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## Alexander McLeod (1774–1833)

### Pioneer Reformed Presbyterian in the New World<sup>1</sup>

GORDON J. KEDDIE

Unless faithfully preserved and periodically rekindled, the memory of great men and their accomplishments soon passes from the consciousness of people. Even among those well acquainted with the contours of American Presbyterian history, the name of Alexander McLeod will likely ring no bells. Yet, in the first part of the nineteenth century, he was one of this country's most widely respected and read preachers of biblical orthodoxy. His *Ecclesiastical Catechism* – today, one of his least known works – was published at the height of a period of intense debate over church government, and catapulted the young preacher to prominence, not only in New York where he was a Reformed Presbyterian pastor, but across the English-speaking world. No fewer than twelve editions of that work came from the press on both sides of the Atlantic. Other publications – on such diverse subjects as African slavery, the War of 1812, the prophecies of Revelation, and personal godliness – passed through multiple editions and survived him in print by a generation. This was followed by a century and a half of silence. The rediscovery of Alexander McLeod is arguably long overdue.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This is a biographical introduction to a collection of writings of Alexander McLeod recently published by Crown & Covenant Publications, 7408 Penn Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15208, under the title *Redemption, Reconciliation and Reformation* (edited by Gordon J. Keddie), available at [crownandcovenant.com](http://crownandcovenant.com). It is a cloth-bound volume of 405 pages. The material is used with permission.

<sup>2</sup> A full memoir of McLeod does exist: Samuel B. Wylie, *Memoir of Alexander McLeod, D.D.* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1855). This was edited for publication by McLeod's son, Rev. John Niel McLeod, after Wylie died in 1852. This work was appointed by the 'New Light' Reformed Presbyterian Synod in 1833 and has the appearance more of a book cobbled together – after over twenty years of a wait – by family and friends, than a well-researched biography of the man and his life. There is plenty scope for a modern biographical assessment of McLeod's life and significance.

Alexander McLeod was born on 12<sup>th</sup> June 1774 at Ardcrishnish on the island of Mull, off the west coast of Scotland. His father, the Rev. Neil McLeod, who died when Alexander was five, was the parish minister. Samuel Johnson had visited the manse on 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> October 1773, and declared Mr. McLeod to be ‘the clearest-headed man in the Highlands’. His ability evidently descended to the son. McLeod was what the Scots called ‘a lad o’ pairts’. After receiving a classical education in Bracadale on the Isle of Skye, and having lost his mother at twelve, Alexander emigrated in 1792, age eighteen, and settled among the Gaelic-speaking Scots of the Mohawk Valley in upstate New York, where he became a teacher of Greek. It was there that he came in contact with the Reformed Presbyterian Church in the person of the Rev. James McKinney (1759–1802), an Ulsterman preaching to the scattered societies of Covenanters from Scotland and Ireland. McKinney proclaimed a full-orbed doctrine of the kingship of Christ over men and nations. He pointed out the secular nature of the recently ratified U.S. Constitution (1787–90), and insisted that civil government was a divine institution called to serve God according to his Word, the Bible, which teaching was to be appropriately applied to the state’s sphere of responsibility, while fully recognizing the proper relationship between church and state as distinct institutions of God.<sup>3</sup>

The Reformed Presbyterian Church – the church of the Covenanters of Scotland and Ireland – was organized as an American denomination on 21<sup>st</sup> February 1798 in Philadelphia. McLeod was licensed by the new Presbytery to preach the gospel, together with Samuel B. Wylie and John Black. In 1801, he was ordained to serve as pastor in Coldenham, NY, with responsibility for New York City, but in 1803 he became the minister of the New York congregation exclusively. There he exercised a fruitful and expanding ministry for some thirty years. It is a testimony to his standing in the Reformed community that he received at various times invitations to pastor the Reformed Dutch Church in Garden Street, to succeed his friend Dr Samuel Miller (1769–1850) at First Presbyterian

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<sup>3</sup> James McKinney, *A View of the Rights of God and Man in Some Sermons* (Philadelphia, 1797), 64 pp. McKinney was the founding minister of the indigenous American Reformed Presbyterian Church when it was organized in Philadelphia in 1798. He intended to publish a sequel to the *Rights of God*, but although this was said to be written and ready for publication at the time of McKinney’s sudden death, age 45, while on a preaching trip, it was somehow lost and never appeared in print (see W. M. Glasgow, *History of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in America* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2007 (1888), p. 604).

Church, Wall Street, and to serve as a Professor and Vice-President at Princeton, with a view to succeeding to the Presidency of that great institution. He nevertheless remained a Reformed Presbyterian and pastor of the New York RP congregation until his death at the age of fifty-eight at the hour of worship on Sabbath, 17<sup>th</sup> February 1833.

He knew affliction all his life. At five, he lost his father; at twelve he was an orphan. Only four of his eleven children survived him. His congregation was visited in the cholera epidemics that periodically scourged New York in those days. He was a sick man for the last decade of his life. These trials blessed him, however, and his many writings bear testimony to a fragrant evangelical humility. Gardiner Spring (1785–1873), minister of the Brick Presbyterian Church, said of McLeod that he had ‘the most philosophical and discriminating mind’ in the ministerial association that included Samuel Miller and Spring himself, and described his preaching as characterized by ‘rich thought and great earnestness’.

His writings bear this out. Like other expatriate Scots of recent times – one thinks of the twentieth-century John Murray of Westminster Theological Seminary – Alexander McLeod makes his points with a weighty and meditative simplicity that so obviously rests on deep experience of the truth of God’s Word as to leave us wondering why we never quite saw it that way before. This is abundantly clear in his celebrated tract, *Messiah, Governor of the Nations of the Earth*, first published in 1803 and still available some fifty years later. It was clearly designed as a definitive yet popular statement of the Bible’s teaching on the kingship of Christ over the nations. It also reveals in the author, the contours of a clear mind that is powerfully furnished with a lively grasp of biblical truth and a vigorous mastery of Reformed theology. His reasons for the *necessity* of Christ’s kingship demonstrate this so well. The effectiveness of carrying out the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20) – the conversion of lost people to Christ, the satisfaction of Jesus’ sufferings and the Lord’s protection of believers and the Church – all depends, he argues, upon the actual, effectual and sovereign kingship of the risen Christ. If he is not Lord of *all*, can he truly be *Lord* at all? He carefully teases out the objections often made against the doctrine of Christ’s lordship over the nations and, point by point, shows that the common notions of separation of Christ and the State – that is, as an autonomous, religiously neutral institution on the one hand, over against a non-involved spectator-Savior who is lord of the soul, but not of the universe – are utterly unscriptural.

He irrefutably shows that nations must bow to Christ and honor him, that the Church must call men and nations to obedience to Christ as King. Undoubtedly, the most controversial application of this truth at the time, was his 1802 tract *Negro Slavery Unjustifiable*, which went through eleven editions in the years up to the Civil War. This vividly confirmed the abolitionism of the RP Church in America, which had earlier acted to forbid her members from being slave-holders, and already had an anti-slavery pedigree going back to the colonial RP Church.<sup>4</sup> He notes most pointedly that it is ‘despicable faint-heartedness’ in Christians when they are unmoved by the spectacle of ‘the crown of the nations being taken from the Mediator’s head’, apparently unconcerned about labouring to rectify the situation.

McLeod, in common with the Reformed divines of his time, was what we now generally call a post-millennialist, although he never used the term. He was looking for the extension of God’s kingdom upon earth before the coming of the Lord. He had no illusions about the difficulties of the task, but was imbued by a desire to change the world by the preaching of the Gospel. The legacy of Alexander McLeod is the call to preach the whole counsel of God to a world in need of the good news of the Gospel and to live as the people of the King – Jesus, the only Redeemer of God’s elect. As the writer to the Hebrews says of righteous Abel, so we may say of the writer of the various pieces in this volume, that he by faith ‘being dead yet speaketh’ (Hebrews 11:4).

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<sup>4</sup> The RP Church of Scotland – of which the colonial RP churches were part (up to 1782, when all the ministers and most of the congregations joined the Associate Presbyterians to form the Associate Reformed Church) – had taken an anti-slavery position as early as 1761. McLeod argues persuasively that slavery is a species of man-stealing for which the penalty of God’s Law is death (Exodus 21:16), whereas the defenders of slavery likened it to the economic bondage of the Hebrews, which the slave-trade certainly was not by any stretch of the imagination, either in its origin in the seventeenth century or its actual practice afterward. Incidentally, Joseph Moore, in his book *Founding Sins*, wrongly attributes the immediate occasion of this action to the people of the New York City congregation, when in fact it emanated from the Coldenham congregation of the joint charge with New York, to which McLeod had been called, and was installed as pastor on 6<sup>th</sup> July 1801 (W. M. Glasgow, p. 609).

## A PERSONAL COVENANT<sup>5</sup>

### Act, Declaration, and Testimony of Alexander Mcleod

I Alexander McLeod, of the city of New York, minister of the Gospel, and Doctor of Divinity, do make and ordain this DECLARATION and TESTIMONY, as the last expression of my WILL, in relation to religion, this nineteenth day of the month of March, in the year of our Lord, one thousand and eight hundred and thirty-two; and in the *first* place,

Being, by mercy of God, preserved in the exercise of sound recollection and judgment, though with indication of speedy dissolution of my mortal constitution, I perform this ACT, *viz*: I commend my soul to God who gave it, now, or when called for by him, to leave this body, that I may be accepted in Jesus Christ, on the footing of the Covenant of Grace, which is all my salvation and all my desire; and so read and appropriate, Psalm 119:57-60.<sup>6</sup> After this voluntary surrender of my spirit, and in connection with my personal Covenant with God, in relation to it, I also commit my body to him, as redeemed dust, in hope of a resurrection from the dead to die no more. Accordingly, I bid farewell to this world and all the good things it contains – to my beloved spouse, the wife of my youth – to each of my remaining offspring; and I resign them all to God *their* Father and *my* friend. I bid farewell to the church militant and its delightful ordinances, and all its sanctified, though imperfect members and even to my long and

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<sup>5</sup> Rev. John N. McLeod (1806–74), son and successor of his father as pastor of First Presbyterian Church, New York (from 14<sup>th</sup> January 1833 until his death on 27<sup>th</sup> April 1874), records that this personal covenant was found among the papers of Dr McLeod after his decease. It was subsequently published in *The American Christian Expositor*, Vol. 2, pp. 438-439, under its original title, *Act, Declaration and Testimony of Alexander McLeod*. It was later re-published in Wylie, *Memoir of Alexander McLeod, D.D.*, on pp. 498-500. It should be noted that, when he wrote this personal covenant on 19<sup>th</sup> March 1832, Alexander McLeod was ill enough to be some six months from preaching his last sermon – on the text ‘To die is gain’ from Phil. 1:21 – and barely eleven months away from his death on 17<sup>th</sup> February 1833). See John N. McLeod’s account in his ‘Introductory Essay’, on p. xix of the fifth edition of his father’s book, *The Life and Power of True Godliness* (New York: Robert Carter, 1847).

<sup>6</sup> See Psalm 119:57-60 – “Thou art my portion, O LORD: I have said that I would keep thy words. I intreated thy favour with my whole heart: be merciful unto me according to thy word. I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies. I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments.”

best companion, the BIBLE, leaving all without a grudge, in order to be in heaven with the Lord, which is *far better*.<sup>7</sup>

In the *second* place, in the sight of the heart-searching God; my unwavering conviction of the truth of the doctrine, which I preached and published from the press during my ministry. I strove earnestly and prayerfully to utter nothing that I did not know to be from God, and to publish nothing but what appeared to my understanding and my conscience to be useful both for the illustration and defense of the truth: and also for the good of the brethren in the church and in the world.

I never quoted or selected from any human composition, or for any purpose, without previous examination of its truth; and never, from the works of any man, either living or dead, except for the sake of promoting sound doctrine; and, by reference, to bestow due honor upon respectable names to whom honor is due; or with design to refute doctrinal sentiments. Seeing everything I wrote in the course of my ministry is entirely my own, and not composed hastily, I give it now, again, and as a part of my declared religious belief, and affirm that all my avowed principles remain firm and unaltered, according to the form of the *Covenant* which I recently drew up; and which is now in overture before the three Synods, *viz.*, of Scotland, Ireland, and the United States.

In the *third* place I give my *Testimony*, to the truth and propriety of ‘Reformation Principles Exhibited’, in defense of Christianity, and in opposition to error – to the terms of ‘Ecclesiastical Communion’, in the Reformed Presbyterian Church, and the ‘Ecclesiastical Catechism’, under my own pen. I continue in my unabated attachment to the cause of the Covenanted followers of the British Reformers, without ill-will to any organized church, or any individual on earth. Lamenting the evil causes which continue the heresies, the schisms, the prejudices, the selfish policy, the party passions and zeal which distract, I have never advised, occasioned, or given countenance to the divisions of the commonwealth of Christ; while endeavoring for myself, in this divided state, in which I found the church of God, to select, and faithfully to adhere – without consulting any temporal interests – to the communion which appeared most pure, and correspondent with the Scriptures.

Finally, I call to witness for the sincerity of these my professions, the rocks, the caverns, and hovels of Caledonia; the woodlands, and barns and hills of Curriesbush, and Duanesburg – the class-rooms and lodging-houses of Schenectady, the scene of my collegiate studies, and all the delightful

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<sup>7</sup> See Philippians 1:23 – “For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better.”

closets of my youthful prayers, meditations, and fastings. I call upon the sun, and the moon, and the stars that adorn the heavens, to bear witness to my repeated vows to God; and now, Oh, Father! I appeal to thee, to accept of me in thy Son Jesus Christ, while I disclaim all confidence in any good works, or affections, or experience of my own, and rely exclusively upon the Lord, my righteousness and strength, who is able to save to the uttermost, all who come unto thee by Him.<sup>8</sup> I, a poor miserable sinner, by nature a child of wrath, shapen in iniquity, conceived in sin, and deserving Hell, do now trust in Him for salvation, because of thy gift, offer, invitation, commandment, and assured promise; and with this confident persuasion,

I set down my name,  
ALEXANDER McLEOD

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## AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

of  
ALEXANDER McLEOD, D.D.

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- 1806 *The Ecclesiastical Catechism* (New York: Hopkins & Seymour, 1806), 129pp. [A Scottish edition (Paisley: Alex. Gardner, 1868) contains an Introduction by William Binnie.]
- 1806 *Reformation Principles Exhibited. Part II. Declaration and Testimony* (New York: Hopkins & Seymour, 1806), 140pp. [Adopted by the Reformed Presbytery as her Testimony in 1806, this volume was drafted by Alexander McLeod at the appointment of the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church.]
- 1807 *Reformation Principles Exhibited. [Part I.] Brief Historical View of the Church* (New York: Hopkins & Seymour, 1807), 120pp. [Adopted by the Reformed Presbytery as a supplement to the Declaration and Testimony in 1806, this volume was also drafted by Alexander McLeod at the appointment of the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church.]

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<sup>8</sup> See Hebrews 7:25, "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

- 1814 *Lectures upon the Principal Prophecies of the Revelation* (New York: Whiting & Watson, Eastburn, Kirk & Co., 1814), 480pp. [A Scottish edition (Glasgow: John Keith, 1844) contains an 'Introductory Essay' and 'Biographical Introduction' by Stewart Bates, D.D.]
- 1815 *A Scriptural View of the Character, Causes and Ends of the Present War* (New York: Eastburn, Kirk & Co., 1815), 224pp.
- 1816 *The Life and Power of True Godliness* (New York: James Eastburn and Co. and William Gilley, 1816), 425pp.

## II. PAMPHLETS

- 1802 *Negro Slavery Unjustifiable* (New York: T. & J. Swords, 1802), 43pp.
- 1803 *Messiah, Governor of the Nations of the Earth* (New York: T. & J. Swords, 1803), 47pp.
- 1808 *The Constitution, Character, and Duties of the Gospel Ministry* (New York: J. Seymour, 1808), 72pp.
- 1811 *An Address to the members of the Reformed Presbyterian Church: recommending exertions for Raising a Fund for the support of the Theological Seminary* (New York: S. Whiting and Co., 1811), 12pp.
- 1827 *An Address to the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in America on submitting to their consideration the Plan of Correspondence with the General Assembly* (New York: G. & C. Carvill, 1827), 44pp. [A Scottish edition was published by Stephen Young, Paisley, in 1828.]
- 1830 *Draught of a Covenant and League, to be recommended to the Synods of the Reformed Presbyterian Churches in Scotland, Ireland, and America* (Glasgow: Andrew Young, 1830), 12pp. [Prepared by Dr McLeod in a Committee with Rev. Archibald Mason, Mr. John Fairly, Prof. Andrew Symington, and Mr David Armstrong, in Glasgow at the Scottish R.P. Synod of 1830. See also *The American Christian Expositor*, Vol. 1 (1831), pp. 22-25].

## III. ARTICLES

Periodicals cited are abbreviated as follows:

**CM** – *The Christian's Magazine* (1808–1811)

**EGR** – *The Evangelical Guardian and Review* (1817–18)

**EW** – *The Evangelical Witness* (1822–26)

**ACE** – *The American Christian Expositor* (1831–33)



- 1810 *The Doctrine of the Atonement. Six Essays.* **CM**, Vol. 3, pp. 32-40; 89-100; 196-206; 372-379; 431-439; 675-688. [All but the sixth essay were republished in **ACE**, Vol. 2 (1832-33)].
- 1817 *The Divinity of the Saviour.* **EGR**, Vol. 1, pp. 156-162.
- 1818 *The Scriptures the Supreme Judge of Religious Controversy.* **EGR**, Vol. 2, pp. 156-158; 200-204.
- 1818 *Brief Statement of the Evidences and Uses of Divine Revelation,* **EGR**, Vol. 2, pp. 253-261; 289-296. [Reprinted in **ACE**, Vol. 2, pp. 201-209; 241-249 under the title, *The Authenticity and Use of Divine Revelation.*]
- 1819 *Man a Religious as well as a Rational Creature.* **EGR**, Vol. 2, pp. 409-415; 433-439.
- 1822 *Criticism on Romans VIII, 18-23.* **EW**, Vol. 1, pp. 28-37; 49-59; 97-105.
- 1822 *Remarks on the Providence of God.* **EW**, Vol. 1, pp. 181-188.
- 1831 *Christ a Surety for Sinners.* **ACE**, Vol. 1, pp. 161-166.
- 1831 *Criticism – Matthew 17:24-27.* **ACE**, Vol. 1, pp. 177-182.
- 1831 *The Safety of the Church.* **ACE**, Vol. 1, pp. 241-245; 281-288.
- 1831-32 *Exposition, Rom. ix, 22, 23.* **ACE**, Vol. 1, pp. 454-458; **ACE**, Vol. 2, pp. 13-18; 41-44.
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- 1817 1. *A Brief View of facts which gave rise to the New-York Evangelical Missionary Society of Young Men, together with the Constitution.* Published by direction of the Society (New York: Day & Turner, 1817), 8vo., 20pp.
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- 1817 *An Address delivered before the Auxiliary New-York Bible and Common Prayer Book Society, in St. Paul's Chapel, in the City of New-York, on Tuesday, the 28th day of January, A.D. 1817, by Thomas Y. How, D.D., Assistant Rector of Trinity Church, New-York. EGR, Vol. 1, pp. 13-119; 169-177; 267-280.*
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- 1817 *Letters concerning the Plan of Salvation, as deduced from the Scriptures; addressed to the Members of the Presbyterian Church, Springstreet, New-York, by Matthew La Rue Perrine, A.M., Pastor of the said Church (New-York: Dodge & Sayre, 1816), 12mo., 236pp. EGR, Vol. 1, pp. 350-364.*
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- 1822 *The Pestilence, a Punishment for Public Sins: A Sermon preached in the Middle Dutch Church, November 17, 1822, after the cessation of the Yellow Fever, which prevailed in New-York, in 1822. By Paschal N. Strong, A.M., one of the collegiate ministers of the Reformed Dutch Church in New-York. Published by request (New-York: H. Sage, 228 Broadway, 1822), 26pp. EW, Vol. 1, pp. 272-274.*
- 1823 1. *A Dissertation on the Eternal Sonship of Christ, by James Kidd, D.D., Professor of Oriental Languages in Marischal College and the University of Aberdeen &c., 357pp.*  
 2. *Letters, on the Eternal Generation of the Son of God, addressed to the Rev. Samuel Miller, D.D., by Moses Stuart, Associate Professor of Sacred Literature in the Theological Seminary, Andover, 166pp. EW, Vol. 1, pp. 264-271; 314-327; 363-372. [Mentioned in a letter to J. Renwick Willson, 12<sup>th</sup> November 1822].*

## V. LETTERS

- 1823 *A Letter to the Editor. Being a Review of the Parties, which arose on the moral and religious consideration of the Yellow Fever, in New-York, in the Summer of 1822.* **EW**, Vol. 1, pp. 398-405; 461-472.
- 1831 *A Letter to the Coldenham Congregation.* **ACE**, Vol. 1, pp. 318-320; 321 [this letter is clearly by Alexander McLeod, but is under the signature 'J.M' – presumably John Niel McLeod, acting as editor for his father, who was ill at the time]; p. 404 (corrections by the author).
- 1831–2 *A Voyage over the Atlantic* [Letters I-IV]. **ACE**, Vol. 1, pp. 16-21; 49-55; 425-432; 458-463.
- 1833 *Act, Declaration and Testimony of Alexander McLeod* [found and published after his death]. **ACE**, Vol. 2, pp. 438-439.

## VI. EDITORIAL

- 1810 *An Introduction and Notes* (with John B. Romeyn, D.D.), pp. 4-21, in the American edition of Thomas Bradbury, *The Duty and Doctrine of Baptism* (New-York: William Barlas, 1810), 312pp. [Originally published in England in 1749].
- 1813 *The Larger Catechism ... with the Proofs from the Scripture, revised by Alexander McLeod, D.D.* (New-York: J. Watts & Co., 1813), 142 pp. [The first book ever stereotyped in America].
- 1813 Certain notes in *The Works of Thomas Reid ... with Notes by the American Editors, Vol. 4* (Charlestown: Samuel Etheridge, Jun'r., 1813).

## VII. OTHER SOURCES

'The Letters of Alexander McLeod to James Renwick Willson (1809–1833)' are held in **The Willson Papers** at the Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary, 7408 Penn Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15208 / (412) 731-8690. These, and other manuscript material, have been catalogued by Elizabeth F. Carson (Mrs Galen Wilson), who has also authored a biography of Willson, also in the RPTS holdings – 'An Inordinate Sense of History, James Renwick Willson, 1780–1853' (unpublished MA thesis, The College of William and Mary, 1987).

Annual notebooks and other materials belonging to Alexander McLeod are held in **The McLeod Family Papers** in the Special Collections

Department of the University of Delaware Library, Newark, Delaware 19717-5267 / (302) 831-2229. These include some twenty-nine notebooks belonging to Rev. Alexander McLeod and his son and successor at First RP Church, New York, Rev. John N. McLeod. **Series I** of the collection comprises many ‘notebooks containing personal thoughts, sermon notes, lectures and discourses written and presented during the career of Rev. Alexander McLeod.’ These include leather-bound annual volumes dating from 1809 to 1832. One – the notebook for 1822 – is in the private possession of a Reformed Presbyterian family in Philadelphia. A complete photocopy of this volume is held in the Library of the Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Pittsburgh, PA. [A sample, the entry for 17<sup>th</sup> February 1822, is included below].

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## A SABBATH DAY’S MINISTRY<sup>9</sup>

17<sup>th</sup> FEBY. 1822

### Morning Psalm 95:6-11

‘Hardening the heart’ is a common expression. We meet with such phrases in the common intercourse of society; & the Scriptures make frequent use of it. It is an evil. Consider the guilt & danger of obduracy against the word of God.

Psalm 95:6-11

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### Lecture Rom. 7:7-12.

In these verses the Apostle speaks in the first person. Two questions arise on this form of speech; & each of these is subdivided. Did Paul speak of himself figuratively or really. If figuratively, did he refer Jews, Gentiles, or

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<sup>9</sup> Alexander McLeod was committed to extemporaneous preaching, by which he meant preaching without notes, or even a skeleton outline. He explains this in his published discourse, *The Constitution, Character, and Duties of the Gospel Ministry* (New York, 1808) [see the second extract, below]. The present extract gives a sample of what he would typically take into the pulpit for the day’s services. The second service was traditionally the ‘Lecture’, for which he would employ a brief written outline – on this occasion from Romans 7:7-12. On this day, he also spoke at the New York State Prison in the afternoon, for which he had prepared an outline of his message to the prisoners from Luke 15:10. In the evening, he spoke on Romans 7:9 for which he had an outline. The material has been transcribed from Vol. 10 of his unpublished Sermon notebooks (1822), pp. 36-40.

men generally before Moses & the Law? If really, did he speak of himself as unregenerate or as a saint.

Solution. Paul spoke of himself as he was before and at his conversion. Yet he is a figure of others. Explain – state principles – exhort.

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**Afternoon.** State-prison. Luke 15:10.

**Evening at home.** Rom. 7:9.

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### **Joy for the Salvation of Souls.**

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New York State-prison.

17<sup>th</sup> February 1822.

Luke 15:10. *There is joy in the presence of the Angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.*

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There is a union of grace & of greatness in that Gospel, which we are permitted to bring with us even to the prison cell. In its message holy angels & fallen men rejoice. The Creator has mercy on the creature, & redeems the Sinner: and the inhabitants of heaven are awake to the restoration of our race, singing Hosannas, over every individual of the repentant population of the earth.

There is a perfect harmony between the laws of sympathetic nature in heaven, & the fine exhibitions of it on the face of our world. It is the design of the several parables recorded in this chapter to illustrate this fact. The lost Sheep – the piece of Silver – the prodigal Son, all exhibit the power of uncertainty in giving an active and ever varying interest to our anxieties. This world in the universal family & Gospel hearers to a minister, are – like the sick son of Bathsheba to David – peculiarly interesting while its case is involved in uncertainty. When the issue is favorable to our hopes there is joy. Text.

In order to give method to my remarks on this assertion I make this...

#### **Arrangement.**

##### **I. Describe a persistent sinner.**

He is a converted man whose mind is changed: and so,

1. Grieves for his Sin.

2. Hates Sin.
3. Renounces Sin, and,
4. Apprehending mercy, resolves holiness.

## II. There is joy in heaven for him.

There is joy with ministers; people; Angels &c.

All intelligent creatures in the success of what is dear to them: Holy beings in the Salvation of Souls, because of their, 1. Natural dignity; 2. Immortality; 3. The Price paid for them; 4. God's glory advanced by them.

The ground of such joy being thus exhibited, I proceed to ...

## III. Application.

1. I urge repentance toward God upon Convicts. It is more to be desired than liberty from prison, useful if you gain liberty; useful here & in death.
2. I urge the joy of angels. They sympathize. If they do not weep, Jesus wept.

**Conclusions.** It is not often I come to you – twelve months ago, I told you, 'Ye must be born again.'

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## The Death of the Sinner at his conversion to a life of holiness.

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*Rom. 7:9. For I was alive without the Law once;  
but when the Commandment came, sin revived & I died.*

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I may address my hearers after reading this sentence, in the words of the man of Ethiopia, '*of whom speaketh the Prophet this? Of himself, or of some other man?*' Acts 8.

It is an inquiry often made, and upon which the critics are divided. It is one, nevertheless, of easy solution; and the reply is essentially connected with the doctrine of true godliness.

I proceed, therefore, to enquire ...

1. What did the Apostle mean by saying he was once alive without the law. And ...
2. What did he mean by saying, he died & sin revived when the Law came.



EXTRACT FROM – *The Constitution, Character, and Duties of the Gospel Ministry* (New York, 1808)

**1. The Pastor according to God's heart, preaches the gospel of Christ to his congregation.**

This is the food which he diligently provides for immortal souls. This gospel is the power of God unto salvation. Christ crucified is the substance of it. And this subject is far from being contracted. No, my brethren, it embraces whatsoever is useful for the perfection of the man of God. Preaching the gospel is an official exhibition of the system of grace in all its parts, accompanied with a direct offer of all its blessings to all sinners, and with fervent admonitions to receive and improve the offer, and the gift. God is exhibited to view in all his attributes. Man is described, as a creature, dependent upon God, rational and accountable, bound to know, love, and serve God perfectly, and labouring under the guilt and the pollution of sin, original and actual. The Redeemer is revealed in his person and offices, as he really is, God manifested in the flesh, our prophet, our priest, and our governor, the only mediator between God and man, and our only Saviour. Salvation, through him, is *offered*, to everyone, without terms, and without conditions. And the pre-requisites to the *enjoyment* of happiness in heaven, are explained, and required of all: Faith in Jesus Christ, repentance unto life, love to God, and holiness in heart, speech, and behaviour. Union with Christ by faith is manifested as the only ground of pardon and acceptance, the only source of grace and holiness, the only foundation of morality, and the only fountain of perfection, and felicity, and glory. The spirit of God is exhibited in his divinity, and excellency, and efficacy – the author of all motion, all beauty, and all glory. He is revealed as the Sanctifier and the Comforter. The doctrine of conversion is explained, and the necessity of conversion is urged upon every conscience. The Holy Scriptures are explained, and the truths of inspiration are illustrated and applied. The history, the prophecy, the precept, the doctrine, the promises, and the ordinances, yea, all the parts of the counsel of God, are displayed without fear and without partiality, by the faithful pastor. The order of God's providence is marked and proclaimed. The events which fulfil predictions, and the duties which, from the signs of the times, devolve upon Christians, are duly exhibited. The perversions of science (falsely so called, 1 Tim. 6:20), and the misrepresentations of Scripture, dangerous to the sentiments and morals of men, are detected and refuted. The order of the church of Christ is vindicated; and the history, of God's judgments



upon the nations, is unfolded. Men are taught to introduce the principles of Christianity into full operation, in all the various relations of life, and Jesus, the Saviour, is proclaimed as *Head over all things*, the governor, and the judge of the universe (Eph. 1:22; 4:15).

Such a subject, my brethren, as this gospel which we preach, so interesting, so various, so copious, and so magnificent, most assuredly requires the devotion to its service of talents and erudition. In order to qualify a man to preach this gospel, it is necessary that he have good sense, extensive information, and much experience, he must be a man of reading, of study, of piety, and of prayer, in order to become a workman who needeth not to be ashamed. Such a subject as this also requires that it be discussed plainly, solemnly, and fervently. Nor is it altogether unimportant to the edification of the church, whether the gospel be preached by the pastor to his congregation, by reading in their hearing, or by what is generally termed extempore speaking.

### *Extempore preaching*

To this question I have paid some attention. And, from the observations which I have been enabled to make, I conclude, that it is more agreeable to the mind of God, in the institution of the gospel ministry, that the pastor should *speak* to his hearers, from the fulness of his understanding and his heart, upon a subject which he has thoroughly studied and digested, than that he should confine himself, entirely to the *recitation* of words which he has committed to memory, or to the *reading* of a manuscript which he holds before him. The voice of *nature*, the voice of *scripture*, and the voice of *experience*, are certainly, in favor of extempore sermonising.

1. This is the order of nature. Speech is the natural mode of communicating our thoughts to others. Writing is an artificial substitute for speech; and by its means we converse with those to whom the voice cannot reach. But when we address those who are present, it is more natural that we *speak* what we know, than that we either *repeat* what we have committed to memory, or *read* what we have written.

2. All scriptural example is upon the side of extempore preaching. Thus, the ministers of the synagogues taught and exhorted. Thus, all the apostles and evangelists practised. Thus did also our blessed Saviour. Having read his text, he '*closed the book*', and gave the meaning. '*And he began to say unto them, &c*'. Luke 4:20-21. And,

3. Experience also recommends this example to our imitation. The most successful ministers, in the best days of the church, thus preached the

gospel. The early reformers, in this as well as in other particulars, imitated the example of the primitive pastors; and the most eminently successful ministers in every age, did likewise. If at any time, signal awakenings have commenced under the ministry of one who habitually *read* sermons, it was found necessary to employ *preaching* extemporaneously, in cultivating the field and in gathering the harvest.

There are also many strong objections against the opposite method. It restrains the inventive faculty of the preacher; it diminishes his dependence upon God's Spirit, while actually engaged in his ministry; and it prevents those intellectual exertions, which, excited by the occasion, give birth to the most natural and forcible remarks. It is also calculated to impede the discharge of other duties. The Pastor of a congregation, who, during an ordinary life, serves one church, must neglect parochial duties, if he is under the necessity of writing two sermons every week. This labour must likewise prevent study. In short, the habit of *reading* or *recitation* has gone far toward banishing discipline, and toward filling the church with a superficial ministry. It has had another injurious effect. For as action and reaction are equal and contrary in the moral, as well as in the physical world, it has driven the great body of the people away from the churches of the regularly educated ministry, to follow declaimers, who have nothing to recommend them but their natural and extemporaneous eloquence. Nor is this all. Those who cannot preach except by reading, have sometimes been placed in a very disagreeable predicament. If they are called upon, in providence, to preach, and have not a sermon in their pocket suitable to the occasion, they become justly liable to the terrible charge, Isa. 56:10. '*Dumb dogs; they cannot bark.*' Indeed, if the practice of *reading* were universally adopted in the public worship of the Lord's Day, it would go far toward the total overthrow of the ordinance of the Christian ministry. As any one may write, so any one may read, and then there is no necessity for an ordained ministry to preach the gospel.

The apologies offered for this innovation have always appeared to me unsatisfactory. 'There are some ministers who cannot correctly explain religion, unless they confine themselves to discourses previously written.' I trust, my brethren, this apology will never be made for *your* pastor. I believe the principle of it is incorrect; and I venture to say, that every man who can write well, and can read well, would have spoken well, had he cultivated attentively the talent of speech. What! Shall there be found men of talents for every other department that requires eloquence, except for the ministry of Christ's gospel? In the Senate, and at the bar, men of information

and of taste have listened with interest to extempore eloquence. But it has been said, 'There are some congregations which feel so little interest in the great doctrines of religion, as to have no relish for discussions which are not recommended by correctness of composition': a compliment which I hope shall never be paid by its pastor to this congregation. I shall now dismiss this subject, after I shall have observed, that men of superior talents and acquisitions will certainly command respect, whatever be the mode in which they address their hearers; but these valuable endowments might be employed much more successfully in the service of the church, by cultivating an extempore elocution, than by reading sermons. Let the *Ambassador for Christ*, be thoroughly acquainted with his Bible; let him enrich his mind with various knowledge; let him correct his thoughts by frequent composition; let him accurately digest the subject about which he is to speak, and let him enter the pulpit and address his congregation in total dependence upon his God; let him pour out his heart, not *with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit and of power*, and his gain in spiritual effect will far counterbalance his loss in elegance of expression.