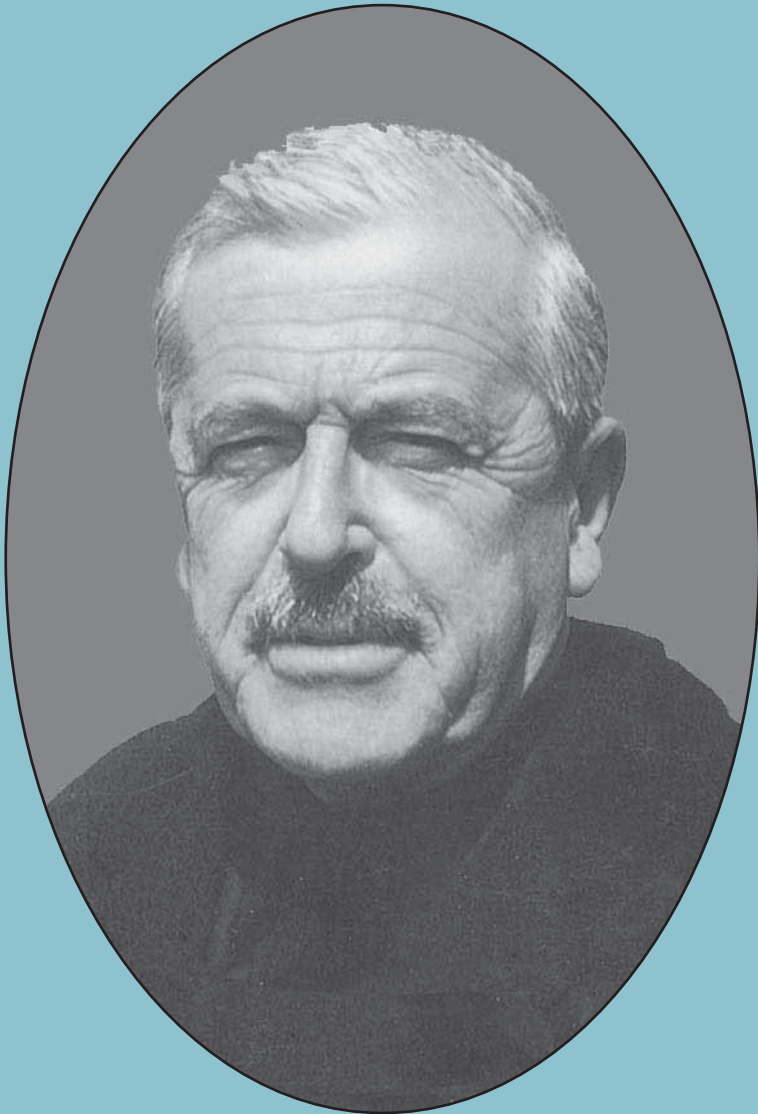


George MacLeod

Founder of the Iona Community



Ron Ferguson

By the same author from Wild Goose Publications:

Chasing the Wild Goose: The Story of the Iona Community

Daily Readings with George MacLeod

George MacLeod

Founder of the Iona Community

Ron Ferguson



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Dedicated to

LORNA, LADY MACLEOD
(not a hero, just a saint)

who lived the truth
that goodness need not be boring

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Preface to the Second Edition

I am delighted that more than ten years after the first edition of this biography, there is sufficient demand to justify another edition. Amendments to the original text have been minimal.

Interest in the work of the Iona Community has grown apace in the 1990s, and into the new millennium.

George MacLeod died on 27 June, 1991 at his Edinburgh home, and the obituaries reflected the sense, even among his long-standing opponents, that the Church had lost a spiritual giant.

The Right Revd Dr Bill Macmillan, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, said of MacLeod, 'He was a noble spirit in the mould of Columba, both men being associated with Iona and a source of inspiration for the Church. This man has gone from our midst, but his dynamic influence remains as a light from God in the Church and in our land.'

Under a banner headline declaring MacLeod to be 'the greatest Scottish churchman of the century', *The Glasgow Herald* went on to describe him as 'the most remarkable Scot of the twentieth century'.

The Independent said he was a great prophetic voice, and *The Daily Telegraph*, which was often critical of MacLeod, said that the central achievement of his life was 'the creation of a community on Iona to be a spiritual forcing house amid the religious indifference of the modern world'. *The Guardian* called MacLeod 'an alternative Church of Scotland in his own person for most of the century'.

In keeping with his pacifist views, Lord MacLeod's death notice in the newspapers carried the unusual addition, 'Letters, please, to your MP complaining about the continuation of the arms race.'

Most of George MacLeod's ashes were interred in Inverness beside those of his wife Lorna, with the remainder being scattered in the sea around Iona. Govan parish church was packed for a memorial service on 21 September, 1991.

Thanks are due to Bellew Publishing for permission to publish the text of the memorial sermon and to *The Herald* for permission to reproduce the poem and picture 'MacLeod: The Seer'.

Ron Ferguson
May 2001

Preface to the Original Edition

Biographers, said Auden, are gossip writers and voyeurs calling themselves scholars.

But he would, wouldn't he?

Researching and writing this book has been a dauntingly exciting task. The claim that George MacLeod is one of the greatest living Scots has been made so often as to be a cliché. That does not make it any less true; yet, at the same time, he is an elusive, complex man who has inspired great loyalty and much opposition in the course of a long and controversial life.

I accepted this commission with much gladness, because I admire George MacLeod and believe his story to be worth telling. (I declare this at the outset, so that the reader may deduct points for bias. Beware biographers who conceal their assumptions.) Before I got to know George MacLeod, I was, like many people, in awe of him. After I became leader of the Iona Community, I learned to love the man. Latterly, I have been close to him at vulnerable points in his life, and I was privileged to conduct the memorial service for his wife, Lorna, to whom this book is dedicated. In my time as leader, he was immensely supportive and personally kind. At the same time, I recognised early on that I would have to resist his powerful embrace if I was to remain my own man: from then on we understood each other and got on well. Admiration need not dull one's critical faculties, and this book is, as it should be, a critical biography.

The first obligation of the historian – and indeed of the minister of the gospel – is to the truth, insofar as the truth itself is ascertainable. I like Desmond MacCarthy's observation that the biographer is 'an artist under oath'. George MacLeod and his family have never wished it otherwise. Although I have been given unrestricted access to all papers, I have never been put under any pressure to act as family retainer. In Auden's terms, there is gossip in the book – why not? – and some may even claim to detect the odd hint of voyeurism, depending on the definition of terms. I would simply agree with Paul Roazen, biographer of Freud, who observed that 'it is impossible to establish a man in history without compromising his privacy'. It is how it is done that matters.

My brief was to write a book which would be historically well grounded and comprehensively researched, yet would also be readable and widely accessible. The original sources which emerged turned out to be a historian's dream. Letters, journals and diaries from early days were discovered in tea chests and dark corners, most of them searched

out by the indefatigable Maxwell MacLeod, whose enthusiastic and uncompromising engagement in the 'quest for the historical George' helped make the investigation such an adventure. So many legends have surrounded George MacLeod and the founding of the Iona Community – several of them created by the old Celtic spellbinder himself – that the tracking down of the historical reality behind the holy smokescreen became an intriguing detective story.

Researching the MacLeod dynastic story – which, surprisingly, has never been fully told – took me into the realms of Scottish church history over the past two and a half centuries; and the span of George's own long and full life coincided with vast changes in ecclesiastical, social, economic and political life in Britain. I am especially grateful to Alec Cheyne, Emeritus Professor of Ecclesiastical History in the University of Edinburgh, for his enthusiastic encouragement at various stages in the manuscript's life.

The research included not simply the study of documents, but interviews and correspondence with many, many people. Devotees and critics alike were prepared to give up hours to the task. In many ways, the story of George MacLeod could have been told by way of his impact on countless people, and to keep that important dimension of his life and work to the forefront, I have interspersed the historical narrative with verbatim accounts by living eyewitnesses.

The need to hold together academic thoroughness and readable prose – and how could it be otherwise in a study of a man who both searched the theological depths and sought to make his message relevant to ordinary people? – has led to one necessary compromise. In order to keep the narrative flow as untrammelled as possible, I have held footnotes to a minimum. The text itself usually indicates the source: reminiscences are contributed by the people named, either through correspondence or interview, accounts of General Assembly debates are from the verbatim records unless otherwise stated, and letter-writers or recipients are named in the text itself. All of these sources, many of which have only come to light in the last few months, are being collated and catalogued, and will be placed in the MacLeod archives. (To avoid confusion, I have spelt MacLeod throughout with a capital L: there was no consistency of spelling within the dynasty until George's father settled the issue.)

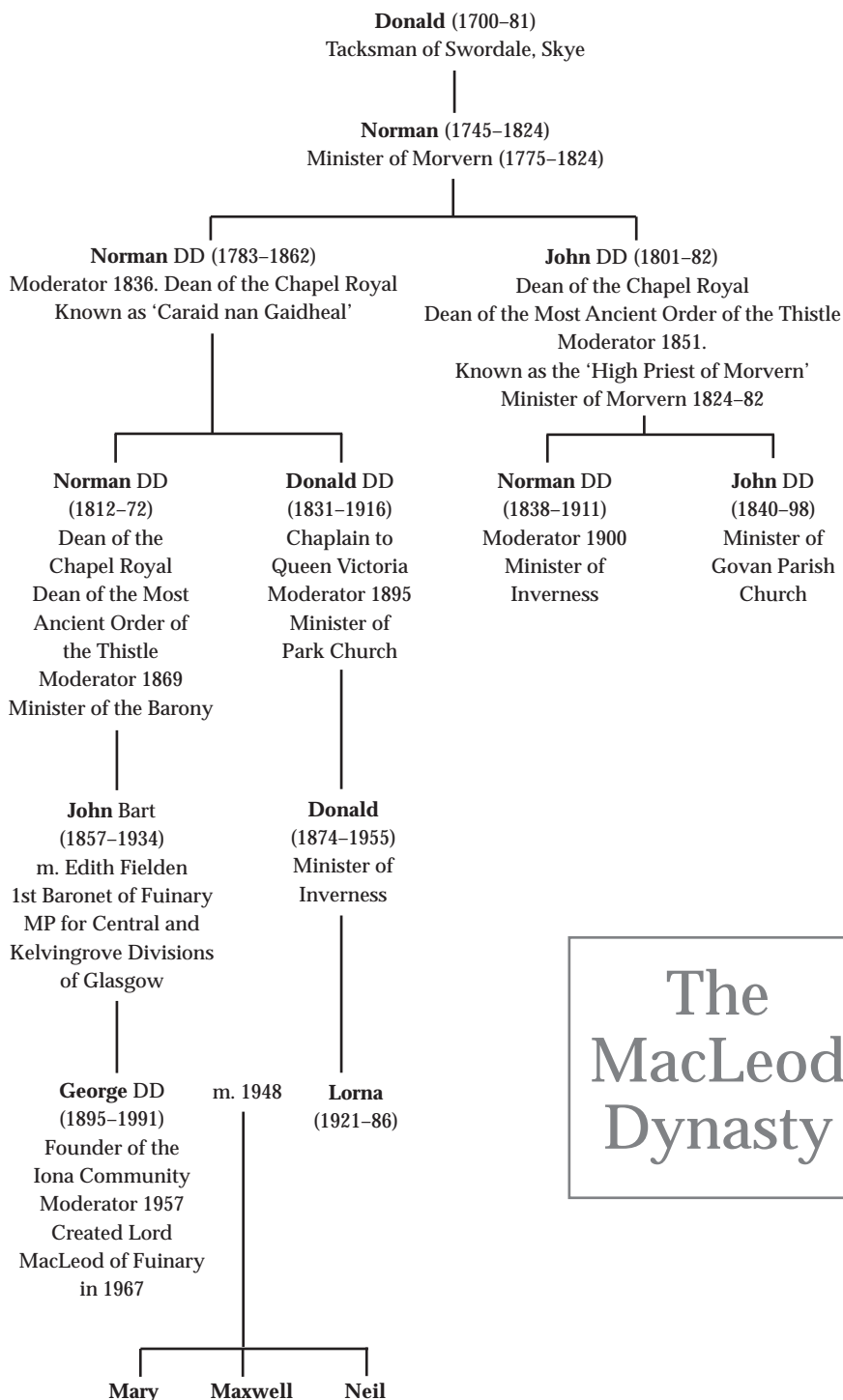
It is impossible to name the many people who have helped with this project, but I would particularly like to thank Iain Maciver, assistant keeper of manuscripts in the National Library of Scotland; the staff of the Mitchell Library, Glasgow; Harry Reid, deputy editor of *The Glasgow*

Herald and the *Herald's* library staff; Janet McBain of the Scottish Film Council; Revd Johnston McKay of BBC Religious Broadcasting; Revd James Weatherhead, Principal Clerk to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, and his secretary, Chris Brown; Lawrence Marshall, secretary of the Iona Cathedral Trustees; Lt Col. A.W. Scott Elliot of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders; Peter Finch, secretary of the Nutfield Local History Group; Councillor Iain Thornber; Revd David Roberts; Revd Kathy Galloway; Revd John Sim; and Teresa de Bertodano, Senior Editor, Collins Fount.

Acknowledgements are also due to the Iona Community for permission to print extracts from *We Shall Rebuild, Only One Way Left*, and *The Whole Earth Shall Cry Glory*; to Hodder & Stoughton, for permission to quote from *The Years of Fulfilment*, *The Glimmering Landscape*, and *John White*; to John Murray for permission to quote from *Clayton of Toc H*; to Methuen for permission to quote from *Govan Calling*; to SCM Press for permission to quote from *Speaking the Truth in Love*; to Hutchison for permission to quote from *Laughter in Heaven*; to the Handsel Press for permission to quote from *The Kilt Beneath my Cassock*; to the BBC for permission to quote from recorded materials; and to *The Glasgow Herald*, *The Scotsman* and the *Scottish Field*.

On a more personal note, I would like to express my thanks to George Mackay Brown, that great Orkney *seanachaidh*, for his encouragement to me in my writing, both fiction and non-fiction, and to my wife, Cristine, for her loving support.

Ron Ferguson



Frontispiece

This day I begin the memoir of my beloved John. Oh my God and his, guide my pen! In mercy keep me from writing anything false in fact or sentiment. May strict Truth pervade every sentence! May I be enabled to show in him the Grace of God, so that other scholars in Thy school may be quickened and encouraged to be followers of him as he was of Christ! I feel utterly unworthy to undertake this memoir, or of any of even the least of Thy saints, but Thou who hast given me this work in Thy Providence, and called me to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ, wilt enable me, I doubt not, to show the riches of Christ as displayed in a poor sinner.

Norman MacLeod of the Barony
September 6, 1852

Prologue

The old Mull shepherd has seen them coming from a long way off, far down the barren glen. The sleek red car is moving quickly in the bright sunshine. He calls swiftly to his dogs, encouraging them to bring the huge flock across the road before the car arrives.

The weather is hot for August, and the shepherd has had a hectic day. His work has been constantly interrupted by the stream of cars returning from the big event on Iona. In a moment, the red car is upon him, the driver tooting his horn impatiently as the car is surrounded by sheep and dogs. The passengers notice that the shepherd is about to shout abuse, when he suddenly catches sight of the old man hunched in the front passenger seat. The Mull man stops, tears off his hat, and waves the vehicle through as the sheep scatter. A moment later, the car is speeding down the glen.

The elderly man in the front of the car is George Fielden MacLeod, also known as the Very Reverend, the Lord MacLeod of Fuinary. In his 94th year, he is frail and tired. Scotland's most eminent living churchman is being driven from his beloved Iona for what, he has announced, is the last time.

The 1988 celebrations on Columba's isle have been to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of MacLeod's Iona Community. The high point of the week was the dedication of the MacLeod Centre, an international centre of reconciliation for young people and families – set across the road from the living quarters of Iona Abbey which were rebuilt by George MacLeod and his community. The new building was opened free of debt after a wide-ranging international appeal – many of the donations coming as a thank offering for the inspiration of the man after whom the centre is named.

As with most public events in his highly public life, the dedication has been marked by controversy. Protestant extremists held aloft banners, in front of the television cameras, proclaiming MACLEOD IS A FALSE PROPHET and, when the elderly man shuffled forward on his sticks towards the lectern to take a prayer, a shout was heard in the silence: 'Turn to Christ before you die, Doctor MacLeod.' At the end of the ceremony, Lord MacLeod almost danced into the new building, holding on to the arm of Mrs Leah Tutu, wife of the Archbishop of Cape Town. George's voice, singing a South African hymn, 'Marching in the Light of God', sounded to those near him like that of a child.

When he left the island with which his name has been so profoundly associated, many people felt that he was going home to die, his life work

complete. There were tears on Iona jetty when he left.

The car speeds through the glen. The impatient driver, Lord MacLeod's son, Maxwell, wants to get his father back home to Edinburgh as quickly as possible. His father, as usual, has other ideas. At Fishnish, waiting for the ferry, he turns to his two retired secretaries, Nan MacKenzie, who had been with him for over sixty years, and Mary Macgregor, who had come out of retirement to help with the MacLeod Centre campaign.

Over there is Morvern, he tells them, the land of his forebears. When they get to the other side, Maxwell will drive them to his house at Fuinary and they'll light a fire and have tea. He hasn't been there for years.

The passengers remonstrate quietly. Surely Dr MacLeod wants to get home? He is not to bother. Another day perhaps. Maxwell pleads with him: the old house is dilapidated, there is no tea, not even water.

No, says the old man, he must go there.

At Lochaline, the car turns in the direction of Fuinary. Moving more slowly now on the single-track road, they pass the old graveyard. George points out the family tomb, where seventeen of his ancestors sleep.

Four miles on, they swing to the north up a steep track, overlooking a beautiful Hebridean bay. Fuinary manse stands bleak and ghostly, in four wooded acres.

A hard shove on the door gives them entry. 'My God, you've let this place get into a hell of a mess,' the old man mutters.

Maxwell, who is by now convinced that his father has chosen to come to Fuinary to die, helps him to a chair in the only one of the twenty once-elegant rooms which is remotely habitable. To the old man's amusement, his son produces a gunmetal flask that George had used in the First World War, and pours a stiff dram into a cracked mug. He then goes out and carefully adds a few drops of cool water from the Fuinary burn.

In front of the crackling fire, father and son talk of their Morvern ancestors, while the ladies make a discreet tour of the grounds. The old house seems filled with the spirits of bygone MacLeods.

Then the old man closes his eyes and falls asleep. His son lays a coat upon him, and checks his pulse.

In a deep sense, George Fielden MacLeod is home.

Part One

DYNASTY

1

The Big Men of Morvern

*A thousand, thousand tender ties
Accept this day my plaintive sighs
My heart within me almost dies
At thought of leaving Fuinary.*

Dr Norman MacLeod – ‘the Highlander’s Friend’

I should like to be at the head of everything!

Dr Norman MacLeod of the Barony

George Fielden MacLeod, that Presbyterian equivalent of a turbulent priest, was born in 1895 into one of Britain’s most formidable ecclesiastical dynasties.

The powerful MacLeod house, which has now given more than 550 years of ordained service to the Church – producing six Moderators of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, and amassing seven Doctorates of Divinity, two Deanships of the Chapel Royal, two Deanships of the Thistle, and four royal chaplaincies – shaped and moulded George, even at the points at which he dramatically tore up the family script.

It is nicely ironic that such a well known pacifist should trace his descent from a Highlander who was deeply engaged in beating ploughshares into swords.

The Isle of Skye cradled the early MacLeods, nurturing a Celtic mysticism and poetry and passion which has marked the family ever since. Donald MacLeod, ‘tacksman’ (gentleman farmer), lived in the mid-eighteenth century at Swordale, a few miles from Dunvegan Castle, ancient seat of the Clan MacLeod.

Descended from one of the earlier Chiefs, Donald was armourer to the Chief of the Clan MacLeod. In addition to making excellent weapons, he is said to have been the first to introduce family worship to the district. In 1763 the Synod of Glenelg granted bursaries of £6 a year to several hopeful young men intending the ministry, among them Norman, ‘son to Donald MacLeod, tacksman of Swordale’. Norman graduated at Aberdeen in 1767 and for a time was tutor at Dunvegan

Castle, where in 1773 he met Dr Samuel Johnson and James Boswell.

At the age of thirty, Norman MacLeod was presented to the parish of Morvern by the Duke of Argyll in 1775. It was said of him when he sailed from Skye, accompanied by his one-eyed servant Rory, that 'a prettier man never left his native island'. His commanding presence was much commented upon – he was more than six feet in height – and he was described as having a noble countenance which age only made nobler.

Morvern, in the western Highlands opposite the island of Mull, was Jacobite territory. When Bonnie Prince Charlie raised the standard of revolt in 1745, not a single man from Morvern joined the loyalist Argyll militia. The hilly grassland of Morvern was 'wasted' by reprisals.

Norman MacLeod had been chosen for political reasons. A stout Presbyterian and Hanoverian loyalist, he was said to have done more than anyone to reconcile the people of Morvern to the final collapse of their Jacobite hopes, and to lead them from episcopalianism into the established Presbyterian church.

Thus was founded a great Scottish Levitical house. As Lord Sands put the matter quaintly in his description of the first General Assembly of the Church of Scotland attended by Norman in 1777: 'The young minister of Morvern, who was thus introduced to the General Assembly, carried in his loins no fewer than five Moderators of that venerable body.'¹ His great-great-grandson was destined to make the figure six.

The young minister did not have an easy time to begin with. His grandson, Norman, who immortalised his grandfather and the parish of Morvern in his evocative *Reminiscences of a Highland Parish*, set the scene.

'When the minister came to his parish, the people were but emerging from those old patriarchal times of clanship, with its loyal feelings and friendships, yet with its violent prejudices and intense clinging to the past, and to all that was bad as well as good in it. Many of his parishioners had been out in the '45, and were Prince Charlie men to the core. These were not characterised by much religion – one of the predecessors of our minister had been commanded by this party not to dare in their presence to pray for King George in church, or they would shoot him dead. He did, nevertheless, pray, at least in words, but not, we fear, in pure faith. He took a brace of pistols with him to the pulpit, and cocking them before his prayer began, he laid them down before him and for once at least offered up his petitions with his eyes open.'²

The minister of Morvern's charge covered 130 square miles, with a seaboard of 100 miles, and he ministered to the spiritual needs of 1800 people. He and his family lived at Fuinary (sometimes spelt Fiunary)

manse, rebuilt for him in a lovely situation overlooking the Sound of Mull.

Norman MacLeod won the people over by his personal qualities. At a time when there were more than a few rogues in the ministry, his devotion, learning and pastoral care made him both revered and loved. He had a small stipend and a large family. The sixteen manse children learned to love the open seas and the hills, the nearby waterfall roaring in its dark gorge, and the hunting and fishing. In the winter evenings, young and old gathered round the fireside where songs and laughter mingled with graver discussion. Not infrequently, the minister would tune his violin and call on the lads to lay aside their books and the girls their sewing, and get them to dance. Family worship, conducted in Gaelic, ended the day.

The two churches in Norman's care were not much more than barns, yet the site of one of them, Keil Church, (short for Cill Columcill – the Church of Columba) was said to have been chosen by St Columba of Iona in the sixth century. The awareness of nearby Iona island, one of the great cradles of European Christianity, was strong in Morvern, and must have appealed to the romantic MacLeod mind. It was Norman's uncle, Neil MacLeod of Kilfinichen in Mull, who showed Johnson and Boswell round Iona and was described by Dr Johnson as 'the clearest headed man I met in the islands'.

Norman MacLeod ministered in Morvern for fifty years. His grandson graphically described his last Communion service in 1824.

'When he entered the pulpit, he mistook the side for the front; but old Rory, who watched him with intense interest, was immediately near him, and seizing a trembling hand, placed it on the book-board, thus guiding his master into the right position for addressing the congregation. And then stood up that venerable man, a Saul in height among the people, with his pure white hair falling back from his ample forehead over his shoulders. Few, and loving and earnest, were the words he spoke, amidst the profound silence of a passionately devoted people, which was broken only by their low sobs, when he told them they should see his face no more. Soon afterwards he died.'³

Before he died, the MacLeod patriarch had the pleasure of seeing his youngest son appointed his assistant and his successor.

John MacLeod's ministry was at least as distinguished as his father's. Despite attempts to lure him away, he remained as minister of Morvern from 1824 until 1882, the combined ministry of father and son in the same parish being 107 years.

John MacLeod became one of the Kirk's most outstanding ministers.

He was made Dean of the Most Ancient Order of the Thistle and Dean of the Chapel Royal, as well as being granted the degree of Doctor of Divinity by Glasgow University. He was elected Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1851.

Doctor John's bearing was even more imposing than that of his father. Standing six feet seven inches, with a powerful athletic frame, he was nicknamed 'The High Priest of Morvern'.

John MacLeod presided over a period of rapid social change in Morvern, and in the end became the last remaining link with the old order. Cattle had originally been the basis of the West Highland economy, but the steady increase in population, combined with a climate which put the Highland farming at a disadvantage, put severe pressure on the situation. When it was discovered in the Borders that certain strains of sheep could survive all the year round on pasture that had only been grazed in summer by cattle, the scene was set for the Highland Clearances, the hardship of which lives on in bitter memory.

John MacLeod's soul was disquieted as he saw his beloved community altered beyond recall. No revolutionary, yet concerned for the poor, the minister was torn between love for his parishioners and his understanding of the economic realities of his day. He became a tragic and lonely figure.

The other great controversy in which he was involved was that leading up to and surrounding the Disruption of 1843, when more than a third of the established Church of Scotland ministers and lay people separated to form the Free Church of Scotland. This grievous sundering of Presbyterianism, in which the Auld Kirk (the national, established church) lost many of its most able people, was one of the most divisive events in Scottish history. The immediate issue was that of the power of patrons, mainly landed gentry, to appoint ministers to charges.

The patronage issue brought to the surface divisive theological controversies which had been simmering for a long time. For many years the Church of Scotland had been dominated by the Moderate party – clergy and leading laymen who were suspicious of religious enthusiasm. Influenced by the rationalistic philosophy of the day, they were more in tune with English fashions, on the side of law and order, and were generally at home with the landed gentry. The more urbane Moderate clergy were strong on culture and morality, weak on dogma.

The Evangelical party represented the more popular movement, but they were less well organised and were prone to schism. Their faith tended to be personal, dogmatic, clear-cut and enthusiastic, and they were less than impressed by continental philosophy. They stood firmly

by the Westminster Confession of Faith, that pillar of scholastic Calvinist orthodoxy.

In the decade before the Disruption, the Evangelicals gained the ascendancy in the Kirk's General Assembly. The leading Evangelical figure, Dr Thomas Chalmers, was a man of deep personal piety and great intellect. His followers argued that congregations should be free to 'sit under' a minister of their own choosing. The landed gentry had no desire to surrender their right to choose ministers for the parish churches which they endowed and supported. Patronage was an important weapon of social control. The last thing many of the powerful heritors wanted was a zealous Evangelical minister on the doorstep!

Behind the theological arguments lay the emergent economic realities of Scotland. A thrusting merchant class, based in the growing cities, came into conflict with the old inherited order. The rising tide of an Evangelicalism shorn of the harsher aspects of traditional Calvinism and emphasising self-help and personal responsibility met the spiritual needs of the new, confident Scottish bourgeoisie. Patronage became the battleground, as the old and new forces took up their positions.

John MacLeod stood firmly with the established Kirk of the land and defended it with vigour. When the agitators came down to his part of the country, he met them almost single-handedly. The general verdict is that it was largely his influence which kept people loyal to the Church in the district, when many other parts of the Highlands opted for the Free Kirk.

The controversy, which divided Christian brother from Christian brother in Presbyterian Scotland, was not without its amusing side. John built another church at the far end of the parish. He offered two local men the chance to build the track to the new church. As they were taking off their coats, one of the workmen asked whether it was to be a Free church or an established church. When told it was the Auld Kirk, he put his coat back on saying he might be poor, but he wasn't about to help anyone get into the established Kirk. John won them over when he said, 'Come here up the brae and hew out the track down the way – so you can help people get out of the established Church!'

Dr John's extensive ministry in his beloved Morvern made him one of the Scottish Kirk's best known characters. When Tennyson visited the district in 1853, he worshipped at Keil Church. The Poet Laureate was much struck by Dr MacLeod ('such a well-borne head!' he exclaimed) and the two men sat up far into the night, swapping stories.

When he died in the manse of Morvern in 1882 in his 83rd year, the oldest minister in the Kirk, *The Scotsman* paid a tribute to the man they

called the 'Father of the Church of Scotland'.

'To look at him, one might have supposed he had been brought up in kings' palaces rather than in the humble manse of a remote and mountainous parish ... To have sat with him in the evening opposite the door, overlooking the waters of the Sound of Mull, and heard his wonderful stories of Highland life and character afforded a reminiscence not likely to fade from the memory of any who enjoyed the privilege ... The spectacle of an open-air communion in Mull, with the tall, white-haired figure towering over the assemblage, and moving them by his words as the trees are stirred by the wind, was one which, once seen, could not readily be forgotten. No man in the Highlands was better loved or more widely respected; and as his influence was great, so will the remembrance of his manly Christian character be enduring.'⁴

John MacLeod's oldest brother, Norman, was one of the greatest Gaelic scholars of his day. He had Gaelic schools established throughout the Highlands, and prepared Gaelic school books for the children. After his translation to the Lowland parish of Campsie in 1825, he spent much time devising schemes for the benefit of the Gaelic-speaking people, starting a monthly Gaelic magazine and preparing a definitive Gaelic dictionary. In 1836 he accepted a call to the Gaelic Chapel, Glasgow, afterwards known as St Columba Church. The same year he was chosen Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, and his alma mater conferred upon him the degree of Doctor of Divinity. He was also appointed Dean of the Chapel Royal and one of Queen Victoria's chaplains.

Like his brother, he actively supported the established Kirk during the ten-year controversy which led up to the Disruption. While the bulk of the Gaelic-speaking people followed the Free Church, the St Columba congregation remained loyal. Dr Norman, who died in 1862, earned himself the soubriquet 'Caraid nan Gaidheal' – the Highlander's friend.

In one particular regard, the MacLeods made things difficult for their successors. The coat-hooks were placed so high up in the hallway of Fuinary manse, that subsequent incumbents found it difficult to hang up their coats.

The MacLeods of Morvern were big men.

If it is difficult to place George MacLeod without knowledge of the Morvern patriarchy, it is impossible to understand him without a more than passing acquaintance with his grandfather, the leading Scottish divine of his day.

Norman MacLeod, born in 1812, was the eldest son of 'Caraid nan

Gaidheal'. At the age of 12 he was sent to board with the schoolmaster of Morvern, and spent many delightful summers there. He remembered Fuinary as 'the Garden of Eden without the serpent'.

Norman's grandfather and father would doubtless have been surprised had they known that the boy would come to be known throughout Scotland simply as 'Norman', or 'the great Norman'. For the young man was more interested in stories than in scholarship, in mimicry and in theatre than in earnest conversation. When he went off to Glasgow University, his parents were worried about him, and wrote anxious letters about his conduct.

The elder Norman asked his boisterous son to conduct himself with calmness and seriousness on the Sabbath day, and 'cease your buffoonery of manner in tone of voice and distortions of countenance, which are not only offensive, but grievous. You carry this nonsense by much too far, and I beg of you, my dear Norman, to check it ... You, even already, seldom use your own voice or gestures or look – all is put on and mimicked; this must cease, and the sooner the better.'⁵

His biographer, his brother Donald, reassured his readers that the youthful Norman had not gone too far in his student days.

'His moral life was at the same time pure, and his religious convictions, though not yet as strong as they afterwards became, were yet such as prevented him from yielding to the many temptations to which one of his temperament and abounding, as he did, in animal spirits, was greatly exposed. Next to the grace of God, his affection for home and its associations kept him steady.'⁶

Two factors gave Norman a more serious bent. The first was the death of his younger, and more earnest, brother James. The second was the influence of Dr Thomas Chalmers, whose theological lectures at Edinburgh University gave new direction to his life. He decided to become a minister. In 1834, Chalmers arranged for him to become tutor to the son of a Yorkshire gentleman, and they spent a year at Weimar in Germany. Norman loved the exchange of ideas on the continent, and the social life appealed to him as well. Donald reassures Norman's admirers again:

'He may, indeed, have often given too great a rein to that "liberty" which was so congenial to his natural temperament, but it is marvellous that the reaction was not greater in one who, brought up in a strict school, was suddenly thrown into the vortex of fashionable life. He was passionately fond of music, sang well to the guitar, sketched cleverly, was as keen a waltzer as any attaché in Weimar, and threw himself with a vivid sense of enjoyment into the gaieties of the little capital.'⁷

His mother wrote telling him to concentrate on reading his dead

brother's Bible, and to keep the deathly image of James before him in times of temptation. Imbibing Coleridge, Goethe and Wordsworth, and coming under the spell of a local baroness, Norman struggled to find a form of faith which could co-exist with a love of life. What was happening in Weimar was the making of an unpuritan divine who would lead a revolution in the Kirk.

In 1838, Norman was inducted to his first parish in Loudoun, Ayrshire. Two days before he became a proper preacher, he attended his last ball – and felt very sad. He wrote in his journal:

'I have returned sick at heart. It is my last ball! And I heard the German waltzes played, and my brain reeled. I shut my eyes. I was once more with my old Weimar friends; when I opened them the faces were the faces of strangers, and I could stand it no longer, but left at twelve. I alone seemed sad. The louder and more cheerful the music grew, the more deeply melancholy I became.'⁸

The young preacher poured his energies into the task of ministering to the needs of his Ayrshire parish. It was Covenanting territory, with its history of bitter struggles against the imposition of episcopalianism. He was summoned to meet one old deaf woman who was a leading light among the Covenanters. She sat in the midst of her supporters, holding her ear trumpet.

'Gang over the fundamentals!' she instructed the young minister. Norman bawled the main themes of Protestant theology into the ear trumpet, until the lady was satisfied. He had passed the test.

The young minister – tall, attractive, full of life – became a popular figure in the community, and his preaching filled the church with attentive hearers.

The Disruption of 1843 – preceded by ten years of damaging controversy – weighed heavily upon him because of its divisiveness. He detested party spirit and intolerance. The roots of his breadth of outlook went back to his home.

'Christianity was a thing taken for granted, not forced with a scowl or a frown,' he wrote of the influence of his parents. 'I never heard my father speak of Calvinism, Arminianism, Presbyterianism or Episcopacy, or exaggerate doctrinal differences in my life. I had to study all these questions after I left home. I thank God for his free, loving, sympathising and honest heart. He might have made me a slave to any 'ism'. He left me free to love Christ and Christians.'⁹

The General Assembly of 1843 – famous in the annals of Scottish ecclesiastical life – was a deeply depressing event for Norman. When more than a third of the Assembly walked out, many leaving the security

of manse and stipend, they were met by cheering throngs in the streets of Edinburgh. It was an exciting and glamorous movement. For Norman, it was just as much a sacrifice to stay in; he felt it would have been a relief to join the processions outside.

'I cannot incur the responsibility of weakening the Establishment – that bulwark of Protestantism – that breakwater against the waves of democracy and of revolution – that ark of a nation's righteousness – that beloved national Zion, lovely in its strength, but more beloved in the day of its desolation and danger,' he wrote to his best friend, John Mackintosh, who sided with the Dissenters.¹⁰

The national Church of Scotland, which had once commanded the allegiance of the bulk of the people of Scotland, was by 1843 reduced to one Presbyterian denomination amongst several. Its recovery by the end of the century was due in no small measure to the leadership of Norman MacLeod.

He was called to be minister of the Barony Kirk, Glasgow in 1851 – the same year in which he married Catherine, sister of the beloved John Mackintosh, whose biography Norman wrote.

The Barony, next to Glasgow Cathedral, had some of the worst slums of the city in its parish. In a flurry of activity, the energetic minister organised district meetings for adult education, founded the first Congregational Penny Savings Bank in Glasgow, set up a refreshment room where people could get cheap food, and established a reading room. New recreational facilities were organised, the mission staff of the church was increased from one to five, and the congregation held parish missions. Six new churches were erected in the parish.

People crowded into the Barony to hear Norman preach. His biggest concern was that the poor were excluded because they didn't have proper clothes to wear or couldn't afford the seat rents; his solution was to hold special evening services at which people who were respectably dressed were turned away. Fourteen hundred people, all dressed in working clothes, regularly filled the church; and some of the people in the congregation were members of the Glasgow upper class who had dressed down for the occasion. Moleskins borrowed from their servants helped them slum their way in.

Norman MacLeod was the talk of the town. Attractive, engaging, humorous, loquacious, droll, exuberant, he was a natural leader in a Kirk which had to win back lost territory.

Doctor MacLeod – he was made a Doctor of Divinity by Glasgow University – was much loved by the city's poor. He visited them, prayed with them, and defended them against attacks by others. It is said that

*George's grandfather,
Norman MacLeod of the Barony*



when the child of one of his poor members was stricken by fever, she called out the Free Kirk Minister, who prayed over the contagious child. When asked why she had not called out her own minister, the worthy parishioner replied that she didn't wish to expose the beloved Norman to the danger of such serious infection!

It was not only the poor of Glasgow who heard the great Norman gladly; his ability to communicate with all kinds of people was widely commented upon. He became a great favourite of Queen Victoria, who regularly summoned him to Balmoral. His first sermon at Crathie in 1852 was noted by the Queen as follows:

'We went to Kirk as usual at twelve o'clock. The service was performed by the Revd Norman MacLeod of Glasgow, son of Dr MacLeod, and anything finer I never heard. The sermon, entirely extempore, was quite admirable, so simple and yet so eloquent, and so beautifully put ... Everyone came back delighted; and how satisfactory it is to come back from church with such feelings! The servants and the Highlanders – all – were equally delighted.'¹¹

After the death of the Prince Consort, Norman spent many hours counselling the Queen.

As the Queen's favourite chaplain, Norman admired Victoria and could say to her what was in his heart – 'She always strikes me as possessed of singular penetration, firmness and independence, and very real; she was personally singularly kind, and I never spoke my mind more frankly to anyone who was a stranger and not on an equal footing' – even when what he had to say was not what Her Majesty wished to hear. A story handed down in the MacLeod family suggests that Norman was chosen to enquire delicately into the nature of the Queen's relationship with her ghillie, John Brown, and that he got a royal flea in his ear for his trouble. The story adds that the next day the Queen asked

him to plant a tree with her as a gesture of reconciliation. There is, understandably, no record of such a conversation; but his grandson, George F. MacLeod, noted in his diary as a young man how he looked for and found the tree in the place where the records said it was.

When the Duke of Edinburgh advised Norman to preach for twenty minutes, the minister pulled himself up to his full, considerable height and – as he wrote to his wife – ‘told him I was a Thomas à Becket, and would resist the interference of the State, and that neither he nor any of the party had anything better to do than hear me. So I preached for forty-seven minutes, and they were kind enough to say they wished it had been longer.’¹² His grandson was to have similar sharp conversations with a future Duke of Edinburgh.

Despite the controversies, Norman MacLeod was a much loved figure at Balmoral, and his journal shows how the Queen would sit spinning contentedly at the wheel while her favoured chaplain read Burns’ poems to her.

Life in Glasgow Presbytery was not so calm, and when the bold Norman spoke for three and a half hours on the Sabbath question, all hell broke loose.

The issue, in 1865, was the proposal to run Sunday trains. Should it be allowed? The Presbytery said no, and issued a letter to be read from the pulpits within its bounds. The minister of Barony refused. In his peroration saying why he had declined to read the missive, Norman argued that the Jewish Sabbath had been superseded by the Lord’s Day, which was a day of freedom. The speech resounded throughout Scotland, and Dr MacLeod immediately became the nation’s most controversial personality. In an era when the doings of leading churchmen took up many column inches in the press, the Barony minister was either national hero or villain. He was hissed by fellow ministers in the streets of Glasgow, vilified in correspondence and mocked in newspaper cartoons.

The Barony minister did not lack courage, and he might well have sung the words of the popular hymn he himself composed:

Courage, brother! do not stumble
 Though thy path be dark as night;
 There’s a star to guide the humble;
 ‘Trust in God, and do the right’,
 Let the road be rough and dreary,
 And its end far out of sight,
 Foot it bravely; strong or weary,
 Trust in God and do the right.

In his attack on the traditional Scottish sabbath, Dr MacLeod was further prising the Kirk free from the puritan embrace – much to the fury of his opponents, who found it difficult to deal with such an able, devout, humorous, tobacco-puffing, popular preacher. Glasgow Presbytery restricted itself to an admonition, and the Kirk's General Assembly declined to censure him. It was a turning point for the Church of Scotland. Puritanism was well and truly in retreat.

Norman MacLeod was a great Victorian – preaching to Florence Nightingale, spending earnest hours in conversation with David Livingstone, reading Burns to the Queen herself – who was leading the Church of Scotland out of bondage to its own past and marching it towards the next century.

In his attacks on ultra-Calvinists – ‘They won't enjoy life; they won't laugh without atoning for the sin by a groan; they won't indulge in much hope or joy; they more easily and readily entertain doctrines which go to prove how many may be damned than how many may be saved’ – he was echoing the views of yet another distinguished member of the MacLeod family, the brilliant theologian John MacLeod Campbell, who was deposed for his insistence that Christ had died for all and not just for the elect. Emotionally, Norman was with his grandfather back in Morvern, playing his violin for dancing in the manse. When he heard that the old songs and tales had been put under clerical ban in some areas, he was heard to exclaim, ‘What next? Are the singing birds to be shot by the kirk sessions?’

Such sentiments did not endear him to puritans, but the Auld Kirk steadily reclaimed old territory and even broke new ground as the Dissenting bandwagon slowed down. His unanimous election as Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1869 confirmed his standing as a leader of a revolution which had strong popular backing.

Yet despite his successes and apparent confidence, his journals reveal more than a touch of Celtic melancholy and self-doubt. They also shed light on the struggles of a Christian man trying to come to terms with the conflict between his high animal spirits and the expectations people had of a Victorian clergyman.

His labours had taken a steady toll of his energy, and a trip to India as convener of the Kirk's India mission nearly finished him off. When he rose to speak at the General Assembly of 1872, many of the commissioners felt they were seeing him for the last time. He spoke for an hour and a half about the Church's mission to India, arguing for a wider

ecumenical view, and despairing over the fact that missionaries were exporting Scottish ecclesiastical differences – ‘Is it not monstrous to make the man they ordained on the banks of the Ganges sign the Westminster Confession of the Church of Scotland or the Deed of Demission and Protest of the Free Church?’

When he died a few weeks later, he was mourned by the great Queen Victoria, who described him as ‘minister of all Scotland’, was distraught. Dean Stanley wrote that Norman ‘represented Scottish Protestantism more than any other single man. Under and around him men would gather who would gather round no one else. When he spoke it was felt to be the voice, the best voice of Scotland.’ Gladstone, who made a special study of Norman, said it was because the Scottish Church had been able to rear Dr MacLeod and men like him that she had been able to brave all the storms and retain her national position.

No one mourned Norman more than the poor who packed the streets of Glasgow for his funeral.

Norman was not the only son of ‘The Highlander’s Friend’ to distinguish himself in the Kirk. His brother Donald was minister of Park Church in Glasgow, Chaplain to Queen Victoria, and Moderator in 1895.

John MacLeod of Morvern’s son, Norman, was minister at Inverness and became Moderator of the General Assembly in 1900. Another son, John, was the pioneering minister of Govan Parish Church.

The MacLeod house not only represented power in the Church of Scotland, but also a particular – and very influential – ethos. The distinctive MacLeod style was marked by attractiveness, tolerance, breadth, humour and gaiety. Theologically it was broadly evangelical, inclusive and ecumenical. Politically it was sympathetic to the establishment, yet concerned for the poor. Combined with Celtic romanticism and poetry, skilled oratory, confidence in the presence of all ranks of people and a popular touch, the MacLeod style was bound to be a potent force for change in the Church.

It was this developed, confident MacLeodism which Norman the Third’s grandson, George Fielden, inherited in full measure. When George was pursuing a loquacious career as the darling of the Edinburgh ecclesiastical establishment in the 1920s, the young preacher’s father was asked if the mantle of the great Norman had fallen on George.

‘Yes,’ replied Sir John MacLeod with characteristic geniality, ‘the gas mantle!’

George Fielden MacLeod was his grandfather’s son.

2

The Blessing and the Curse

We English are everlasting children in an everlasting nursery.

H.G. Wells

Every man of ambition has to fight his century with its own weapons. What this century worships is wealth. To succeed, one must have wealth. At all costs, one must have wealth.

Oscar Wilde

The MacLeod mantle could be a blessing or a curse.

To bear the name of Norman MacLeod and to be the firstborn son of the great Norman of the Barony was to carry a burden which required broad shoulders. Norman the Fourth was no Norman the Conqueror. He could not wear the crown, but he bore the cross. After a spell in commerce in Liverpool, he went out to Canada, beaten by alcohol, living the life of a down-and-out, pursued by creditors.

The torch was passed to the second son, John Mackintosh, named after his uncle, the Free Kirk minister whose biographical memoir was written by his dear friend Norman of the Barony. Born in 1857, young Jack MacLeod decided that rather than be a mediocre minister he would be a good accountant. Educated at Glasgow Academy and in Germany, he started work in an Edinburgh accountant's office, becoming in 1880 a member of the Edinburgh Society of Chartered Accountants. Two years later he settled in Glasgow.

By all accounts, young Jack MacLeod was a popular and hard-working professional. Being a son of Norman of the Barony did him no harm, and he easily made the kind of contacts necessary to rise in the Glasgow accountancy world. All he needed was a pretty wife who would be good at socialising; if she also had money, then so much the better. One such candidate was Edith Fielden.

The Fielden dynasty was to cotton and wealth what the MacLeod dynasty was to the Kirk. Edith's grandfather, 'Honest John' Fielden of Todmorden in Lancashire, was one of the largest cotton manufacturers in the world. He was a mill-owner with a conscience, a man with a mind of his own. Brought up a Quaker, he became an active Unitarian. He

went into politics and promoted the 'Ten Hour Bill' which reduced the number of hours children could work in factories.

His son, Joshua, had his father's business acumen and money, but not his radical views. In 1863 he moved to the huge Nutfield Priory in Redhill, Surrey, having been elected Conservative MP for the Eastern Division of West Kiding. Set in rolling countryside, the neo-Gothic Priory had two towers, a vaulted cloister, three dining rooms, thirty bedrooms, and a Great Hall with organ and minstrel's gallery. It was a real 'Upstairs-Downstairs' situation. When guests came, they brought their own servants with them, and the home and visiting servants sat at table in the butler's dining room downstairs in exactly the same formation as the masters and mistresses upstairs.

Joshua made Nutfield the kind of place to which anybody who was anything would want to be invited. Musical recitals were particularly sought after, and the Fielden children would perform gracefully for the appreciative company. As a Unitarian, Joshua was not involved with the local Church of England parish church, though he did contribute to its restoration fund and the records show that his wife and daughters played their part.

The Fieldens were very rich, but they also had a strong, and even austere, sense of duty. A vivid picture of the household is painted by Joshua and Ellen's grandson, Lionel.

'Life at Nutfield was held firmly in a framework of habit and ceremony. As the hands of the grandfather clock which stood beside the organ moved towards eight in the morning, doors would softly open upstairs, the sound, followed by that of rustling skirts, percolating through the gallery of the Great Hall. The descent of the staircase would be made by the family and guests. Arrived in the Hall, they stood; no one said good morning, no one spoke. As the clock struck eight, my grandmother's door, in the centre of the gallery, opened; and presently she floated down to us. She smiled but did not speak, continuing past us through the Gothic arch beyond the organ, and entering the morning room. We followed, and arranged ourselves on small gilt chairs round the walls. Then the servants, who had been waiting at the green baize door in strict order of precedence, headed by the cook and the butler, filed in. I suppose there were about twenty of them. Grandmamma read prayers – brief – from a book which she had printed for these occasions. Then she rose, and wished the servants good morning: they filed out. She would then make some optimistic remark about the weather, and we went into the dining room, where breakfast was set at a huge circular table in the window-embrasure, overlooking the immense view.'¹

Lionel also provided an unusual insight into his ‘handsome and bad-tempered’ grandfather.

‘When, as a child, one of my aunts bit her small brother, he told her: “True, if you do that again I shall bite you!” She did it again and heard his heavy footsteps approach. Slowly he raised her and bit her arm to the bone.’² Clearly not a man to be trifled with.

When John Mackintosh MacLeod met Edith Fielden at Cannes – she was playing tennis at the Fielden villa there while John was on holiday in the area – he knew who he wanted to be his bride. Edith agreed. The only problem was Father. When John wrote to Joshua Fielden in June 1886 for his daughter’s hand, the answer was a firm No. The young Glasgow accountant was not of sufficient standing. The fact that he had Moderators and royal chaplains in his family did not cut much ice with the socially conscious entrepreneur. The daughter of Joshua Fielden could do better.

John was distraught, but wisely did not confront a man whose bite was worse than his bark. Edith’s sister Mabel encouraged him not to accept defeat, and she arranged illicit meetings in Scotland.

Whether Joshua would have relented or not is not known; he died in March 1887, the victim of an earthquake while in Cannes for a health cure. Edith and Jack became engaged in July 1887. It was a real Victorian love match.

‘My beloved,’ wrote Edith in October, ‘it is a great mercy that we are so at one on all essential points ... As I look on every side I can see nothing but blessings.’

The engaged couple were certainly at one politically. John’s Tory views were strengthened by Unionist opposition to Gladstone’s plans for Ireland, and in 1895 he publicly opposed the voices calling for the disestablishment of the Church of Scotland.

‘Oh how wicked the Radicals are,’ wrote the granddaughter of Honest John Fielden. ‘As for Gladstone,’ she commented on the prime minister who had been so impressed by her beloved’s father, ‘I quite agree with you that no word is bad enough for him.’

On Christmas Day the Fieldens entertained the men of the village at Nutfield Priory. Edith hid away all her jewellery as she knew there were some Radicals among the men.

‘When I think that if God wills, this time next week you will be with me – no, darling, I can’t write of it,’ she told her beloved. ‘It seems almost too much happiness and what shall I say – perfection – for any mortal to have here on earth. God bless and keep you and bring you safe to the arms of your beloved Edith.’

January 4, 1888. The first entry in Edith's journal. 'My wedding day. John Mackintosh MacLeod and I were married at two in the afternoon at St Michael's, Chester Square, London. It was a great disappointment that Dr Donald MacLeod was not allowed to take any part in the service, he being a Presbyterian.' The bride was wearing half-mourning for her father.

A Presbyterian minister, even one as eminent as Dr Donald MacLeod, was not validly ordained in Anglican eyes in 1888. The Scottish Presbyterian MacLeod reputation counted for nothing in England.

The well-to-do couple lived comfortably but not ostentatiously in Glasgow. They travelled regularly – no passports required – in the secure world of the Continent. It was an era when progress was felt to be inevitable and the clouds of war seemed very distant.

1890. Florence and the Rhine.

1891. John Mackintosh Norman (at first called Ian, then Norman) is born.

1892. Move into a three-storied house at 4 Park Circus Place, Glasgow.

1893. Ellen – named after Edith's mother – is born.

Then the entry in Edith's journal. '1895, June 17, George was born at 11.30 am. The other two children went to Nutfield for five weeks.'

George Fielden MacLeod was named after his father's brother, Professor Sir George MacLeod, who succeeded Joseph Lister as Professor of Surgery at Glasgow Medical School in 1869 and became Senior Surgeon-in-Ordinary in Scotland to Queen Victoria. When he died in 1892, *The Scottish Standard* said of him that there could be no doubt that the rapid advance of Glasgow University as a medical and surgery school was largely due to his unwearied efforts and to his knowledge of continental science.

In the year of George's birth, Sigmund Freud founded psychoanalysis, Röntgen discovered X-rays, Marconi invented the wireless, and Auguste and Louis Lumière introduced the cinema. There were as yet no aircraft, motor cars or gramophones.

Britain was the greatest nation in the world. Queen Victoria had been on the throne for nearly sixty years, and during her reign Great Britain had grown to have dominion over a quarter of the world – 'the empire on which the sun never set'. British heavy industry was very strong, and the formidable Royal Navy patrolled the high seas, ensuring the safe passage of goods, values and missionaries.

The upper class and the upper middle class could afford to travel regularly on the Continent, especially if they had staff to look after the

children at home. The MacLeods went abroad most years. Edith said it was her ambition to paddle in every sea in Europe.

It was a comfortable, urbane existence. Awareness of poverty or hardship did not appear to obtrude. Income tax was only 8d in the pound. Estates were passed intact from father to son. The upper classes were very secure indeed, and felt free to exhibit their wealth ostentatiously. Jack, a keen Mason, was rising steadily in the accountancy world, knowing the right people, giving the correct handshakes. He had formed a new partnership and business was good. He was well liked and respected, and was treasurer of several charitable trusts. The only fly in the ointment was the steady flow of letters from Canada indicating brother Norman's erratic alcoholic progress.

There were several servants at Park Circus Place. The cook and the maids were in the basement, and were summoned by bells. The children were attended to upstairs by the nanny.

George's earliest memory was of being driven, at the age of two, in carriage and pair at Nutfield on the occasion of Queen Victoria's Jubilee. He also remembered the announcement of the relief of Mafeking.

Another early memory was of standing in his room on the day of Queen Victoria's funeral in January 1901. His nurse, an Aberdeen lady who sang the children to sleep with evangelical hymns, was having an argument with Edith. The sun was streaming in, and Aberdeen was firm that all the blinds should be drawn as muffled church bells clanged the hour of the royal committal. Mrs MacLeod asserted that the Queen was probably glad to be gone to her Prince Consort, and that these things did not matter anyway. She won – until she left the room. Then Aberdeen pulled down one of the three blinds.

The next door neighbour was the first in the street to have a motor car, with a chauffeur. Generally, the only sounds to be heard were the clip-clop of the hansoms in the street.

The peace deepened on Sundays. George was later to describe that special day in the MacLeod household.

'Somehow before eleven o'clock we were always sitting in the same chairs, my father reading *The Spectator*, my mother writing a letter and the rest of us silent "with a good book". As the quarter struck, my father gave a cough, peculiar to the day, my mother stamped a letter, and we rose. As we left the house, synchronised doors noiselessly emitted other strings of human sausages till they slowly converged on the broad steps of the church on the corner.'³

The preacher at the corner church, Park Church, was the Revd Donald MacLeod, DD, Moderator of the General Assembly of the

Church of Scotland, chaplain to the sovereign, brother of Revd Dr Norman MacLeod of the Barony.

It was a stable universe. Father would come home at 5.30 pm from the office or the Western Club, and would relax in the smoking room with a whisky and soda and cigarette, before changing for dinner (two maids in attendance, written menu). He and Mother would entertain guests. Jack was a jovial and kindly man, with a reputation as a good raconteur. Mother was quieter, deferential to her husband, yet with something steely about her.

The children generally played upstairs in the nursery with Victorian building bricks and a wooden Noah's ark. A favourite game was 'Church Services'. Ellen and Norman were the office-bearers, George the minister, and Mother and Father and guests the congregation. When the offering plate was passed round, the congregation pretended to put something in. On one occasion, an uncle put in a pound. When the little minister – as he became known – shook hands with the departing congregation, he gave the uncle back his money, saying, 'Your change, sir!'

Norman, handsome and extrovert, was the favourite. A keen reader, he would invent games to keep George and Ellen quiet. When they played Boer War games in the nearby Kelvingrove Park, Norman was always the captain. George never took part in these military clashes and revolver charges, preferring to hold on to Nanny's hand. The three children were very close, living and playing and learning in a secure, essentially Victorian, environment.

Family holidays each summer were memorable. Many of Jack's clients were rich, and when they died his firm had to look after their property. Holidays at Tavool, on the shores of Loch Scridain in Mull, stood out. Father commissioned a 15-ton steamboat, and the trips to Staffa and Iona were much enjoyed.

Religion took its place naturally in the MacLeod household. Religious values were simply assumed, and churchgoing was mandatory. Jack was a devoted churchman, as keen as his father on uniting the disparate strands of Presbyterianism, and resisting those who wished to see the Church of Scotland sever its links with the state as a precondition for such unity. As Hon. Treasurer of the Glasgow Church of Scotland Defence Association, and as vice president of the Knox Club (a pressure group formed to safeguard the Protestant succession to the throne), he gave public lectures on the history and constitution of the Kirk and her privileges, and organised petitions to Parliament. He was also clerk to the managers of the MacLeod parish church, which had been erected in

Barony parish as a memorial to his father.

The religious ethos of the MacLeod household was centred on the notion of duty. It is best summed up in a scroll which John MacLeod gave to Norman and George at Christmas, 1901. Headed 'Do Your Duty', it said:

Come wealth or want, come good or ill,
Let young and old accept their part,
And bow before the awful Will,
And bear it with an honest heart.
Who misses, or who wins the prize?
Go, lose or conquer as you can;
But if you fail or if you rise
Be each, pray God, a gentleman.

The scroll was in the handwriting of John MacLeod, whose personal seal was accompanied by the seals of George's grandfather and great-grandfather. It was as if the message of a great, broadly evangelical house had been reduced to a simple command: Be a Gentleman. It was a message that was to remain deep in George MacLeod's being: there is a sense in which he remained all his life a Victorian gentleman.

It was to further his training as a gentleman that George was packed off to Prep School in Edinburgh at the age of eight. He most of all hated to leave his nanny, who was his chief source of emotional warmth at 4 Park Circus Place.

Cargilfield School for Boys was in Barnton, and had a good scholastic record. Young George didn't particularly enjoy it, and looked forward to returning to Glasgow at the end of term.

One family memory of him as a lad was of George buying up all the 'lum' hats at a jumble sale: he then proceeded to put them down the centre of the hall and jump on them!

'You must not expect me to win any races in the sports,' he wrote to his mother in 1908, and the first indications of a lifelong obsession with shifting furniture around came at the same time - 'I hope that you have not arranged our top room, because if you do not mind I would rather like to do it when I come home. I am looking forward to next holidays. Only five more days! Hurrah! Your loving George.'

On one occasion, George had to sing a solo at a recital. The family had a meal at an Edinburgh hotel, and George ate a bad egg. The family story is that when he sang the line, 'I waited for the Lord' from Handel's *Messiah*, he vomited.

George struggled with French grammar, Latin and Greek, and did what he could to avoid sport. He was always keen to get back to the security of 4 Park Circus Place. It was, of course, a privileged existence, and he did not question it till later.

'Delicious days they were – for the privileged,' he was to write. 'We did not know of Disraeli's other nation, the underpaid and the unemployed. True, there was a mystery one evening when every area was seen from our top windows to be filled with waiting and submerged police. The Lord Provost lived round the corner and a hunger march was expected to protest outside his door. Either it never materialised, or we were packed off to bed, to sleep unknowing.'⁴ No doubt drifting off to sleep to the accompaniment of evangelical hymns.

There were many beggars in the Glasgow streets. On one occasion, John MacLeod told George to give a penny to a blind man. When the boy returned, his father remonstrated with him because he had not touched his cap.

'But father, he's blind!' said George.

'Yes, but he may be a fraud!' came the reply.

In 1909, at the age of fourteen, there came the next stage in the formation of a Victorian–Edwardian gentleman. George MacLeod, top hat in its box, was on the train for Winchester.

'Manners Makyth Man' was the motto of the famous College of St Mary, Winchester. The task of this most illustrious English public school was to train not just gentlemen, but leaders. The college was founded in 1387 by William of Wykeham, whose scheme of education also embraced New College, Oxford. The quadrangles, and the fine chapel, tower, hall and cloister spoke of tradition, history and inspiration.

The Winchester tradition had always been to treat the boys almost as adults, and from the age of fourteen, the young Scot would have been encouraged to speak, behave and dress like an English gentleman – complete with top hat, stiff collar, waistcoat and fob watch. The time at Winchester represented the Englishing of George MacLeod.

He described his first morning in his diary entry of September 16, 1909.

'Went to Chapel and walked up and down meads, walked round cloisters while bells tolled. Was pushed by an eager hand into a seat in Chapel where I could see nobody and hear nothing ... went to Dr Sweeting, was engaged for Glee Club and Chantry.'

Young George's first letter home to his mother from Culver House, Winchester, four days later, described being out for a walk down by the river with only his top hat to shade him from the sun. After the fashion



George aged ten at Cargilfield School, Edinburgh

of grandfather Norman, the letter had a drawing of George in top hat. He went on:

‘Well, my darling, it was sweet of you writing me those letters. But as they are putting a new organ into chapel, the cloisters are a sort of workshop, filled with all manner of things – pipes, blocks of wood, ladders, stones, bricks, plaster, etc. – so it is not quite enchanting at the present minute but I hope the organ will soon come and then I am sure it will be very beautiful.’

Every boy, George tells his mother, receives a shilling a week, called