



[Effectual Prayer - Allan Macaskill of Habost (mid-19th century)]

Very often in days gone by, crofters had to sell a cattle beast in order to raise cash at a time of need, such as a demand for rent.

One such occasion involved Allan Macaskill, 'Allan Tailear', or Allan Donnachadh from 7 Habost, who was born in 1825 and married Mary Macleod from Ardhasaig, Harris in the mid-1850s, with whom he had three children before the family moved to Harris.

He set off from Habost, Lochs, across the moor to the cattle sale at Stornoway with a cow. On his return journey, walking alone across the road-less moor after dark, with the money from the sale of the cow in his pocket, he became aware of being followed. He felt very uncomfortable and being a man of prayer he went behind a rock to pray. When he emerged eventually, there was no sign of anyone and he proceeded home without further hindrance.

Years later, Allan was speaking to the question on Communion Friday in a district near Stornoway, and by way of illustration he referred to the power of prayer as evidence of his experience when he felt threatened one night on the way home from Stornoway.

After the service was over, a total stranger outside the Church approached Allan, and the man extended a hearty invitation to him to be his guest. Allan was hesitant at first, but eventually consented to go with the man. He was hospitably received and after they partook of a good dinner, Allan and his host fell into a conversation, which inevitably touched on the morning service in the Church and the text of the question. Suddenly the man confessed that he was one of the men who were following Allan on the moor on the night of the sale, with the intention of robbing him, 'Until we realised that you were not alone, because we heard several voices coming from behind the rock where you said today you were praying'.

The prospective robber had by then become a prominent Christian.

'The effectual fervent prayer of the righteous man availeth much'. James chapter 5, verse 16.

'Tha mor eifeachd ann an urnuigh dhùrachdaich an fhirein'.

[ends]

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Author: Angus Macleod

Date:

Original document title: Effectual Prayer

Location in physical archive: Series K, File 2, Section 37

NRAS reference: NRAS 4336/1/9/2

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