. This people have a new hope – 'their hope is in his word'. They give a place to God's Word as able to solve all their difficulties. Sometimes they read the Word without grasping a syllable of it; at other times, they are uplifted by it. They feel there is no scholar so backward as themselves. They seek to the merits of Christ's atoning death. They know what it is to wait and find nothing. They know that God is sovereign, that he can meet with them when they least expect.

A mark of this people is that they seek the blessing. Their hearts are set on things above. The Word of God is their rule. They mourn that they do not have sorrow as they desire for their sins. They desire to make a right use of the means of grace. They have learned: 'Without me ye can do nothing'. And that God will not accept anything that is not sprinkled with the blood of Christ. Come what may, it is to Christ they flee as the Saviour of the lost.

Appendix 2.

Gleanings from Robert Watt's contributions at Question Meetings

This people were convinced of being on the broad way to destruction.

We saw great things in this church (Dingwall). This people saw the preciousness of Christ as the pearl of great price. They see nothing in themselves but filth. They will remember the mercy of God until their dying day. This people wonder at themselves for being so dead and carnal, and are afraid they will make shipwreck. This people see and hear things that the world cannot.

Beaully Question meeting 1954. The text was given out by Alex MacLennan in John 17:3. We heard many precious things, but have lost much by not having the Gaelic.²⁹³ Love to the people of God is a mark of grace. They are troubled for their own sins. They see more and more their need of

²⁹³ Beaully retained a Gaelic Lord's Day morning service until late 1959 and several communion season services in the language into the following decade.

Christ. Their eyes were opened to see they were on the broad way to Hell. They are discouraged because of the heart of stone – you can get nothing out of a stone. It is a glorious thing to be a Christian who is desiring to see the glory of Christ. They are poor and needy all the way until they reach Immanuel's Land. They hope that the good work is begun in them.

Stratherrick Question meeting 1956. The text was I Peter 1:18-19. This Question is deep and high. The question with us should be: what interest have we in the blood of Christ, do we desire to be cleansed from all filthiness of flesh and spirit? They are spiritually minded – this is a high attainment. There is a doubting Thomas in the Lord's people. They cannot believe, for all the preaching they hear, unless the Spirit comes. They desire, as Jabez did, for the Lord to bless them – to enlarge their hearts to go out more in prayer. Did you pray this morning? Whatever depression may visit you, the hand of God is about you. I'll not be long here; but if you are present at my deathbed you will know the truth I am resting on for eternity: 'Be of good cheer I have overcome the world.'

This people came to see their own ugliness. Satan is ever after them. Satan and the carnal mind are friends. Christ is precious to this people. They will be complaining till they come to the brink of the river. I would be the happiest man here today, if I knew I had Christ although I have not much of the world.

(Possibly Dingwall, 1956). People were prevented from coming to the Inverness communion with the snow, also from coming to Beaulieu with trees across the road. I was impressed by it. We should be desirous of knowing why. I feel carnal and hard. I don't know what is wrong with me. I am upside down. However my hope is in the Saviour of Israel. I flee to him whose name is a strong tower. Satan tells me I can never get to the place I desire to go. They have much to complain of, but keep it to themselves. They wonder what is going to be the end of everything. They know that the Balm of Gilead can heal all manner of diseases.

A mark – without the Word they would have no hope. They are afraid of themselves, and would like to sit at the feet of Christ. At one time they did not wait on God. I am a worm and I feel like a worm, but I hope to meet some whom I love from this place if I get to Heaven. They are afraid of not being of God's people, but their hope is in him that cannot lie. They spread their troubles before God. They believe in the Word from Genesis to Revelation. They would like to see Jesus. I like

that passage: ‘Kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation’ (1 Peter 1:5). I desire to be rid of the burden of sin.

The Question was in I Timothy 1:12. Many of the Lord’s people are not fully assured of their salvation. They would like to believe they have believed. A mark – they value their souls above the things of earth. Many of the experiences of Christians are not Christian experience. They are often cast down. Those who have this knowledge know that salvation is sovereign; grace humbles the soul.

Appendix 3.

Alex MacLennan’s letter to a Young Artist

[The following letter to Margarita Williams, a girl with Harris roots who had grown up in Oban and whose family worshipped in the FP church there, is republished with her kind permission. She continues to work as an artist, now based in Harris.]

27.9.66

How kind of you to write, informing that the painting is now finished. It has not arrived yet, but I am not impatient as I feel sure you have given of your best, and that will please me.

It seems you have an aptitude for that work. Some might say: ‘what is the good of it? [it] will not materially benefit any’. So I will say a little on both sides, for and against.

First, for it. There were many things in Solomon’s temple purely ornamental – such as flowers, pomegranates, palm trees – which had a deeper spiritual significance to a spiritual mind, to one heaven-taught. Also, the Lord raised up skilful men able to do such work.

On the other hand, some will say there is no material substantial benefit to be derived from painting apart from the sentimental. Pictures have no place in the gospel church. All is to be avoided which draws the mind away from worshipping God in spirit and in truth...

Now that is the two sides of the matter and my opinion is: you may be spiritually minded even in painting. Anything that leads your mind to God is good, and all that makes you tend to forget him is not good.

When you are painting the sky, [it] should lead you to think of his greatness, glory and his immensity, his power, the work of his fingers, where you will one day dwell (if you love and serve Christ); also teach you your own nothingness. Psalm 8.

When you are painting the clouds, think of God’s chariots, the dust of his feet, the blessing that they contain for the parched ground, giving the

promise of rain. Think also of the Pillar of Cloud which screened Israel in the wilderness from the blazing sun. Also think of their contrast to the sun behind, which never alters from her course. Also, may we be reminded by the clouds the transitory changeable nature of all things here below – our frames, feelings and circumstances – and be led to the One who, like the sun behind, never changes. Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and for ever.

When you are painting the trees, desire that you may be a tree of God's planting, planted by his grace, 'a tree planted by a river'; that you be seeking to be a fruitful tree in the garden of God. Otherwise one will be cut down as a cumberer of the ground. Seek to be a palm tree, noted for its straightness, beauty and fruitfulness.

When you are painting the rivers, think of their value and how they beautify the landscape; also necessary for cleanliness and fertility. How they all make for the ocean: may it teach you to seek and be restless until you find rest in God – for your mind, reason, understanding, will and affections. I refer you to Matthew 11:28.

Also, do think of the 'river of the water of life', which if you drink it you will never thirst again, with the satisfaction it gives. Also think (as young people love pleasures) there are rivers of it with God. The river stands for fullness, freeness, perpetuity. You can take a drink out of this river if you are thirsty and desire to drink. If you don't drink from this river, you will die with thirst in the other world, in the sense that you will be cut off from God and all happiness.

When you are painting the roads, may you think of the way to heaven through Jesus Christ. I refer you to John 14. There is no bridge across the great gulf between us and God but this one – Jesus Christ. If you miss this bridge, you will fall in and you will never reach the bottom. It is pitch dark in it and full of devils and hissing serpents. So, dear Margarita, when you are painting the highway, do think of what it cost our Saviour to provide this road to heaven and to God to erect a bridge across this gulf.

I could say much more on the subject of painting, but if you are exercised along the lines mentioned above, you may be living to God's glory. Anything you are engaged in, work or recreation, see to it that it does not spoil your appetite for the spiritual, or impair your efficiency in serving God, and keeping your latter end in mind.

With my love to you and all your family. 'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all'.

Alex MacLennan.