

## Thomas McCulloch and the Rhetoric of Piety

by

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Thomas McCulloch (1776-1843) was a multi-sided individual and the very meetings here today bear evidence of this reality. In my own studies on McCulloch I have explored his contributions in literature, museum collections, liberal education, learned societies, systematic theology and theological education.<sup>1</sup> Today I want to focus upon McCulloch and his use of rhetoric for the purposes of Christian piety. This is one theme which has virtually been neglected in McCulloch studies and I hope this paper will "open" another field.

In recent scholarly works the interaction of rhetoric and piety have become an avenue for academic exploration. I cite here, Serene Jones of Yale Divinity School, and her book *Calvin and the Rhetoric of Piety* in the "Columbia Series in Reformed Theology." Here she has demonstrated yet another layer in John Calvin, that is, to see how Calvin combined the classic art of rhetoric for the ends of Christian piety.<sup>2</sup> In essence it allows us to see Calvin, the Christian Humanist, labouring for the Reformation cause.

On a much smaller scale, I will explore this theme as it relates to Thomas McCulloch as a practitioner of rhetoric for the ends of Christian piety. First, I will set out the terms and the limits placed upon this study as follows: an analysis of two long overshadowed

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<sup>1</sup> These themes may be found in the following:

Jack C. Whytock, "Thomas McCulloch and William McGavin: A Neglected Transatlantic Literary/Religious Connection" in *Historical Papers 1999: Canadian Society of Church History*, pp. 167-185.

Jack C. Whytock, "Thomas McCulloch's Quest to Educate: Societies, Collections and Degrees" in *The Canadian Society of Presbyterian History: Papers 1999*, pp. 28-48.

Jack C. Whytock, "A Case Study of Presbyterian Theological Education in British North America 1820-1843" in *The Canadian Society of Presbyterian History: Papers 2002*, pp. 43-66.

<sup>2</sup> Serene Jones, *Calvin and the Rhetoric of Piety* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999).

McCulloch works: specifically, his published address *Words of Peace* (1817)<sup>3</sup> and the Associate Presbytery of Pictou's booklet on baptism – *The Subjects and Mode of Baptism* (1810).<sup>4</sup> Both works also represent the earlier period of McCulloch's life in Pictou before his commencement in Divinity teaching. They also provide a picture of McCulloch the churchman and the active presbyter.

### **The Parameters: Terms and Works**

I am using the term "rhetoric" in its most classical form; that is, the art of persuasion employed both in the spoken word or in the written word. The *Oxford English Dictionary* sets rhetoric forth as "the art of using language so as to persuade or influence others...."<sup>5</sup> Throughout the Middle Ages rhetoric was one of the subjects of the seven liberal arts subjects, the *quadrivium*, yet was linked with grammar and logic as the *trivium* subjects. Going back to an early period in the ancient church, we find that six of the most noteworthy church fathers were trained in rhetoric; Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory Nazianzen, John Chrysostom, Ambrose and Augustine.<sup>6</sup> Thus the study of rhetoric has had a long-standing tradition in the Christian Church and has shaped many of her preachers and theologians in their skills of communication. Augustine of Hippo helped the ancient church take classical rhetoric and use it for a Christian end, as in the rhetoric of preaching and Christian discourse. Augustine, writes Richard Lischer, worked from a principle of the "church's ownership of all truth and beauty, wherever they are found." Thus Augustine reworked Cicero's principles and adapted them to the first articulated Christian rhetoric manual in *On Christian Doctrine*.<sup>7</sup>

In essence, McCulloch is in this tradition and as a teacher of rhetoric we can apply an analyses to McCulloch's written material. McCulloch, as a student at Glasgow University in the 1790s, followed a curriculum still heavily arranged around the *trivium* despite the influence of the Scottish Enlightenment. The arts course shaped the theological curriculum of the period such that when McCulloch attended the Seceder Divinity Hall in Whitburn there was not a syllabus of lectures in homiletics as the students were already

<sup>3</sup> Thomas McCulloch, *Words of Peace: being an address, delivered to the congregation of Halifax in connexion with the Presbyterian Church in Nova Scotia* (Halifax: Ward, 1817).

<sup>4</sup> Committee of the Associate Presbytery of Pictou, *The Subjects and Mode of Baptism Ascertained from Scripture, being a Conversation between a Private Christian and a Minister in which the Truth is illustrated, and the sentiments of the Baptists upon these points reviewed* (Edinburgh: J. Pillans and Sons, 1810).

<sup>5</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, second edition, prepared by J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), Volume XIII, p. 857.

<sup>6</sup> Edwin C. Dargan, *A History of Preaching*, Volume I (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1968), p. 65.

<sup>7</sup> Richard Lischer, ed. *The Company of Preachers: Wisdom of Preaching, Augustine to the Present* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), p. 277.

acquainted with logic, grammar and rhetoric.<sup>8</sup> The students were assigned a constant round of discourses and, on occasion, a homily and a sermon; but it was not the Divinity Professor's task to lecture on "homiletics," that had been done in the *trivium*; rather, the Divinity Professor critiqued the student discourses, etc. The point here is that in the recent modern era of communication studies there is a change in the seminary to the syllabus of homiletics. Thomas McCulloch represents a continuum with an older tradition, a more classical rhetorical tradition and this must set the context for interpreting McCulloch as a rhetorician. Furthermore, McCulloch used rhetoric in that classical definition of persuasion and did not limit it to style alone; hence my keeping with the traditional understanding of rhetoric.

One other very simple fact must be acknowledged to set the context for McCulloch's two texts we will examine; namely, the fact that he taught logic, moral philosophy and rhetoric during his five years at Dalhousie College. This was a continuation of what he had also taught at Pictou Academy (college division) where in year two the students studied logic, grammar, and rhetoric.<sup>9</sup> In lecture notes from lectures at the Academy (college division) we find McCulloch outlining the eleven classical types of argument and Bacon's four types of illogical judgments.<sup>10</sup> All this is clear evidence not only of a man trained in rhetoric but also of one who shaped his lectures around rhetoric and the related subject matters of the *trivium*. His training, together with his labours in the classroom in Pictou and Dalhousie should keep us from being surprised from finding his use of rhetoric in his published sermons or tracts. His divinity students knew well that he was the rhetorician, as they delivered their discourses from memory before their Professor who was ready to offer the rhetorician's critical thoughts.<sup>11</sup> Thus, McCulloch's writings make for an excellent study to see how he employed rhetorical skills of persuasion for the end of Christian piety.

The next key term "piety" generally today has a negative connotation about it. No doubt this is in part because it is seen by many as the same as "pietism." The two words need to be carefully distinguished. "Piety," put simply, refers to the life of Christian devotion, virtue and duty flowing from a certain knowledge or acquaintance. Again, the *Oxford English Dictionary* is plain here, "Habitual reverence and obedience to God...devotion to religious duties and observances; godliness, devoutness, religiousness."<sup>12</sup> In the older tradition piety as understood by Phillips in 1696 was "a Moral vertue which causes us to have an affection and esteem for God and Holy Things."

<sup>8</sup> See chapter twelve "The General Associate Hall (1786-1820)" in my "The History and Development of Scottish Theological Education and Training, Kirk and Secession (c.1560-c.1850)" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wales, 2001), pp. 329-351.

<sup>9</sup> B. Anne Wood, *Pictou Academy in the Nineteenth Century* (Pictou, N.S.: Pictou County Geneology and Heritage Society, 1997), p. 20.

<sup>10</sup> Wood, *Pictou Academy*, p. 27.

<sup>11</sup> Wood, *Pictou Academy*, p. 84.

<sup>12</sup> *OED*, Volume XI, p. 804.

It is to be distinguished from the mystical strains of German "Pietism." Again piety must be applied to Thomas McCulloch in the Calvinian usage where John Calvin laid great stress on *pietas* as is evidenced in his most famous work *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*.<sup>13</sup> Interesting that over the centuries one section of *The Institutes* has been printed as a separate small work, usually referred to as *The Golden Booklet of the True Christian Life*, with the latest being a new Hungarian translation in 1999.<sup>14</sup> It has a very straightforward theme, the development of Christian piety. McCulloch was a child of the Calvinist tradition and never lost sight of this aspect of piety, as we will see. Thus our study here will focus upon McCulloch the churchman trained in rhetoric, yet also the Reformed Calvinian student of piety. I hope this will reveal a deeper understanding of McCulloch and his contributions to the history of Christianity in Canada.

### The Two Works

The first work, *The Subjects and Mode of Baptism* has often been ignored in its connection to McCulloch, no doubt due in part to its title page stating that it was written by a Presbytery Committee. However, in the copy in the New College Library, Edinburgh the following is written:

(By Special Desire)  
To the Rev. Mr. James Robertson, Kilmarnock,  
from Mr. McCulloch, one of the Committee,  
Edinburgh, 6<sup>th</sup> April, 1810.

The Rev. Robertson, the man to whom Thomas McCulloch gave a copy, was a very prominent Antiburgher minister in Kilmarnock, only a few miles from Thomas McCulloch's former charge in Stewarton, Ayrshire. Both McCulloch and Robertson were in the same Presbytery, prior to McCulloch's 1803 departure.<sup>15</sup> This clearly affirms Thomas McCulloch's involvement and as one looks more closely at the actual text it forces one to conclude that the committee was dominated by one man, namely, Thomas McCulloch. Furthermore his son William and his granddaughters Isabella and Jean all make reference to this book as authored by Thomas McCulloch. Furthermore, it has more a story line and is done in the form of a dialogue – all reminiscent of the author of the *Stepsure Letters* or *Colonial Gleanings*. If a second author must be identified, I

<sup>13</sup> See, "To the Reader" and the "Index" under the word "piety" for this thesis in John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, two volumes, in "The Library of Christian Classics", ed. J. T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), pp. 3-5. Also, Richard Stauffer, *The Humanness of John Calvin*, trans. George H. Shriver (Nashville: Abingdon, 1971); Jones, *Calvin and the Rhetoric of Piety*, pp. 129-132.

<sup>14</sup> Kalvin Janos, *Keresztyen elet* (Kolozsvar: Koinonia, 2001); John Calvin, *The Golden Booklet of the True Christian Life* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1952).

<sup>15</sup> Robert Small, *History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church from 1733 to 1900* (Edinburgh: David M. Small, 1904), pp. 288-289.

would suggest that Rev. James MacGregor was the close collaborator. The style of the 1810 work is that of McCulloch. MacGregor's *A Guide to Baptism* written about 1826 and contained in *A Few Remains* is more the reasoned tract rather than the literary tract for persuasion. (The nineteenth century Maritime Presbyterian works on Baptism constitute an amazing body of material for comparison – the Committee [McCulloch], MacGregor, Sommerville and MacDonald).<sup>16</sup> My conclusion is that McCulloch was the author and the Committee simply served as a “final” editing group.

The reason the Associate Presbytery of Pictou published the work was to defend its theological and ecclesiastical position in the colonies. I can only conjecture at this point, but I am not convinced that *Subjects and Modes of Baptism* was really against the New Lights and their emergence as a Baptist grouping (which in 1809 had reached its decision to “withdraw fellowship from all the churches who admit unbaptized persons [immersed, that is] to what is called occasional communion.”)<sup>17</sup> The immediate context, I believe, lies elsewhere; namely, with the arrival of the “Scotch Baptists” to Pictou County, specifically to River John and also to Prince Edward Island. These folk, many who were recent immigrants represent the Haldane tradition from Scotland. In 1808 James Haldane moved from being an Independent Congregationalist to being a Baptist and in 1808 saw to print, *Reasons for a Change of Sentiment and Practice on the Subject of Baptism*.<sup>18</sup> The Secession Presbyterians, though similar in some theological aspects to the Haldanes, were adamantly opposed to their Independency and Baptist views. The father of the famous missionary John Geddie was influenced by the Haldanes.<sup>19</sup> I believe that the Haldane influence in Pictou County, though not large by comparison to the Presbyterian immigrant presence, was the motivating factor for this 1810 book, *Subjects and Modes of Baptism*; it was defensive and promotional. There is only one direct reference in the text to a Baptist writer; that is, Abraham Booth (1734-1806), England's noteworthy Calvinistic Baptist preacher and author of the famed work *Paedobaptism*

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<sup>16</sup> James MacGregor, *A Guide to Baptism* in *A Few Remains of the Rev. James MacGregor*, ed. George Patterson (Edinburgh: William Oliphant, 1859), pp. 137-165.

Donald MacDonald, *A Treatise on the Holy Ordinance of Baptism* (Charlottetown: Hazzard and Moore, The Sunnyside Press, 1898. Note MacDonald died in 1867.

William Sommerville, *Baptismal Immersion Not of God. Arguments Pro and Con* (Saint John: McKillop and Johnston, 1876). Thomas McCulloch was a close friend of Sommerville and in fact preached in Sommerville's church the Sunday before McCulloch died.

<sup>17</sup> John Moir, *The Church in the British Era* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1972), p. 138. Russell Prime, “Background” (2) (unpublished paper) received, May, 2003, Halifax, N.S.

<sup>18</sup> Nigel M. de S. Cameron, org. ed. *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1993), pp. 385-386.

<sup>19</sup> R. S. Miller, *Misi Gede: John Geddie Pioneer Missionary to the New Hebrides* (Launceston, Tasmania: Presbyterian Church of Tasmania, 1975), p. 9.

*Examined* (1784).<sup>20</sup> There are no allusions to the New Lights of Nova Scotia, nor directly to the Haldanes; yet I see Pictou County with its recent Scottish immigrants as providing the seed bed for this tract.

I will not now give an extensive background to the historical context for *Words of Peace* published in 1817 but summarize the context.<sup>21</sup> McCulloch had been called by the Associate Anti-Burgher congregation in Halifax in 1808 but declined, yet maintained an interest in the work there. In 1811 this congregation, now Burgher, received Rev. James Robson as their minister who was inducted there on 13 May, 1812. Robson originally from Kelso, Scotland, was formerly the minister of the Burgher congregation in Lochwinnoch, of the Presbytery of Paisley, having served there from 1803 to 1810. It appears that Rev. Robson had a “stormy” relationship with the Lochwinnoch church. He then spent two years as an itinerant preacher before going to Nova Scotia where he pastored the Halifax Associate church from 1812 to 1820 “when, owing to dispeace in the congregation, he resigned his charge”. From Halifax he went to Pictou where he served from 1824 until his death in 1838.<sup>22</sup> Thus the Halifax congregation was one of the Burgher congregations that entered the 1817 union, the year that McCulloch gave his *Words of Peace* to the congregation. Robson was an aggressive supporter of the 1817 union as was McCulloch, so this was not the source of conflict. Robson served as Clerk to the Synod of Nova Scotia from 1817 to 1838.<sup>23</sup>

### **The Rhetoric and Piety of *Words of Peace***

In typical rhetorical fashion Thomas McCulloch frames the opening of this address in such a way as to gain first the audience’s sympathy – “You know, brethren, that I have long felt an interest in your congregational affairs. By occasional intercourse, our acquaintance has grown into friendship....”<sup>24</sup> (In many ways this was similar to what has been argued for Paul’s epistles, written in the rhetorical style.) Then follows McCulloch’s stated thesis, the divisions which have arisen in the Halifax congregation must be stopped. He immediately nuances his argument to qualify it by realizing that

<sup>20</sup> Donald M. Lewis, ed. *The Blackwell Dictionary of Evangelical Biography 1730-1860*, I (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), p. 120.

<sup>21</sup> See, Barry Cahill’s paper in these 2003 papers for a full contextualization. Also, William McCulloch, *Life of Thomas McCulloch, D.D. Pictou*, editors Isabella and Jean McCulloch (Truro, 1920), pp. 52-53.

<sup>22</sup> Robert Small, *History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church from 1733 to 1900*, vol. II (Edinburgh: David M. Small, 1904), p. 538; A.E. Betts, *Our Fathers in the Faith: Being an account of Presbyterian Ministers ordained before 1875* (Halifax: Maritime Conference Archives, 1983), p. 111.

<sup>23</sup> W. Gregg, *History of the Presbyterian Church in Canada* (Toronto: Presbyterian Printing and Publishing Co., 1885), pp. 90-91, 137.

<sup>24</sup> *Words of Peace*, p. 3. I express my thanks to my son Ian Whytock for retyping *Words of Peace* to facilitate a much easier read. However, I have retained in the footnotes the page numbers to the original printed text.

yes, there is a place for proper dispute in the church and “It is possible for even the peace of the church to be too dearly purchased.” Contention and debate must be carefully handled, “When dissension occurs, it must then be an enquiry of prudence, will the gain of quarrelling counterbalance the loss?”<sup>25</sup> “...That strife which will receive the approbation of the God of peace, must be supported by very weighty reasons indeed; and let us all remember, that his decisions do not always accord with the views of those who are quarrelling. What such persons conceive to be of vast importance, God may very lightly esteem.” This is followed by a summary statement that “all who think of offenses will increase them in magnitude until the very grounds of the offense are removed from mind”. Having stated the nuances and qualifications the argument proceeds with full force. There are no subheadings in the text yet I summarize the development of his argument under eight reasons. In good rhetorical fashion there is a clear progressive advance towards the climax of the argumentation. I provide the following flow of the argument against contention:

1. To think often about Christian charity;
2. Consider how contention affects social discussion;
3. Test your contentions by asking if this is for God’s honour and in accord with His will;
4. Go beyond an individual religion to see the family of God as better;
5. Contention is injurious to personal piety;
6. Contention affects the wider church negatively;
7. Now ask yourself, “How do these disputes benefit you as a congregation?”;
8. And contention affects death’s preparation and you need to consider the coming judgement.<sup>26</sup>

Following these eight arguments that McCulloch makes to convict this Halifax church of the dangers and problems of contention, the ultimate goal is reconciliation and the restoration of peace in this congregation. He concludes with a long paragraph of summary application in which one can identify six applicatory exhortations or “calls to action” for the members of this Halifax congregation to do:

1. First review your present conduct;
2. Each accept your share of the blame and make allowance for others;
3. Think upon the good qualities in each other – “This is an important step to reconciliation;”
4. Be followers of Christ – forgiveness and grace are demanded of you;

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<sup>25</sup> *Words of Peace*, p. 5.

<sup>26</sup> *Words of Peace*, pp. 6-15.

5. Consider the hour of your death and how you should be right for that hour; and
6. Finally, your consciences and affections must be right “for your own sakes, then, for the sake of religion, for Christ’s sake....”<sup>27</sup>

It is to be noted in both the eight arguments in the body of the address and in the six concluding applications that there is a similar order, always leading to the climactic point concerning death and the judgement of all. This is an evidence of a writer and speaker trained in the classical rhetorical style and is reflective of one who also taught the subject of rhetoric. The end in view for this was not rhetoric for rhetoric’s sake but rather as a tool and servant of Christian piety. Rhetoric was but the tool and servant in McCulloch’s hand.

McCulloch’s use of rhetorical figures of speech or the elements of speech in this address were not of an allegorical nature but were comparison, *interrogatio*, and *gradatio*. Several comparisons were made between the members of the church and the character and attributes of God the Father and the example of Jesus Christ, thereby eliciting the “if” “then” comparison. The other chief rhetorical element of speech McCulloch employed in this address was the *interrogatio*, or the rhetorical question posed for argumentative effect. One expects such in a homily or sermon and since this is a “congregational address” it comes close to a sermon in several aspects. Usually he used one rhetorical question then proceeded with a statement but on occasion he will group several together, for example, “Does God command quarrelling? Does his grace set every man against his brother? Did Christ strive with his friends?” and nearing the end of his eighth argument there are six rhetorical questions strung together – again at the climax of the final argument –

Are you, brethren, in a state of preparation for the judgement seat of Christ? ...Have you embraced the gospel of peace? Have you been diligent that you may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless? Where are those talents which you have gained for Christ? When the judgement is set and the books are opened, will they contain a detail of your love to the brethren? To you he entrusted the peace of his church; and what have you done with it? ...<sup>28</sup>

In terms of the goal, the development of Christian piety in the church in Halifax, the stress on piety is perhaps the most striking in this composition, more so than anything else from the pen of McCulloch. The *Mephibosheth Stepsure Letters* present a different accent on piety – industry, morality, virtue, etc. and *Colonial Gleanings* a piety of evangelical allegory. But here in *Words of Peace* we find Thomas McCulloch serving us the fullest development of Christian spirituality and piety. We are actually able to dissect and see beyond the erudite Calvinistic lectures to the heartbeat of his faith to that of the

<sup>27</sup> *Words of Peace*, pp. 14-16.

<sup>28</sup> *Words of Peace*, p. 15.



experimental evangelical pastor/theologian. His language is reflective of that Secession evangelicalism of which he belonged – “Did you only consider your present situation, you would easily perceive, you would all feel, how pernicious to improvement in personal religion your contention is, how injurious to the exercise of every Christian grace” and “Religion in secret is sweet; but a day in the family of God, is better than a thousand.” McCulloch here is the pious evangelist – “Have you embraced the gospel of peace?” He is the pious evangelical confronting them with “affection for the brethren,” “peace of mind,” appeals to “consciences and affections: and calls to “fervent prayer and meditation” this is all reflective of McCulloch’s goal to heal the division and see pious Christianity grow and prosper.

### **The Rhetoric and Piety of *The Subjects and Mode of Baptism***

With *Words of Peace* McCulloch used a rhetorical style of reasoned argumentation, whereas with *The Subjects and Mode of Baptism* the arguments are woven into story and dialogue. The use of metaphor and allegory are common figures of speech employed in rhetoric also. The dialogue begins on the first page not by the Minister but by Christian asking time of the Minister to have a conversation and to ask for information. In essence it is a warm beginning – not confrontational – more a kind invitation to drop in at “a fire-side chat”. (The tract is mildly reminiscent of Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*. The Minister is a type of Evangelist.<sup>29</sup> Christian is the Pilgrim.) The Minister’s response is naturally agreeable and stresses friendship, love, conversation and a real spirit of gentleness. Again, there is all absence of an asorbic tone or style but clearly there is a desire to draw the reader gently into the subject. The Minister’s statement to Christian, “Were the friends of Christ to enter more frequently in social intercourse, the truths and consolations of religion would be better known, and more highly appreciated,”<sup>30</sup> is virtually what McCulloch wrote seven years later to the Halifax congregation. This sets the tone for a topic which could be highly controversial. It also establishes a spirit of Christian piety breathing through well-written rhetoric. The next page continues this introductory dialogue whereby sympathy is further aroused by the reader as the Christian is in a pitiable state because he wants Christian fellowship but he is confused by the different churches. The Minister then asks him to tell him what principles specifically he finds difficulty with in the Minister’s church. Christian freely does this on the third page – he has a problem with the baptism of infants by sprinkling. At last the subject of the book is clearly uncovered! Christian is becoming convinced that the practice of the Baptists is correct. Again the Minister does not respond with direct hard-hitting confrontation but a question:

<sup>29</sup> The minister has many characteristics of the Reverend James MacGregor. However, I think it is too early to argue for a full portrait of MacGregor here, and this will come later in *Colonial Gleanings*.

<sup>30</sup> *Subjects and Mode of Baptism*, p. 1.

**M** – Did you derive your present views from the scriptures, or from books written by Baptists upon these points? [then the answer]

**Chr** – A conversation, some time ago, with a friend who is a Baptist, first induced me to consider the subject; and afterward an attentive perusal of books supporting his sentiments, convinced me of their truth.<sup>31</sup>

Unfortunately, the specific books are not named. The Minister then ascertains that the Christian had actually never considered the arguments which a Presbyterian would use but rather he had only considered the arguments used by the Baptists. So the minister only proceeds to offer arguments after Christian has graciously asked him – “Your strongest argument, I presume, is custom; but if you have any others, I am ready to hear them.”<sup>32</sup>

The Minister before proceeding to outline his arguments lays before Christian the principles on baptism as found in the Westminster Shorter Catechism by quoting question and answer 95 together with all the scripture proofs. In essence the Minister has now a “text” to deal with and the five scriptural proofs in reality are the outlines for the arguments to follow. The Minister elicits Christian’s response and the author records Christian’s shock that the scriptures which the Presbyterian minister used were all the texts he had thought supported only the Baptist position. The dialogue now begins in earnest with the first argument being the premise that inference and analogical reasoning from Scripture are permitted in the Christian life. The very words are reflective of classical rhetoric, but again the form is Christianized for a pious end. The Minister first argues that analogical reasoning is permissive and not just express command. He reasons from Acts 10:46,47 that Peter baptized Cornelius and his friends on the basis of analogical reasoning. Christian concedes this point because they received the Holy Spirit, therefore baptism was to be dispensed. Thus analogical reasoning was critical to the first argument.<sup>33</sup> The Minister further buttresses his case with the matter of females taking Communion, yet there is no express command in Scripture for this; rather it is by analogical reasoning.<sup>34</sup>

The second argument centres around the Baptist assertion that only adults can believe and repent and thus be baptized. The Minister here presents the case that if this Baptist argument is true, then infants are excluded from the mercy of God.<sup>35</sup>

Argument number three, is that infants along with their parents were admitted into the church. Presuppositions stated here are these:

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<sup>31</sup> *Subjects and Mode of Baptism*, p. 3.

<sup>32</sup> *Subjects and Mode of Baptism*, p. 4.

<sup>33</sup> *Subjects and Mode of Baptism*, pp. 8-10. [Argument #1 – Analogical Reasoning, example 1]

<sup>34</sup> *Subjects and Mode of Baptism*, p. 10. [example 2]

<sup>35</sup> *Subjects and Mode of Baptism*, p. 11 [Argument #2 – Faith + Repentance Prerequisite for Baptism means Infants are excluded God’s mercy.]

- (a) the Old Testament Church is a continuation into the New Testament Church, and
- (b) proselytes in the Jewish economy were brought in by circumcision.
- (c) Circumcision was not a cardinal ordinance.<sup>36</sup>

Argument number four concerns the mode of admission into the church since the time of Abraham. Here the Minister brings Christian to see that formerly it was by circumcision, and latterly by baptism. Here is their similarity.<sup>37</sup> Then he quickly moved to the argument of household baptism as in continuity with the Old Testament dispensation yet carefully showing aspects of discontinuity due to the new dispensation.<sup>38</sup>

Argument number six is in the form of a rhetorical question posed by the minister: "Whether do you suppose them [infants] to be Christians or Heathen?" Christian responds with great humility: "I am really at a loss to answer you at present; I shall be glad to hear your own sentiments."<sup>39</sup> The Minister seizes this open door and walks Christian through the answer in a general fashion but avoiding major controversies.

In another major argument, namely the attack upon infant baptism due to "abuse" of the practice, Christian challenges the Minister: "But many baptized infants are never interested in the righteousness of faith."<sup>40</sup> This discussion on this point was clearly expected and is found in all baptism booklets of the time.

The final discussion or argument on the matter of subjects is I Corinthians 7:14 "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife...else were your children unclean...". Here McCulloch, for the Committee, enters into his most protracted of word studies and exhibits his scholarly knowledge of the various interpretations of the text at hand.<sup>41</sup>

Next follows the arguments for the mode of baptism as pouring or sprinkling and not immersion. I summarize these as follows:

1. *Baptizo* does not always mean immersion.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>36</sup> *Subjects and Mode of Baptism*, pp. 12-13.

<sup>37</sup> *Subjects and Mode of Baptism*, pp. 14-15.

<sup>38</sup> *Subjects and Mode of Baptism*, pp. 15-16. Page 19-20 deals with discontinuity aspects.

<sup>39</sup> *Subjects and Mode of Baptism*, p. 17. The Minister's answer starts on page 17, then he is diverted by debate, and returns to his main line of argumentation on pages 23-25.

<sup>40</sup> *Subjects and Mode of Baptism*, p. 22.

<sup>41</sup> *Subjects and Mode of Baptism*, pp. 28-31. See McCulloch's discussion on "legitimate" and "consecrated."

<sup>42</sup> *Subjects and Mode of Baptism*, pp. 32-33.

2. The argument of analogical reasoning – by noting where the baptisms occurred, eg “in Jordan”, “in the wilderness”, etc.<sup>43</sup>
3. The full understanding of the terms “out of” and “from” as denoting “motion to a place”.<sup>44</sup>
4. By refuting the Baptist argument that Rom. 6:4 and Col. 2:12 are clear references to mode. Here the argument is that these references refer to meaning and not mode.<sup>45</sup>
5. Next, the argument of the Old Testament foundations for the mode of baptism as pouring or sprinkling is presented.<sup>46</sup>
6. Old Testament prophecy is brought forward in support of the mode.<sup>47</sup>
7. Finally the Minister argues for a parallel between Pentecost and the mode of baptism.<sup>48</sup>

Then the conclusion, which the reader has been expecting. There is a triumph of the Minister’s persuasiveness and Christian responds:

**Chr** - The evidence which you have already brought forward is convincing. Our conversation has afforded me much pleasure; and I trust I shall always remember it with gratitude. It has shown me the truth, and will enable me to take sweet fellowship with those around me, and to walk with them into the house of the Lord. I ought to apologize for troubling you so long. May the Lord reward you with the consolations of his covenant!

**M** - My dear Sir, there is no need for apology. The benefits of our conversation are not all your own. Already I enjoy the satisfaction of gaining you to the truth; I shall also reap the benefit of your fellowship in the church....<sup>49</sup>

Here was the triumph of Christian piety for Presbyterians. The method employed was nothing other than the art of persuasion, or classical rhetoric. This later booklet shows the clear emphasis on the author’s skills in reasoning, logic and grammar.

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<sup>43</sup> *Subjects and Mode of Baptism*, pp. 33-34.

<sup>44</sup> *Subjects and Mode of Baptism*, pp. 35-36.

<sup>45</sup> *Subjects and Mode of Baptism*, pp. 37-40.

<sup>46</sup> *Subjects and Mode of Baptism*, pp. 41-45. See on “divers washings.”

<sup>47</sup> *Subjects and Mode of Baptism*, pp. 46-47.

<sup>48</sup> *Subjects and Mode of Baptism*, pp. 47-48.

<sup>49</sup> *Subjects and Mode of Baptism*, p.49.

## Conclusion

When *Subjects and Mode of Baptism* is combined with *Words of Peace* we see an author who knew and practised well the art of rhetoric for the ends of Christian piety. Both works show Thomas McCulloch's ability in a light beyond that of the educator, here is the churchman at work – the rhetorician for piety. Furthermore, here is a Scot who was well trained in the homiletics of the eighteenth century, namely rhetoric, logic, grammar and elocution. As with Augustine, so with the Scottish professors in the eighteenth century; rhetoric was used for pious ends. McCulloch embraced well his own tradition, the Seceders, and his use of rhetoric was to this pious end. His was not the “flowery” style of some Moderates; it was plain, direct, forceful, and persuasive, yet imaginative and with affection.

In these two tracts we see Thomas McCulloch, the pious churchman, as one steeped in the great rhetorical tradition stretching back to Cicero, the Church Fathers, the Scottish Divinity Professors, and to his own generation. The art of communication was classical rhetoric for a pious end. *Words of Peace* reveals in McCulloch a sensitive soul and a pious churchman, not just the figure of a stern theologian or polemical educator. Likewise, *Subjects and Mode of Baptism* presents McCulloch in a gentler way, a kinder portrait. When both are taken together, we uncover more of Thomas McCulloch, the churchman and rhetorician of piety.