

Restless Spirit: The Odyssey of Norman McLeod 1780–1866

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“Children, children, look to yourselves. The world is mad.” The opening words of this paper are purportedly the last words of the Reverend Norman McLeod. As he lay on his deathbed in Waipu, New Zealand, in 1866, this Moses-like personage exhorted his followers to be circumspect of the world and its fleeting charms. The forceful personality and independent spirit that set him apart shone through even in his waning hours.

This year marks the 150th anniversary of McLeod’s taking leave of this life. One can only imagine how his death affected the faithful flock over whom he had cast such a long shadow for such a long time. From Scotland to Cape Breton to New Zealand, McLeod traversed the globe as an iron man in an age of wooden ships. He commanded a fierce loyalty from men and women who were willing to pull up stakes and follow him to the ends of the earth.

Who was this man with the restless spirit? Norman McLeod has been maligned and caricatured, despised, and scorned as an ecclesiastical despot who would have neither truck nor trade with any who dared to challenge his brand of the Gospel. Some might say that the only God he knew was a frowning Providence that tipped the scales with more law than grace.

I would contend that Norman McLeod was much more than the monolith many assume him to be. I agree with Laurie Stanley-Blackwell that he was a product of his age. As she says, “. . . he differed little from his austere Free Church contemporaries.”¹

But Norman McLeod cannot be easily buttonholed as a crank or misfit in the wider world of the church of his day. I hope to show that there was more to this man than the negative aspects of his character that some have chosen to emphasize. While not overlooking those aspects, I think that he needs to be reconsidered in terms of the complicated cleric I believe him to be.

Growing Up in the Church of Scotland

Norman McLeod first saw the light of day in September 1780, in Assynt on the west coast of Sutherlandshire, Scotland. He came from a pious family. His father was a member of the Scottish Kirk, and his mother, a dissenter from the English church.

We know virtually nothing about McLeod’s early life. One thing we do know is that the parish minister was the Reverend William McKenzie. John Kennedy of Dingwall, in his book *The Days of the Fathers of Ross-shire*, says,

Mr. McKenzie . . . was almost all that a minister ought not to be . . . Always accustomed to regard his pastoral work as an unpleasant condition of drawing his stipend, he reduced it to the smallest possible dimensions, and would not infrequently be absent without reason and without leave, for many weeks together from his charge.²

It was in the rocky soil of this controversial man that the seeds of McLeod’s antipathy towards the established Church of Scotland were sown. McKenzie’s bad example and negative influence no doubt coloured McLeod’s thinking and theology for the rest of his life.

¹ Laurie Stanley-Blackwell, *Tokens of Grace: Cape Breton’s Open-Air Communion Tradition* (Sydney, NS: Cape Breton University Press, 2006), 72.

² John Murray, *History of the Presbyterian Church in Cape Breton* (Truro, NS: News Publishing, 1921), 21.

If McKenzie was a force for ill, the Reverend John Kennedy, a man of great piety, had the opposite effect on young Norman. Kennedy's ministry was so blessed by God that it resulted in a spiritual awakening in the area. As John Murray writes, "Norman McLeod was one of the young men, who, in that season of blessing, experienced the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to awaken, regenerate and save sinners."³

Norman McLeod's newfound faith and its attendant enthusiasm led eventually to dissension and disunity. He took upon himself an authority that rankled the frocks of the local clergy. As a result, "he separated from the church and began to form a sect of his own."⁴ This was the beginning of the restless and independent spirit that was the Reverend Norman McLeod.

When McLeod's first child, John Luther, was born, he and his wife, as John Murray eloquently puts it, "carried their infant boy over mountain and moor, from Lochbroom to Lochcarron, a distance of forty miles, in order to have their child baptized by the far-famed Rev. Lauchlin McKenzie."⁵ But it wasn't to be. Their own minister had preceded them and forbade McKenzie from administering the sacrament.

This experience had such a profound effect on McLeod that he went as far as to say later while in Cape Breton, "Probably I should never have come to this country but for the prosecution if not the persecution of that man."⁶ The long and fruitless journey "over mountain and moor" was a contributing factor to the journeys that awaited this leader of men and women.

Following his conversion at about age 27 or 28, McLeod felt called to the ministry. But after a time of study at the University of Edinburgh, he could not bring himself to seek ordination from any presbytery of the Church of Scotland. He, like others of the time, disdained the moderatism and patronage of the established church. Flora McPherson describes the Moderate Party of the Church by saying, "Through the years, moderation had degenerated to laxity and indifference. Among the prominent clergy, social charm and literary accomplishment often replaced religious fervor, and the lesser men, like William Mackenzie of Norman's home parish, could only compensate for their spiritual emptiness with cheerful conviviality."⁷ McLeod, though much a loner himself, was not alone in believing that the Church of his day was too close to the secular authority. Many of his fellow seminarians shared his disdain for what he regarded as an apostate church.

McLeod, in regard to the Church of Scotland at the time, was on the outside looking in. His antipathy towards her clergy was reciprocated to a high degree when he was denied an opportunity to preach and teach in church and schoolhouse, respectively. But he soldiered on. As the Reverend Dr. Ian G. MacLeod has put it, "It is quite possible that a man of lesser fortitude, milder disposition or weaker religious conviction would have succumbed to the authority and power of the Church, or perhaps might have lost his faith altogether. Not so Norman McLeod."⁸

His attitude is expressed in his own words in his book *The Present Church of Scotland and a Tint of Normanism Contending in a Dialogue*: "I am thought by some people strangely singular and by some others deeply fanatical, because I will not and dare not pronounce their

³ Ibid., 22.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid., 23.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Flora McPherson, *Watchman against the World: The Remarkable Journey of Norman McLeod & His People from Scotland to Cape Breton Island to New Zealand (Wreck Cove, NS: Breton Books, 1993)*, 6.

⁸ Ian G. MacLeod, *A History of the Church in St. Ann's* (Sydney, NS: Lynk Printing, 1970), 6.

Shibboleth . . . I should at once prefer being chained to the West India slave, enjoying full liberty of conscience, to being joined with the Scottish clergy . . .”⁹

John Murray makes a statement in his book that I will challenge later in this paper. He writes, “He might have sought a license from another denomination, but he was too good a Presbyterian to do that.”¹⁰ Whether McLeod was a “good Presbyterian” in the truest sense of the word is, I think, up for debate.

Setting a New Course

Norman McLeod turned at this point in his life to both teaching and to his original occupation of fishing. At about this time he decided he needed to set a new course — literally. McLeod made up his mind to leave Scotland and to set sail for New Scotland, or Nova Scotia. It was 1817 and McLeod was 37 years old. It seems that he had burned his ecclesiastical bridges, and a new beginning was in order. It was also the infamous period of the Sutherland Clearances. No doubt, this played a large part in helping to guide McLeod and his friends to their ultimate decision.

Their means of conveyance was a ship called the *Frances Ann*. The port from which they embarked was Lochbroom. Their destination was Pictou, Nova Scotia. Like so many voyages of the time, their journey was long and dangerous. Apparently, the *Frances Ann* sprang a leak during a vicious gale. It was the captain’s considered opinion that they should reverse course and make for the nearest Irish port. With the take-charge attitude for which McLeod would become famous, he purportedly said, “No, keep on your course. We are nearer to the coast of Nova Scotia than to the coast of Ireland.”¹¹ The captain reluctantly agreed with his passenger and the *Frances Ann* reached Pictou safely and soundly.

McLeod and those immigrants who accompanied him took up lots along Middle River, Pictou County, between the settlements of Alma and Gairloch. Most of the Gaelic-speaking Highlanders were from the same area of Scotland as himself and were quick to welcome him as one of their own.

George Patterson, in his history of the county of Pictou, says this of McLeod’s sermon content as he travelled through the area: “Those who have heard him at this time describe his preaching as consisting of torrents of abuse against all religious bodies, and even against individual against individuals, the like of which they had never heard, and which was perfectly indescribable. But though so wildly fanatical, he was a man of great power, and gained an influence over a large portion of the Highlanders, such as no other man in the country possessed.”¹²

McLeod’s hold over the faithful took on a sect-like quality. His followers and admirers came to be called “Normanites.” He did not lead a formally constituted congregation, but he does appear to have had a congregation nonetheless. He had a growing following among the adherents of other clergy and churches that, no doubt, caused no little concern. As had been the case in Scotland, Norman McLeod was poaching the parishioners of surrounding charges. It seems that his charismatic style was a powerful draw for many.

The great pioneering apostle of the Maritimes, James McGregor, described the Reformed situation in the area in this way: “There is a fourfold zeal in Pictou. Zeal for the Established Church of Scotland; zeal for the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia; zeal for lukewarmness;

⁹ McPherson, 23.

¹⁰ Murray, 24.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹² *Ibid.*

and zeal for Norman McLeod . . . people will go much farther to hear him than any minister in Pictou.”¹³

We can only surmise, but McLeod’s gains were his colleagues’ losses, and this may have created tensions in the area. Therefore, a call from a congregation in Ohio was both providential and convenient. It is thought to have been a congregation in a place called New Lisbon. McLeod acceded to their request and went about the business of preparing to sail to the United States. He wasn’t, however, planning to go alone. A contingent of his faithful were prepared to follow him yet again. It is not often that when a minister accepts a call to one congregation that his former congregation goes with him. But so strong was the affection that the Normanites had for him that they were willing to be transplanted to Ohio.

Finding Home in St. Ann’s Harbour

All of this meant that a vessel was needed to accommodate the exodus south. That vessel was built at Middle River beginning in 1819. But if McLeod had followers, he also had detractors, something that is borne out by the unofficial name of the ship — the “Ark.” The enterprise was apparently scoffed at, and McLeod was compared to Noah who was similarly maligned for the ship God had commanded him to build. McLeod predicted disaster for the pagans of Pictou.

In May of 1820 Norman McLeod and his Normanites boarded the “Ark” and set sail for what they thought would be the Gulf of Mexico; however, the next we hear of them, they are in St. Ann’s Harbour in Cape Breton, where McLeod would live for 31 years.

How they arrived is described in an 1885 letter of a descendant of one of the crew:

The wind favoring, they made for Cape North, then sailing close by land and examining the coast some fine afternoon they arrived near St. Ann’s Harbor and commenced to try for fish. They found codfish very abundant and after getting a good catch made for the Harbor to pass the night. When looking around in the morning they were delighted with the prospect, weighed anchor, and sailed for the head of the Harbor, a distance of six miles. They landed and after a short consultation, decided to go no further.¹⁴

This was the second, albeit unexpected stop on McLeod’s odyssey. He lived in no other single place longer than he did in Cape Breton. Arguably, it is the place where he had the greatest influence and left the longest legacy.

In this community surrounding St. Ann’s Harbour, from Englishtown to North River, Norman McLeod developed a theocracy fashioned in his image. The relative isolation of the area lent itself to this kind of situation. McLeod was schoolmaster, magistrate, and minister. He was sovereign of all he surveyed. He was prophet, priest, and king. There was little that escaped his notice and scrutiny. As John Murray describes it, “His personality overshadowed everything. His will or word was law with his people.”¹⁵

McLeod’s community was considered a model of morality and industry. It was described as “the most sober, industrious and orderly settlement in the island, (who) have a pastor of their own, endowed also with magisterial authority, to whose exertions and vigilance the character of the people is not a little indebted.”¹⁶

How different this is to our time and situation! Today there is little fidelity to the Church or her ministers. Fidelity has given way to much fickleness where people, if they are church

¹³ McPherson, 39.

¹⁴ Bonnie Thornhill, *The Road to St. Ann’s* (Sydney, NS: City Printers, 2007), 19.

¹⁵ Murray, 73.

¹⁶ Robert J. Morgan, *Rise Again! The Story of Cape Breton Island: Book One* (Sydney, NS: Breton Books, 2008), 116.

attenders at all, change their allegiance as often as their attire. Contrast that to this assessment by Murray:

That original congregation, or at least a goodly part of it, was the congregation that Mr. Norman McLeod gathered about him on the upper reaches of the Middle River of Pictou, Nova Scotia, between August, 1817, and May, 1820. It had an even earlier origin than that. It came across the Atlantic with Mr. McLeod in 'The Frances Ann' in the summer of 1817 . . . They came to Pictou with him in 1817, and they came to Cape Breton with him in 1820; aye more, a number of them went to Australia with him in 1851, and to New Zealand in 1854.¹⁷

It's plain to see that this 19th-century patriarch had many a willing adherent joining him to many promised lands.

It seems, however, that for Norman, his promised lands soon became spiritual wastelands. Utopia, for him, was elusive. Take, for instance, his blistering assessment of Pictou as mentioned in a letter he wrote in 1840: "I do not know the comparison of Pictou in the whole land, for shameless and daring wickedness . . . I humbly desire to bless the name of the Lord, for having given me and some of my friends a gate to escape from it in time . . . O Pictou, Pictou! Thy sins are fearful, and thy judgements are alarming."¹⁸

By 1848 the novelty appears to have worn off when it came to Cape Breton, as well. In correspondence dated 22 August, McLeod writes:

There is a good degree of excitement among my own friends here, in favor of South Australia . . . I know, without hesitation, that it is a far more favorable country than this . . . I would not choose this place for the fixed residence of any of my sincere adherents; if the Lord, in his good providence, would open for them a likely door of escape . . .¹⁹

As Laurie Stanley-Blackwell puts it in *The Well-Watered Garden: The Presbyterian Church in Cape Breton, 1798-1860*: "McLeod weighed the merits and disadvantages of remaining in Cape Breton, 'this now desperate and dreary place' or emigrating to Australia, 'a kind of comparative Paradise.'"²⁰

At about this time, Cape Breton was in the throes of a famine not unlike the situation in Ireland that led to mass immigration to other parts of the world. It began in 1845 and continued for seven years. The blight turned vegetables black, including the staple of potatoes. Settlers arriving from Europe brought it with them.²¹ Norman McLeod's settlement was not spared its effects.

McLeod described the dire situation in this graphic way: "The general destitution has made it impossible, even for the most saving, to shut their ears & eyes from the alarming claims and craving of those around them, running continually from door to door, with the ghastly features of death staring in their very faces."²²

Added to this was the fact that dissension had infiltrated the ranks of this otherwise congenial congregation. Some had become disillusioned with McLeod's rather dictatorial rule. A man named Norman McDonald took drastic action by moving all the way to Upper Canada (now Ontario). Another nemesis was the influential merchant John Munro. Munro blamed McLeod for boycotting his business and accusing him of dishonesty and worldliness. In a letter to *The Times and Cape Breton Spectator*, Munro writes pointedly: "But these are

¹⁷ Murray, 71.

¹⁸ "Letters of Rev. Norman MacLeod," *Cape Breton's Magazine* 13 (1976): 26.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 25.

²⁰ Laurie Stanley-Blackwell, *The Well-Watered Garden: The Presbyterian Church in Cape Breton, 1798-1860* (Sydney, NS: Cape Breton University Press, 1983), 168.

²¹ Morgan, 121.

²² *Ibid.*, 123.

years of changes, and no doubt, will be remarkable in history for revolutions and the upsetting of old dynasties. The other Pope has got a start, and who knows but the chair here may soon begin to totter, also?"²³

In one of his 1835 letters, McLeod refers to those who left his domain with these acerbic observations: "Little do they conceive what mercies and privileges they exchange for wild Canada, where, according to a late calculation, there are ten Romanists to every Protestant, and the latter too frequently also of indifferent characters and various persuasions . . ." ²⁴

Journeying Down Under

Eventually like those he earlier criticized, McLeod prepared to leave the place he had called home for 30 years. Responding to the invitation from his son Donald to join him "down under," McLeod and his followers set to shipbuilding yet again. One can only marvel at the faith and fortitude it took to embark on this intimidating ocean-going enterprise. We need to remember that, at this time, the Reverend Norman was 70 years of age. The project must have taxed his physical resources; however, his determination made him equal to the task.

A poem by Helen C. MacDonald, titled "The Pioneers of St. Ann's," captures the spirit of McLeod and his followers particularly in this verse:

But oh! The sea was in their blood,
And when the tidings came,
The glories of Australia's land,
Adventure's spark to life was fanned,
And soon was all aflame.²⁵

On 28 October 1851, McLeod and some of his followers set sail on a ship named after one of his daughters, the *Margaret*. It has been said that he preached his farewell sermon on a "rocky promontory" in Englishtown, which is at the bottom of the driveway of the home where I grew up. We will probably never know for certain.

When the sermon was over, Norman McLeod stepped onto the *Margaret* and sailed out of the harbour into which he had sailed 31 years before. He would have taken a last and lingering look at the church he had built at Black Cove, at the home he had erected — his school and the houses that now dotted the countryside where three decades before there had been nothing but virgin forest. No doubt, it was a time of mixed emotions as he contemplated what was past and what lay ahead.

As for those not embarking, John Murray wrote, "Hundreds . . . with tears in their eyes and sorrow in their hearts, gathered on the shore to witness their departure, lamenting most of all that they themselves were under the necessity of remaining behind, for a time at least."²⁶

Eventually, five more vessels left St. Ann's to join their spiritual leader. Between 1851 and 1859, 883 persons migrated to New Zealand. Many of these emigrants were not necessarily sheep of Norman McLeod's flock. They were men and women from Baddeck to Boularderie. Much like the situation had been in Pictou, McLeod's influence and the prospect of a new beginning enticed many to sail around the world. There must have been a marked effect on ministers and congregations when so many left the ranks of local churches to join the journey.

Unfortunately, McLeod and his followers had traded the blight of Cape Breton for the drought of Australia. The land was unsuitable for farming. There was no milk and no honey.

²³ Stanley-Blackwell, *The Well-Watered Garden*, 166.

²⁴ "Letters," *Cape Breton's Magazine*, back cover.

²⁵ Thornhill, 14.

²⁶ Murray, 31.

They were disillusioned and disappointed, and their trouble did not stop there. Typhoid fever struck the settlers and many died. McLeod and his wife Mary lost three of their sons. Finally, he made arrangements with Sir George Grey, governor of New Zealand, to obtain a large grant of land in the North Island. There he could keep all his people together. Here, finally, was the land of promise. The soil was fertile, the climate was mild, and ready cash was available from the sale of Kauri gum.

A memorial says this:

Sacred to the Memory of the Rev. Norman MCLEOD and his beloved wife Mary MCLEOD who died 1857, both of whom were public servants of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. He preached the Gospel for 60 years. Born at Stoir Point, Assynt, Scotland, 29th September 1780; Died at Waipu, New Zealand, 14th March 1866, aged 86 years.²⁷

A Complex Character

Norman McLeod was a complicated man. John Murray has it right when he says, "He had all the freedom of an independent church minister, while at the same time he had all the authority of a Presbyterian Church minister."²⁸

The Presbytery of Cape Breton attempted to bring McLeod under its authority in a letter to him in 1840. In a vehement reply, McLeod writes, in part:

Your letter of the 24th . . . I received this morning, to which I beg to answer that it requires a piece of self-denial in me to take any notice of such a fulminating farce . . . I flatly deny having ever claimed the 'Status of a minister of the Church of Scotland,' and in all humility and sincerity, desire to bless heaven for having enlightened my mind to dread and abhor that status . . . I heartily regret that your unfortunate, offensive and confirmed insolence and pride, so conspicuous in your letter as a true specimen of your general disposition and conduct as ministers towards all who dare object to your measures, render it impossible for me to answer you in a more agreeable style.²⁹

The noted United Church historian John Webster Grant wrote with Norman McLeod in mind: "Some of the most colourful Presbyterians of pioneer days were mavericks who resisted any kind of official control."³⁰

The Reverend Robert Somerville who, many years ago, was clerk of the Presbytery of Auckland, penned the following description of Rev. Norman:

Mr. McLeod was a wonderful man. There was an aloofness about him that made him a wonder to many . . . the Waipu people looked upon him as almost divine. His influence upon them was marvelous. They were most obedient to his commands. He kept them in such restraints that the younger people were glad to breathe the air of liberty occasionally. He would have nothing to do with the presbytery of Auckland, and yet one of his dying requests to his people was to keep united, under Mr. Eneas Morrison, until the presbytery appointed a successor. He would not baptize the children, because no parent was good enough to receive baptism for his little ones. It was the same with the Lord's Supper. Yet, with all his peculiarities, he was a genuinely good man, doing good in his own way, and doing it successfully.³¹

²⁷ Ibid., 33.

²⁸ Ibid., 249.

²⁹ Ibid., 252-53.

³⁰ John Webster Grant, *Divided Heritage: The Presbyterian Contribution to the United Church of Canada* (Yorkton, SK: Laverdure and Associates, 2007), 129.

³¹ Murray, 33.

Somerville's portrait of McLeod reveals a most accurate acquaintance with this unique cleric. For example, McLeod was a legend in his own time. His legendary status was not posthumous. It very much existed while he was still living among his people. He was, indeed, "a wonder to many."

Just as he had "resisted any kind of official control" while in Cape Breton, he continued the same practice in New Zealand. He spurned any advances that might have been made by the presbytery in Auckland. I would contend that, in many ways, Norman McLeod was more a Congregationalist than a Presbyterian. He was a Presbyterian in theory, but Congregationalist in practice.

This assessment is accurate on several levels. Take, for instance, his style of church government. As far as we know he led congregations without the assistance of elders or an organized session — a necessary element of presbyterial government. There is no evidence that any elders were elected in either St. Ann's or Waipu.

Another characteristic of the Presbyterian Church is that it is a place where the sacraments — baptism and the Lord's Supper — are rightly administered. Norman McLeod administered neither during his entire ministry. None of his parishioners, including their offspring, were considered worthy to partake of the means of grace. McLeod was the judge and the jury in both Cape Breton and New Zealand. In withholding the sacraments from his people, he considered his commands more binding than what Christ commanded when he said, "This do in remembrance of me."

Somerville sums up the essence, I think, of Norman McLeod with four words I referenced earlier: "in his own way." McLeod did things his way. He was a restless and independent spirit who was a law unto himself and who brooked no quarter with anyone and anything. With few exceptions, he held sway over men and women, young and old, who were willing to follow him to the ends of the earth.

A man of some contradictions, McLeod did have a somewhat softer side, evident on rare occasions. On departing from St. Ann's, though estranged from formal church authority, he deeded his church building to the Free Church of Nova Scotia. As Somerville notes, before McLeod died in 1866, he was open to the Presbytery of Auckland appointing his successor in death even though he would have nothing to do with it in life.

Flora McPherson, in her book titled *Watchman against the World*, contends that Norman McLeod was a ready advocate for what today we would call the "little guy." He was always prepared to stand up against any form of abuse, churchly or otherwise. McPherson writes, "Part of his success may have been that in him the weak and unlettered men saw, as well as their spiritual leader, their defence against the strong men of the community . . . As he assailed the strong and successful, he was the spokesman of the lesser men."³²

The Reverend Dr. Ian MacLeod, in his 1970 book *A History of the Church in St. Ann's*, says this: "There lived in the vicinity of Englishtown, a Mrs. Dorothy Wilhausen, a lady of German-Swiss descent, who was not familiar with the language of the Scots which was used in the home and in the Church. When Mrs. Wilhausen appeared in Mr. McLeod's Church, as she did on occasion, he would preach an additional sermon for her benefit. The language used in the second sermon would be English which she could understand."³³

In a letter written just months before he left Nova Scotia in 1851, McLeod allows that he was not without imperfections. He says, in part, "If I will be spared to cross the great seas, I shall think it my privilege & pleasure to write you a sketch of the scenes & circumstances of the country of our destination, in secular and religious concerns . . . I wish to pray Heaven that the long continuation of your attachment to me, thro good report amidst all my failings &

³² McPherson, 99.

³³ MacLeod, 11.

short comings, would be blessed to your own souls; and that any deficiencies in my own doctrine, or example, might not prove a stumbling block to any of you.”³⁴

Neil Robinson (no relation), a descendant of those who migrated to New Zealand, makes reference to the fact that Norman McLeod cannot be easily categorized. He writes, “. . . those close to him could tell stories that seemed to contradict much of what they saw — his willingness to live on human terms with leaders in, for example, the Catholic church, as long as they earned his approval; his gentle affection for little children, recalled often by grizzled old men remembering their youthful contacts with the minister.”³⁵

The strong feelings elicited by Norman McLeod in his life continued in his death. When McLeod’s casket was being carried to the cemetery, a man who had been antagonistic to the cleric volunteered to relieve one of the pallbearers. The bearer turned on the volunteer and exclaimed, “Do you think I would let *you* touch his coffin?” “All right,” shrugged the other man, “you can take him to hell yourself.”³⁶

Robinson goes on to observe that “Norman McLeod was a fascinating, highly complex character . . . harsh and kindly, dogmatic, but listening to reason when he was inclined.”³⁷

In 1994, a plaque was erected in McLeod’s birthplace of Stoer Point. It says, in part: “To the memory of the Rev. Norman McLeod . . . Leader, Minister and Teacher. He led his people over 14,000 miles of ocean to Nova Scotia, Australia and New Zealand . . . They followed him to the ends of the earth.”³⁸

In closing I can do no better than quote this assessment of the Reverend Norman McLeod by George Patterson:

The character of Mr. McLeod is so complex that we do not attempt to delineate it. That he was a man of great piety and thorough earnestness no one can doubt. That he did a great deal of good is equally undeniable. His plans to make people better were faultless, but the methods he took to carry them out were bad. He tried to force men to be religious and moral; and there he made his great mistake. He was, too, of that morbid Christianity which looks on the dark side of the shield in everything. Perhaps the last words he uttered before his soul took its flight will best illustrate this phase of his character. “Children, children, look to yourselves, the world is mad.”³⁹

³⁴ “Letters,” *Cape Breton’s Magazine*, 26.

³⁵ Neil Robinson, *To the Ends of the Earth* (Auckland, NZ: HarperCollins, 1997), 18–19.

³⁶ McPherson, 178.

³⁷ Robinson, 19.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 225.

³⁹ George G. Patterson, *Patterson’s History of Victoria County* (Sydney, NS: College of Cape Breton Press, 1978), 102.