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“The Sweetness of the Lips Increaseth Learning”:  
Rhetoric & Religion in the Scottish Formation of English Studies

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“The Sweetness of the Lips Increaseth Learning”:  
Rhetoric & Religion in the Scottish Formation of English Studies

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Two of the most important English-language texts of the eighteenth century were George Campbell’s *Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1776) and Hugh Blair’s *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (1783). Campbell was principal of Marischal College and a founding member of the Aberdeen Philosophical Society; he was also an ordained Presbyterian minister and taught future ministers, wrote an important defense of Christianity, and considered his translation of the Gospels to be his most important work. Blair was the first Regius Professor of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres at the University of Edinburgh; he also taught future ministers, was pastor of the prestigious St. Giles High Church in Edinburgh, and first established his literary reputation with publication of his sermons. Much scholarship on their rhetorical theories has focused on the influence of contemporary philosophical ideas, political circumstances, and the “Scottish Enlightenment.” The influence of religion, however, has attracted surprisingly little attention.

This dissertation contributes to the understanding and assessment of Scottish Enlightenment rhetorical theory by demonstrating important connections and interactions between eighteenth-century Scottish Christianity and the “enlightened” rhetorical theories of Campbell and Blair. First, it shows that religion is philosophically relevant to Campbell’s rhetorical theory. Campbell re-defined rhetoric to include all kinds of

communication and emphasized the psychological; as this examination argues, he also made pulpit oratory the paradigmatic instance of rhetoric, and incorporated certain Humean ideas not *despite* his religion, but *because* his Calvinist view of preaching and faith is in certain key respects amenable to Hume's theory of knowledge. Second, it shows that the *Philosophy* provides a philosophical foundation for the Moderate Presbyterian views that theology is an evolving field of knowledge, and that the primary purpose of religion is to encourage morality. And third, this dissertation shows how religion shapes the moral and social purposes of Blair's *Lectures*. The *Lectures* were meant to cultivate and refine aesthetic taste and served as a guide to British cultural and linguistic norms, but they must also be read in light of Blair's underlying assumption that his readers ought to above all seek to love and serve God and neighbor.

This dissertation by Megan A. Caughron fulfills the dissertation requirement for the doctoral degree in English Language and Literature approved by Stephen McKenna, Ph.D., as Director, and by Christopher Wheatley, Ph.D. and Pamela Ward, Ph.D. as Readers.

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Stephen McKenna, Ph.D., Director

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Christopher Wheatley, Ph.D., Reader

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Pamela Ward, Ph.D., Reader



For Mom and Dad.

The wise in heart shall be called prudent: and the sweetness of the lips increaseth learning. Understanding is a wellspring of life unto him that hath it: but the instruction of fools is folly. The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips. Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.

Proverbs 16:19-24

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

1 Corinthians 13:1

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## Chapter I: Why Consider Religious Influence on Scottish Rhetoric

### Chapter Introduction

The name “Scottish Enlightenment” has come to designate a period of intellectual and scholarly activity in Scotland’s university towns of Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen and St. Andrew’s that lasted from roughly 1740 to 1790.<sup>1</sup> Like other enlightenments of the eighteenth century, Scotland’s was characterized by attention to social and intellectual progress, regard for empirical reasoning, and faith in the “increasing ability of human reason to subjugate analytically both the external world of nature and the human self.”<sup>2</sup> Scottish intellectuals of the eighteenth century were keenly aware of the early success and brilliant promise of the new science and fascinated with the progress of scientific knowledge and the implications of that progress. They were interested in understanding the merits of modernity relative to the ancient classical past, the merits of one nation or civilization with respect to another, and the merits of different kinds of societies and governments. Like other Britons of the eighteenth century, Scots were also widely concerned with moral and social self-improvement.

Scotland had entered the eighteenth century desperately poor and gravely in debt, and after the Act of Union in 1707 effectively caused the absorption of the Scottish

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<sup>1</sup> See Broadie, ed., *Cambridge Companion to the Scottish Enlightenment*, (2003). An older but still useful analysis of the Scottish Enlightenment may be found in Chitnis, *The Scottish Enlightenment: A Social History*, (1976). Also useful is Daiches, Jones and Jones, *A Hotbed of Genius: The Scottish Enlightenment 1730-1790*, (1986). For a somewhat dated but still important discussion about mis-characterizations of the Scottish Enlightenment in the 60’s and 70’s by Enlightenment scholars like Peter Gay, Hugh Trevor-Roper, and Roy Porter, see Withrington, “What was Distinctive about the Scottish Enlightenment?” (1987). For a charming introduction to the era and its significance, see Cohen, *How the Scots Invented the Modern World*, (2001). For discussion of the Edinburgh milieu, see Sher, *Church and University in the Scottish Enlightenment*, (1985); for discussion of the Aberdeen milieu, see Carter and Pittock, ed. *Aberdeen and the Enlightenment*. (1987). For a classic study of characters of the Scottish Enlightenment, see Graham, *Scottish Men of Letters*. (1901). The classic study of Scottish Enlightenment philosophy (although there have been many written since) remains McCosh, *The Scottish Philosophy*, (1874).

<sup>2</sup> Habib, *A History of Literary Criticism and Theory*, 311.

Parliament into the English, Scots struggled to overcome their social, cultural, and geographical marginality. In the wake of Bonnie Prince Charlie's brutal defeat at Culloden in April of 1746, it is known that "the trial and execution of Jacobite lords became public entertainment [for Londoners], just another of the shows for the diversion-hungry city."<sup>1</sup> Such Scottophobia lingered on throughout the century, and Scots had to consciously work to overcome the challenges of their marginality.<sup>2</sup>

One way for aspiring Scots to improve their social standing and political and financial fortunes in the nascent British Empire was to eradicate signs of provinciality by cultivating the speech and manners—the "eloquence"—of a British gentleman. This was not particular to the Scots. Britons in general were famously dogged throughout the eighteenth century by a "fetish of correctness."<sup>3</sup> As Lord Chesterfield wrote to his son in 1739, "A man can make no figure without it, in Parliament or in the Church, or in the law; and even in common conversation, a man that has acquired an easy and habitual eloquence, who speaks properly and accurately, will have a great advantage over those who speak incorrectly or inelegantly."<sup>4</sup> In Scotland, however, the stakes were higher, interest more keen, and widespread aspiration to master the British norms of language and speech created a climate of intense linguistic and cultural self-consciousness.

To polish their speech and improve their manners, Scots were quick to draw upon the rhetorical theory of ancient Rome and Greece as well as of contemporary France and England, for, despite being poor, Scots were uniquely well educated. Thanks to John

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<sup>1</sup> Schama, *A History of Britain: Volume Two*. 386

<sup>2</sup> See Crawford, "Introduction," *The Scottish Invention of English Literature*, 1-21.

<sup>3</sup> Bizell and Herzberg, *The Rhetorical Tradition*. 802

<sup>4</sup> Chesterfield, Letter 45 (November 1739), Serachey and Calthorp ed., vol 1, p. 56. Quoted in Conley, *Rhetoric in the European Tradition*, 212.

Knox' ideals for universal education, and a school-system that that was structured to weather the Reformation and well equipped to serve the common people, Scotland even at the beginning of the eighteenth century was perhaps the most literate country in Europe. In public lectures, club gatherings, and the development of university courses, Scots later in the century worked to understand, describe and teach the rules of effective rhetoric, including correct grammar, graceful elocution, and literary and aesthetic judgment. Thus it was that in the eighteenth century, while Oxford and Cambridge had grown to be "notoriously aristocratic" and "decadent both morally and culturally,"<sup>5</sup> it was instead Scotland's universities— Aberdeen, Edinburgh, St. Andrews, and Glasgow— that became the first universities in the world to offer courses on English composition and British literature.

Some scholars, it should be noted, see the institutionalization of English Studies as happening at Cambridge almost a century later,<sup>6</sup> some look almost a century earlier to when James I removed the Scottish court to London as the period that initiated "interest in the possibility of teaching English,"<sup>7</sup> and some are able to trace the origins of English Studies back to the time of the Reformation and the Renaissance.<sup>8</sup> It is, however, generally agreed that the developments toward English studies in the Scottish schools during the second half of the eighteenth century critically constitute "[t]he first serious

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<sup>5</sup> Horner, "Writing Instruction in Great Britain." 131, 123.

<sup>6</sup> See Scholes, *The Rise and Fall of English*, 2; Berlin, *Writing Instruction in Nineteenth-Century American Colleges*; Stewart, "The Nineteenth Century."

<sup>7</sup> McMurty, *English Language, English Literature*, 8. McMurty sees the earliest source of English Studies as the "awareness of the English language as a vehicle for literature [that occurred] in the early sixteenth century, when Wyatt and Surry transferred their appreciation of the Italian lyric into their own language," (1) but considers English Studies as such to be a result of the Industrial Revolution.

<sup>8</sup> Riley, "Where Do English Departments Come From?" 340-41. Riley, it should be noted, is careful to distinguish between English studies and the teaching of English.



efforts to introduce English literary study into the university curriculum in Britain.”<sup>9</sup> It is the Scots who “bear primary responsibility for institutionalizing English literature, first in eighteenth-century Scotland and subsequently in early Victorian England.”<sup>10</sup> It is the Scots who “—through their texts and the graduates of educational institutions—shaped the study of English language and literature in England.”<sup>11</sup> And therefore it is to eighteenth-century Scottish rhetoric professors (even more so than to the rhetoric teachers at the less powerful and prestigious Dissenting academies in Ireland and England) “that we must look for the educational innovations and the establishment of English as an academic study in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.”<sup>12</sup> In short, eighteenth-century Scottish rhetoric and *belles lettres* is an important historical and theoretical foundation of English studies and one of the key “historical and political determinants that gave rise to the formal programs of [modern-day English] study.”<sup>13</sup>

In particular, George Campbell (1719-1796), Principal of Marischal College in Aberdeen (1759-1795), and Hugh Blair (1718-1800), the first Regius Professor of Rhetoric and *Belles Lettres* at the University of Edinburgh (1760-1783), stand out as the key representative theorists of eighteenth-century Scottish rhetorical theory. Campbell’s highly respected *Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1776) and Blair’s more popular *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (1783) did most to shape the philosophy and teaching of English writing and literature during this critical early period in the development of

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<sup>9</sup> Court, *Institutionalizing English Literature*, 17.

<sup>10</sup> Ferreira-Buckley, “Scottish Rhetoric and the formation of literary studies in nineteenth-century England,” 180.

<sup>11</sup> Ferreira-Buckley and Halloran, “Editor’s Introduction,” *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, xxi.

<sup>12</sup> Horner, “Writing Instruction in Great Britain,” 128-29. See also Crawford, “Introduction.” *The Scottish Invention of English Literature*.

<sup>13</sup> Court, *Institutionalizing English Literature*, 5.

English studies and were the most widely known and influential purveyors in their day of what Wilbur S. Howell has called the "New Rhetoric"—that is, a rhetoric that conscientiously met the social needs of its time by re-theorizing classical rhetoric according to seventeenth and eighteenth century movements in philosophy, science, and history.

The success of Scottish rhetoric, and its subsequent influence on English studies in both Britain and America, was profound. Some indication of this may be seen in the fact that the *Philosophy* went through more than forty-two editions between 1776 and 1844. The *Lectures* were even more successful. They were reprinted 130 times between 1783 and 1911, were translated into several languages, and adopted as a textbook by Yale in 1785, by Harvard in 1788, and by Dartmouth in 1822.<sup>14</sup> Both texts significantly shaped how and why rhetoric and literature would be studied in British and American universities through the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Taken together, they articulate the most important developments in the rhetorical theory of the eighteenth century, and, despite their differences, form a summary and compendium of what can be designated as eighteenth-century Scottish rhetoric.<sup>15</sup>

To date, Campbell's and Blair's respective theories of rhetoric and *belles lettres* have been primarily analyzed in terms of eighteenth-century British philosophical, political, and cultural interests and concerns, or in so far as they in turn have influenced current teaching ideas and practices in the field of English. These influences and these

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<sup>14</sup> For a detailed exposition and analysis of the complicated publication history of Blair's lectures, see Carr, "The Circulation of Blair's 'Lectures.'"

<sup>15</sup> See Ferreira-Buckley, "Scottish Rhetoric and the Formation of Literary Studies," 182-83.; Berlin, *Writing Instruction in Nineteenth-Century American Colleges*, 58-76.

consequences are clearly important to understanding the nature and significance of the development of English studies during the period. One important context of Scottish rhetoric theory, however, has been relatively neglected: namely, religion. Yet religion was a ubiquitous and salient presence in the social, cultural, and intellectual life of eighteenth-century Scots. Moreover, rhetoric and *belles lettres* were widely believed to help inculcate many of the same behaviors and attitudes that Scottish clergymen sought to encourage: namely, self-knowledge, self-discipline, sympathy for others, mutual understanding, gentleness—all the virtues, that is, of a good Christian and a good citizen.

It is the argument of this dissertation that religious ideas and practices—in particular, those of Presbyterianism, the sect of Christianity adopted by the Scottish National Church—did indeed exert an important influence on the development of Scottish rhetoric as articulated in Campbell's *Philosophy of Rhetoric* and Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* and that examination of these texts' religious contexts and dimensions illuminates critical aspects of their theories. It shows that to properly understand Scottish rhetoric theory it is as important to understand the religion of Presbyterianism as it is to understand the philosophy of empiricism, the cultural and political consequences of the Act of Union, and the political dynamics of language use in late eighteenth-century Scotland.

### **Originality of Present Inquiry**

Scholars have categorized, described, and analyzed various other intellectual, sociological and cultural influences and trends that influenced eighteenth-century Scottish rhetoric theory. Samuel Wilbur Howell, Vincent Bevilacqua, Douglas Ehninger,

Michael Moran, and Winifred Bryan-Horner have substantially described and categorized the scene of rhetorical theory in eighteenth century Britain, including its most important voices and general currents of thoughts. Eighteenth-century Scottish rhetoric has also been contextualized in the history of rhetoric by Thomas Conley, Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg, and George Kennedy, while its influence on the development of English studies has been variously analyzed by Robert Crawford, James Berlin, Gerald Graff, and Douglas Sloan. More focused studies also abound. Barbara Warnick has given a valuable analysis of the influence of French aesthetic theories in *The Sixth Canon* (1993), an approach bolstered by the anthology edited by Deidre Dawson and Pierre Morere, *Scotland and France in the Enlightenment* (2006). Lois Agnew's *Outward Visible Propriety: Stoicism in Eighteenth-Century British Rhetorics* (2010) has assessed the influence of classical Stoic philosophy on thinkers of the period. Terry Eagleton's *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (1983) has argued that eighteenth century Scottish rhetoric was a response to the political dynamics of Great Britain after the Union; the Marxist tenor of his approach endures in many other studies of the Scottish Enlightenment, including Don Paul Abbott's recent discussion of the influence of nationalism on eighteenth century Scottish rhetoric. The development of Scottish rhetorical theory has also been described, analyzed and interpreted in light of other influences as well, including, for example, Thomas Miller's important considerations of British imperialism in *The Formation of College English: Rhetoric and Belles Lettres in the British Cultural Provinces* (1997), Robert Crawford's anthology focusing on eighteenth-century Scottish issues of marginality in *The Scottish Invention of English*

*Literature* (1998), and Peter Kivy's consideration of aesthetic influence in *The Seventh Sense: Francis Hutcheson and Eighteenth-Century British Aesthetics* (2003).

Insufficient scholarly attention, however, has yet been directed to how Scotland's national religion influenced the development of Scottish rhetorical theory. This should be surprising since even a cursory glance at the period indicates the powerful social and intellectual influence exercised by Protestant Christianity. According to Anand Chitnis, Scotland at the end of the seventeenth century was "above all" a "religiously-aware society,"<sup>16</sup> that it composed "a crucial element in their character,"<sup>17</sup> and that "the historiography indicates that religion was socially positive and, in areas away from the arts, creative."<sup>18</sup> During the eighteenth century, the Presbyterian National Church (the "Scottish Kirk" or simply "the Kirk"<sup>19</sup>) was "central... to Scottish life and the rooting of the Enlightenment in the state of eighteenth-century Scotland necessarily was to imply a close connection between the Church and the Enlightenment."<sup>20</sup> According to William Parker Riley, English studies (as opposed to the teaching of English) were "a fruit of the English Renaissance and the Reformation."<sup>21</sup> And, as Douglas Sloan argues, the Scottish church "had always been an influential force in Scottish life and it came to play an important and unusual role in the Scottish Enlightenment."<sup>22</sup> Winifred Bryan-Horner asserts:

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<sup>16</sup> "Eighteenth-Century Scottish Intellectual Inquiry," 79.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>19</sup> The Scottish "Kirk" was legally established as Scotland's National Church in 1560 and granted a continuation of that legal status by England in the 1707 Act of Union. For the purposes of this dissertation, it is synonymous with the Presbyterian Church, Presbyterian Kirk, or, simply, "the Kirk."

<sup>20</sup> *The Scottish Enlightenment*, 52.

<sup>21</sup> "Where Do English Departments Come From?" 340.

<sup>22</sup> *The Scottish Enlightenment and the American College Ideal*, 9.

Instructors of the eighteenth-century felt that in teaching literature they were teaching a vision of the good.... Since most of the teachers in the eighteenth century were preachers and most university students were in training for the ministry, education was understandably closely connected with religion. Religion was considered the rationale and basis for education and education the route to virtue. Religion and politics both played important parts in the drama of education in the eighteenth century....<sup>23</sup>

Religion in other words was fundamentally important and ubiquitously influential in eighteenth-century Scotland, and the presumption must be that it influenced rhetorical theory in more than merely happenstance ways.

Consideration of the origin of the *Philosophy of Rhetoric* and the *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* only further indicates the likely importance of religious influence. Both Blair and Campbell were ordained Presbyterian ministers who were deeply engaged in reading, interpreting, and preaching the Scriptures. Even while holding university appointments and teaching other future ministers, both men continued to carry out pastoral duties and serve as active members of the Kirk. Campbell spent nine years as a pastor before entering academic life. Blair had been an active preaching minister for twenty years before becoming Regius Professor of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres. Their other writings reflect the depth of their engagement with their religious beliefs: Campbell initially gained international fame with his *Dissertation on Miracles* (1762), which was considered the best refutation of Hume's "Essay on Miracles" at the time. Campbell also considered his translation of *The Four Gospels* (1789) to be his

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<sup>23</sup> *Nineteenth-Century Scottish Rhetoric*. 33.

finest scholarly accomplishment. Blair was famous in his lifetime for his five volumes of *Sermons* (1777-81), which received high praise from King George III.<sup>24</sup>

As believing Christians, Campbell and Blair were, moreover, *typical* Scottish intellectuals of their time. Most major voices engaged in teaching and theorizing rhetoric in eighteenth century Scotland were licensed Presbyterian divines. Robert Watson who succeeded Adam Smith in delivering public lectures on rhetoric and *belles lettres* in Edinburgh subsequently was ordained to the Presbyterian ministry and became rhetoric professor at St. Andrews. Thomas Reid (1710-1794), a member of the Aberdeen Philosophical Society and one of the most important voices of the Scottish School of Common Sense Philosophy, had been licensed to preach in 1729. James Burgh (1715-1755), the author of *The Art of Speaking* (1761), was a Presbyterian minister. Alexander Gerard (1728-1795), author of *Plan of Education in the Marischal College and University of Aberdeen* (1755) and *Essay on Taste* (1759) was a Presbyterian minister. After retiring from his public duties, William Robertson (1721-1793), highly respected scholar, a key leader in the Kirk, and principal of the University of Edinburgh for much of the Enlightenment period, “remained prominent as a preacher in Greyfriar’s Church, discoursing with vigour, if not with inspiration, on fine moral principles and practice.”<sup>25</sup> Thinkers like Henry Home, Lord Kames (1696-1782) and David Hume (1711-1776) who were skeptical about the content of traditional religious doctrines were an exception, but they still took seriously the ideas and implications of religion.<sup>26</sup> Religion, in short, was

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<sup>24</sup> Schmitz, *Hugh Blair*, 83-84.

<sup>25</sup> Graham, *Scottish Men of Letters*, 99.

<sup>26</sup> See Jordan, “A Reconsideration of David Hume and Religious Establishment.” (2002).

an important influence on eighteenth-century Scottish thinkers and it is worthwhile to consider its significance for Scottish rhetorical theory of the time.

### **Scope of Inquiry**

It might appear at this point, however, that certain critical figures are being conveniently neglected by focusing exclusively on Campbell's *Philosophy* and Blair's *Lectures*. What is to be done, for example, with the more classical and therefore less typically "Scottish" rhetoric taught by Robert Watson? Or the works on criticism published by the religiously skeptical Lord Kames? Above all, what is to be made of the rhetoric lectures of the religiously ambivalent Adam Smith (1723-1790), whose lectures on rhetoric and *belles lettres*, delivered in Edinburgh between 1748 and 1751, were critical to the development of English Studies at Edinburgh University?

These thinkers are also part of the full story of eighteenth century Scottish rhetoric; however, their thought and influence are sufficiently expressed by the theories of Blair and Campbell to justify the limits of this dissertation's scope. Kames was not a rhetorician as such, but a theorist of criticism, and his theories on rhetoric and criticism received attention through Blair as well as Campbell, both of whom explicitly acknowledged his works and influence. Watson's influence was likewise drastically curtailed by the simple fact that he too never published his lectures.<sup>27</sup> Blair knew both Smith and Watson personally and succeeded them in delivering the public lectures on rhetoric and *belles lettres* in Edinburgh, but while Blair remained at the center of the Scottish intellectual scene in Edinburgh and published his lectures to a wide audience,

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<sup>27</sup> See Bator, "Robert Watson;" Also see Bator, "The Unpublished Rhetoric Lectures of Robert Watson."



Watson's influence extended only as far as his teaching at St. Andrew's University and through whatever influence he may have had on Blair.

Comparing the *Philosophy of Rhetoric* to Adam Smith's lectures on rhetoric, Howell says that although "Smith's rhetoric is more original, more sociological, more conscious of its adjustment to sweeping historical change, than is that of Campbell" it is nevertheless the case that "by virtue of Smith's refusal to publish his lectures during his lifetime, Campbell's *Rhetoric* must be called the leading British, and indeed the leading European, work on its subject to appear in the eighteenth century."<sup>28</sup> Smith had the originals of his lectures burned at his death, and it was not until 1962 that a copy of student notes on those lectures was discovered and printed. Although their publication led to some speculation that the extent of Blair's borrowings are grounds for considering him something of a plagiarist,<sup>29</sup> it was not Smith's theory of rhetoric but Blair's that saw publication in their day. Smith's place in the development of rhetorical theory was therefore largely forgotten for almost two centuries, while Blair went on to be admired by Samuel Johnson, David Hume, and Jane Austen. His lectures and their abridgements became standards in both British and American college curricula during the first half of the nineteenth century,<sup>30</sup> and were re-discovered in the twentieth century by Corbett, who brought them to new attention when he incorporated Blair's prose analyses into his landmark *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student* (1962). Finally, although Blair and Smith disagreed on various points—for example, Blair placed greater stress on

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<sup>28</sup> Howell, *Eighteenth Century British Logic and Rhetoric*, 601-602.

<sup>29</sup> Ferreira-Buckley and Halloran, "Editors' Introduction." xxxv. They argue, however, that there are important differences between Blair and Smith, and point out that Blair did acknowledge his debt to Smith.

<sup>30</sup> Ferreira-Buckley, "Hugh Blair," 22.

belletristic considerations, while Smith's rhetoric theory is more practical<sup>31</sup>— it is nevertheless the case that they agreed on the issues most important to the present study in that “both of their courses [on oratory and *belles lettres*] involved the use of English literature not as an end in itself but in the service of verbal decorum, morality, or taste.”<sup>32</sup> In short, Adam Smith is important to the development of Scottish rhetoric and his lectures intriguing in their own right, but his contributions are sufficiently expressed by Blair for the purposes of this dissertation.

Blair's *Lectures* and Campbell's *Philosophy*, in short, can be reasonably and justly taken as the most significant, influential and encompassing statements of eighteenth century Scottish rhetoric. As such, they invite an analysis of what influence their religious beliefs and practices exerted on their theories of communication and literary analysis.

### **Review of Scholarship**

This dissertation's analysis of the confluence of Presbyterian Christianity and the theories of communication in George Campbell's *Philosophy of Rhetoric* and Hugh Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* helps fill a significant gap in the scholarship on eighteenth century theories of rhetoric and belles letters. While scholars generally acknowledge that the Kirk was an important part of Scotland's social and

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<sup>31</sup> See Court, *Institutionalization of English Studies*.

<sup>32</sup> Scholes, *The Rise and Fall of English*. 4. For analysis and appraisal of Adam Smith's contributions to rhetoric, also see: Stephen McKenna, *Adam Smith: The Rhetoric of Propriety* (New York: SUNY P, 2006); Michael Carter, “The Role of Invention in Belletristic Rhetoric: A Study of the Lectures of Adam Smith.” (*Rhetoric Society Quarterly*. 18.1 [Summer 1988] 3-13). Vincent Bevilacqua, “Adam Smith's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*.” (*Studies in Scottish Literature* 3 [July 1965] 41-60).; James L. Golden. “The Rhetorical Theory of Adam Smith.” (*Southern Speech Journal* 33:3 [1968] 200-15).; Charles L. Griswold, Jr., “Rhetoric and Ethics: Adam Smith on Theorizing about the Moral Sentiments.” (*Philosophy and Rhetoric* 24:3 [1991] 213-37).

political climate in the eighteenth century,<sup>33</sup> that church doctrine was a constant backdrop to discussions of philosophy, politics, and education, and that church politics were a significant element of Scotland's cultural and intellectual life, insufficient attention has yet been afforded to the role of religion and theology in the Scottish development of English Studies in eighteenth-century Scotland.

The relatively few studies that consider religion as an influence on eighteenth-century Scottish rhetorical theory vary widely in the scope and depth of their treatment. They fall into three broad categories: historical studies that acknowledge the Kirk as a lively and forceful institution in eighteenth-century Scotland, argumentative works that use the religion of an individual or the period to make a larger point, and analyses which make use of the theological writings of Blair and Campbell to analyze their rhetoric theory.

Because religious issues were so widely discussed and keenly felt in Scotland, even by those outside the Kirk, historians and biographers working on eighteenth-century Scottish intellectual figures and events usually at least mention relevant doctrinal wrangles, decisions passed by the General Assembly, and significant religious events and movements such as the schism lead by Ebenezer Erskine when he formed the Associate Presbytery in 1733, the "Cambuslang Wark" initiated by Jonathon Edwards' visit to Scotland in 1742, the controversy over the staging of Henry Homes' play *Douglas* in Edinburgh in 1756. However, most biographical accounts and historical contextualizing of Blair and Campbell, including such notable studies as those by David Sher, Wilbur

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<sup>33</sup> Emerson. "The Contexts of the Scottish Enlightenment." 14-15. Also see Stewart, "Religion and Rational Theology;" Sher, *Church and University in the Scottish Enlightenment*; Haakonssen. *Enlightenment and Religion*.

Howell, Henry Graham, Arthur Walzer, Douglas Ehninger, and Robert Schmitz, primarily attend to Kirk politics and controversies and do not consider the influence of particular theological positions on the rhetorical theories of the period. Moreover, in their discussions of Kirk politics, the side of the Moderate Party tends to be preferred, while scant attention is paid to the key theological differences that fundamentally differentiated Moderates from Evangelicals.<sup>34</sup> Discussions of those theological differences abound elsewhere, but analysis of the development of English Studies in the period has yet to address Moderate (let alone Evangelical) *theology* as an influence on rhetorical theory. Sher acknowledged in *Church and University in the Scottish Enlightenment* (1985) that “Blair’s religious side has never been properly assessed.”<sup>35</sup> Twenty-five years later this is still the case. Campbell’s religious side has garnered more attention, but despite the fact that “he was interested in philosophy primarily as it impinged upon his mission to train students to defend the faith and enter into polite society”<sup>36</sup> the extent and content of religious influence has still not been adequately assessed.

The second group of studies applies Kirk theology and/or Kirk practices to explicate texts in an *ad hoc* manner, and the bulk of such studies are about Campbell. The most salient example of this has occurred in the context of debating Campbell's reception of Hume’s philosophy. This debate, summarized by Arthur Walzer, ran as follows: Bitzer (1965, 1969) claimed that Campbell was strongly indebted to Hume in his empiricist view of causality. The *Philosophy of Rhetoric* was, in this interpretation, an

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<sup>34</sup> Sloan, *The Scottish Enlightenment and the American College Ideal*, 13.

<sup>35</sup> *Church and University in the Scottish Enlightenment*, 330.

<sup>36</sup> Conley, *Rhetoric in the European Tradition*, 219.

essentially Humean philosophy of Rhetoric. G.P.Mohrmann (1968), Dennis R. Bormann (1985), and Alexander Sefton (1987), disagreed with Bitzer's position, arguing that Campbell as a Christian and a Presbyterian divine would logically have defended (and historically in fact did seek to defend) his Christian beliefs against Hume's agnosticism and its cognate epistemology. They argue that Campbell's views on empiricism are actually derived from the "common sense philosophy" of his friend and colleague, Thomas Reid.

Bitzer's revised introduction to Campbell's *Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1988) takes into account Campbell's Christian commitments and offers a moderated account of his debts to Hume, but does not relinquish the original thesis (with which Walzer agrees): that although Campbell did not adopt Humean ideas simplistically or accept his views without question or alteration, Hume still should be considered an important influence on Campbell's philosophy even if only as an opponent. Bitzer and Walzer also tend to think that where Campbell fails to follow Hume he appears inconsistent and puzzling, if not even reactionary and defensive. Notably, the entire debate altogether misses what positive influence Campbell's daily reading and Calvinist interpretation of the Scriptures exerted on his philosophical perspectives. All parties in the debate appear to have assumed *a priori* that there either was none, or none worth considering.

There is nothing incorrect about acknowledging Hume as an important influence, especially in so far as he provided a philosophical idiom; Campbell himself wrote that Hume was an important influence. A preoccupation with David Hume's philosophy, however, or with seeing only the skeptical dimensions of his thought (rather than, say,

considering the influence of Hume's associationism and its potential assimilation to Christian thought), risks a neglect of other important sources for Campbell's thought. Additionally, both Walzer and Bitzer devote very little time or space to considering Campbell's intellectual debt to Thomas Reid despite the fact, pointed out by Bormann, that Reid was a significant philosopher in his own right, at the time appeared to have the better shot at long-term philosophical fame than Hume, and as a fellow member of the Aberdeen Philosophical Society Reid was for many years a close associate of Campbell, a more like-minded friend, and undeniably Christian. To acknowledge Calvinist Christianity as an influence is not to deny or diminish the influence of Hume. The co-existence of the two influences is interestingly problematic, but the inadequacy of Bormann's analysis—namely, that he points to compelling circumstantial evidence, but does not demonstrate Campbell's divergence with Humean philosophy from the text of the *Philosophy of Rhetoric* itself—does not mean that Campbell's Christianity has no bearing on the question. Finally, Walzer does not rigorously defend his claim that Campbell—who was, it should be remembered, a founding member of the Aberdeen Philosophical Society and primarily known in his time for his philosophical *Dissertation on Miracles*—was simply “uninterested” in “philosophical consistency.”<sup>37</sup> More careful considerations of religious influence suggest more plausible explanations of Campbell's apparent inconsistencies. These may not fully resolve the problems of philosophical inconsistency in Campbell's *Philosophy*, but they do offer a historical and theological explanation for Campbell's philosophical conclusions.

The third category, the smallest, consists of those studies that do seriously

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<sup>37</sup> Walzer, *George Campbell*, 132.

consider the religious positions of Blair or Campbell to gain insight into their views on rhetoric. Gary Hatch's study of original student notes of Blair's lectures taken by his students indicates that in his university teaching Blair was much more forthright about encouraging students in their Christian duties than appears in the published version of his lectures. Hatch comments that it is "odd that Blair, a famous preacher and minister in the St. Giles church in Edinburgh, had to little to say about the connections between rhetoric and Christianity, aside from his general discussion of preaching and his discussion of the Bible as literature. .... [T]he relationship between Blair's ideas on rhetoric and his views on Christianity [are a] possible path for future scholarship"<sup>38</sup>.

Beth Manolescu attends to Campbell's religious concerns in discussing the question of invention to argue that "Campbell's account of the invention and presentation of emotional appeals in *Philosophy of Rhetoric* is shaped by the purposes of advocating a moderate style of preaching and of defending the authority of revealed religion."<sup>39</sup> Manolescu's calls for more and closer attention to the to "potential intersections" between religion and rhetoric theory in the theories of rhetoric theorists with "clear ties to a religious organization or movement."<sup>40</sup> A number of her own conclusions, however, are called into question by the arguments of this dissertation.

A 2005 dissertation by Rachel Whiden uses Campbell's *Dissertation on Miracles* to analyze how Campbell's arguments about miracles and religious convictions shaped his understanding of persuasion. In particular, Whiden examines how Campbell's probability theory operates in his theory of proofs. However, in her dissertation she

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<sup>38</sup> "Student Notes of Hugh Blair's Lectures on Rhetoric," 88.

<sup>39</sup> "Religious Reasons for Campbell's View of Emotional Appeals in *Philosophy of Rhetoric*," 179.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

assumes Campbell's Christianity to be merely ideological and his arguments against Hume to be naive, defensive and reactionary. Her judgment of the *Philosophy of Rhetoric's* discussion of proofs is overall disfigured and compromised by an a-historical dismissal and ill-concealed distaste of religious belief.

Besides these shorter analyses, a small number of book-length studies have recently attempted to correct the many dismissive and inaccurate views of Christianity's influence in the Scottish Enlightenment. David Sher's *Church and University in the Scottish Enlightenment* (1985) is an important contribution to the understanding of the relationship of religion to the Scottish Enlightenment and gives ample evidence for the necessity of considering religious influence on Scottish rhetorical theory. However, his work centers on the Edinburgh milieu (and therefore gives little consideration to Campbell), and does not deeply consider the theoretical influence of Christianity on rhetoric theory.

In David Allan's examination of history-writing in eighteenth century Scotland in his *Virtue, Learning and the Scottish Enlightenment* (1993), he specifically identifies and demonstrates the problematic absence of positive attention to religious influence in scholarship on eighteenth-century ideas. To correct the notion that religion in the eighteenth century acted largely as a deterrent to intellectual progress, Allan offers an extensive argument that Calvinist humanism was an important positive influence on developing and furthering Scottish education and scholarship in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

A third important study on how religion historically encouraged learning and



progress is Jeffrey Suderman's *Orthodoxy and Enlightenment* (2001), a biography of George Campbell and critical analysis of his works. Like Allan, Suderman takes exception to negative and neglectful attitudes toward religion and shows that orthodox Christian beliefs demonstrably nourished rather than repressed what later centuries recognize as some of the best of eighteenth-century Scottish scholarship. While the study directly and seriously addresses Campbell's Christianity, Suderman does not explain its theoretical importance for Campbell's rhetorical theory.<sup>41</sup> This dissertation therefore builds on and expands Suderman's work by showing how Christianity appears philosophically in the *Philosophy of Rhetoric*.

### **Analysis of the Gap in Scholarship**

A study of how religious influences interacted with eighteenth century Scottish theory and pedagogy of rhetoric is warranted, but it is useful to deal with the reasons why the influence of religion has not yet been fully considered. There are three readily apparent reasons for this lack of attention. First, present-day views of rhetoric do not naturally or readily invite considerations of religious influence. Second, the reputation of Moderate Presbyterians in their own day for being insufficiently religious encourages the idea that their religious beliefs were irrelevant to their intellectual and academic endeavors. And third, the anti-clericalism of the more famous French Enlightenment and the long-term negative consequences of Enlightenment thought for religious beliefs have diminished awareness of religion's positive role in the Scottish Enlightenment. It is worthwhile to address each of these factors in detail.

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<sup>41</sup> See Walzer, "Review."

### *The Nature of Rhetoric*

Although studies of rhetorical theories have often drawn upon theories of ethics, psychology, and epistemology, religion has been less widely considered. As Margaret Zulick points out:

The connection between rhetoric and religion goes back, at least in emblem, to the Goddess Peitho herself, the personification of persuasion and receiver of supplicants who wish to win over their lovers with words. Both rhetoric and religion appear to be universal to the human condition. Yet rarely are they correlated in the course of human inquiry.<sup>42</sup>

In the case of eighteenth-century Scottish rhetorical theory, lack of scholarly interest in analyzing the possible inter-influences of religion and rhetoric may be at least partly explained by the fact that, even though Scotland's civil government and religion were closely connected, there is less precedent for considering religion than other political, cultural, and theoretical influences.

Yet religion in itself is the kind of thing that lies close to the political, cultural, and intellectual heart of individuals, communities, and nations. This is significant given that English studies are an institutional phenomenon driven as much by social as by strictly theoretical interests, a recognition that is central to Gerald Graff and Michael Warner's response to "educational fundamentalists"<sup>43</sup> like William Bennett, Allan Bloom, and E. D. Hirsh who decry the fragmentation and politicization of English studies. Graff and Warner look to history to demonstrate that, "From their beginnings,

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<sup>42</sup> Zulick, "Rhetoric of Religion: A Map of the Territory."

<sup>43</sup> Graff and Warner, *The Origins of Literary Studies in America*, 1.

academic literary studies were held together not by any shared definition of literature or of the discipline, but by tacit social agreements that enabled incompatible principles to coexist in any uneasy truce.”<sup>44</sup> They further argue on the basis of their historical studies that “even at the dawn of professional literary studies, educational consensus was already profoundly shaky”<sup>45</sup> and that English as subject has never been a homogenous and clearly defined discipline but one fraught with “institutional controversies rather than agreements” and a “welter of conflicts, debates, and contradictions.”<sup>46</sup>

Common ground between the critics of modern English studies and its historicist defenders, however, may be found in that both raise questions about the larger meanings and purposes of English studies and both invite considerations of social purpose and ethical principles— all issues that, among other things, invite studies on the religious dimensions of the historical development of English studies, including its unique original development in eighteenth-century Scotland. Both “educational fundamentalists” like Bennet, Bloom, and Hirsch who advocate a return to a pre-1960’s “humanist concensus,” who lament “much that has been going on recently in the name of ‘theory’” and who “believe that concepts like *truth* and *reality* are necessary for the health of a discipline called English”<sup>47</sup> as well as historicists like Graff and Warner who insist on acknowledging the realities of the “actual past”<sup>48</sup> and who call for closer attention to the historical and cultural realities of the development of English studies should therefore take interest in how religion in eighteenth-century Scotland contributes to a deeper

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>47</sup> Scholes, *The Rise and Fall of English*, x.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

understanding of the history and nature of English studies. To examine religious influence on eighteenth-century Scottish rhetorical theory is to analyze how historical and cultural ideas about virtue and the public good relate to the study of English rhetoric and composition: it is a study, in other words of the historical relationship of English studies to virtue and the public good.

The need for such a study is all the more compelling given the overwhelming historical evidence that Presbyterianism exerted a particularly powerful and important force on eighteenth-century Scottish thought, culture, and politics. The Scottish Reformation happened swiftly and thoroughly. Relatively small, remote, poor, and unusually literate,<sup>49</sup> Scotland became much more quickly, peacefully, and radically Protestant than England. The *Scots Confession*, adopted by the Scottish Parliament in 1556, legally established the Scottish Kirk and closely allied it with civil authority. This enabled the Scottish Kirk to rapidly attain a high degree of theological consolidation and political power such that, much more than in England, Scotland's religion came to be concentrated into a single, politically powerful sect that was able to exert a relatively steady and forceful influence on Scottish politics, culture, education, and scholarship all the way down through the eighteenth century. The Presbyterian way of seeing the world and man's relationship to it was therefore a deeply-rooted part of the culture, morals, and prejudices of eighteenth-century Scots and served as an important source for the pieties, ethical standards, and political views that formed the context of the Scottish Enlightenment in general, and of Campbell's and Blair's philosophies of language and literature in particular.

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<sup>49</sup> See Withrington, "What Was Distinctive about the Scottish Enlightenment?" 14-15.

As Terry Eagleton points out, “In the eighteenth-century... literature did more than ‘embody’ certain social values: it was a vital instrument for their deeper entrenchment and wider dissemination.”<sup>50</sup> Even a historicist approach to Scottish theories of rhetoric that seeks to trace its connections to social and political values and institutions, class struggle, and tensions between conservative and progressive forces thus also invites seeking a greater understanding of Scottish religious beliefs. So although rhetorical theories have not often invited analysis of their connections with religion, understanding the religious dimensions of eighteenth-century Scottish rhetorical theory is important for a correct assessment of its historical, philosophical, and cultural origins and contributes to the more recent effort to understand the historical and theoretical development of English studies.

### ***Eighteenth-Century Perceptions of Moderate Presbyterianism***

A second reason scholars overlook the role of religion in the Scottish Enlightenment is attributable to some confusion, if not actual ignorance, about the content of Moderate Presbyterian beliefs. The Moderate party was politically dominant in the years of the Scottish Enlightenment’s greatest flourishing and is often portrayed, and with good reason, as exerting a secular, liberal, and rationalist influence in the Kirk and society. Moderate Presbyterian divines of the period were also vigorously lampooned in their own time for over-sympathizing with agnostic and latitudinarian<sup>51</sup> perspectives, and for bringing heretical modes of thought into the Kirk.

### Contemporary characterizations of Moderate Presbyterians by Evangelical

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<sup>50</sup> *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, 17.

<sup>51</sup> In this dissertation, I only use the words “latitudinarian” or “latitudinarianism” as common nouns to indicate the general view that only a few doctrines of the Christian faith are certain and important.

Presbyterians, or the even more resounding condemnation of Moderatism issued by nineteenth-century Evangelical Presbyterian scholars, has, however, been too often wrongly taken to mean that the influence of Moderatism was not a Christian influence, and that “natural religion” rather than Presbyterian Christianity deserves credit for any positive religious influence in the Scottish Enlightenment. It is recognized that, “whereas in France the gap between the established church and the Enlightenment grew wider during the second half of the eighteenth century... in Scotland the established church came to terms with the Enlightenment after a series of bitter conflicts in the mid-1750s over issues involving the proper relation of church and churchmen within polite society.”<sup>52</sup> Nevertheless there remains a tendency to see Moderatism as exerting an essentially secular force.

This view, however, misreads Moderate theology. Moderates did espouse a more secular, tolerant approach to their religion than did the Reformers of the sixteenth century, Covenanters of the seventeenth century, or Evangelicals of the eighteenth century. Yet the Moderate party was a party of Presbyterians— not non-Christians. They were intellectually and spiritually formed by distinctly Christian ideas about God, the world, and human nature, and although secular and liberal relative to other kinds of Calvinists at the time, members of the Moderate Party clearly thought of themselves as reasonable and even orthodox Presbyterians. They deserve to be acknowledged as the Protestant Christians they saw and proclaimed themselves to be.

It should also be remembered that scholarly conventions had shifted in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. “The Enlightenment,” Broadie points out, “was a

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<sup>52</sup> Sher, *Church and University in the Scottish Enlightenment*, 64.

Republic of Letters, a multi-national company dealing in ideas, in which people put their ideas into the public domain to be criticized and improved, or criticized and sunk.”<sup>53</sup>

By the late eighteenth century, published academic scholarship had been for almost a century settled into a recognizably modern form<sup>54</sup> as the normalization of print brought scholars into easier and faster contact with each other’s ideas. The fragmentations of Christianity since the Reformation, however, had left scholars holding widely divergent versions of the Christian religion so that by the eighteenth century every publishing scholar knew that his audience would include reputable thinkers of widely varying religious beliefs and positions. Moderates were more quick to recognize and accept that the common articles of faith for the academic community increasingly had less to do with religious doctrines and more to do with the methods of the New Science, the physical laws of nature it had discovered, and the powers of the human mind. Moderatism was therefore not only about ideas; it was also about audiences. It is significant, then, that both Campbell and Blair chose to frequently refer to Scripture by way of examples and illustrations. Their use of Scripture might not indicate the depth and quality of their own religious devotion, but it does indicate that Campbell and Blair both wrote for a Protestant audience and suggests the extent to which their own and their readers’ habits of thought were informed by close acquaintance with Scripture and a Christian Protestant worldview. The nature and extent of that influence has not been properly assessed, and is therefore the subject of this dissertation.

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<sup>53</sup> Broadie, “Introduction,” *The Cambridge Companion to the Scottish Enlightenment*. 5-6.

<sup>54</sup> For an excellent study on the history of the publication industry in eighteenth-century Scotland, see Richard Sher, *Enlightenment and the Book*, (2006).

### ***The Twentieth-Century Reputation of Enlightenment Thinking***

Finally, as Withrington has noted, the pre-eminence of the anti-religious French Enlightenment has colored how scholars see the “Enlightenments” of other nations, including Scotland’s. Also, a tendency to approach the Scottish Enlightenment as an extension of the French Enlightenment has discouraged recognition of the positive role religion played in the development of ideas in the Scottish Enlightenment.

The perception that the Scottish Enlightenment echoes French animosity to religion is admittedly encouraged by the religious skepticism (or at least ambivalence) of some of the most famous Scottish thinkers of the eighteenth century, including Adam Smith, Lord Kames, and of course David Hume. Yet the approach to religion in the Scottish Enlightenment, even by religious skeptics, differed significantly from the French. The French *philosophes* flourished outside of established institutions of religion and teaching whereas Scottish philosophers flourished within the Scottish universities and Kirk and the hostility to religion shown by Voltaire, Diderot, Rousseau and other French *philosophes* differs markedly from the socially amiable and politically tolerant skepticism of Hume, Kames, and Smith.

Moreover, although Hume and Smith were in some respects truly the brightest lights of the Scottish Enlightenment, they were exceptions rather than representatives of the approach to religion found among Scottish Enlightenment thinkers, nor do their contributions comprise or define the extent of Scottish accomplishment in the eighteenth century. Many of the most important intellectual figures of eighteenth-century Scotland were, in fact, not only believers but ordained clerics and included not only George



Campbell and Hugh Blair, but also Francis Hutcheson, Thomas Reid, John Witherspoon, John Home, George Turnbull, Robert Watson, Alexander Gerard, Marischal's Principal Blackwell, and Edinburgh's Principal William Robertson.

Finally, the high cultural status of agnosticism in academic circles during the twentieth century has led to a tendency to correlate intellectual and academic progress with the rejection of religion. In a skeptical intellectual culture, texts will be considered enlightened and worthwhile so long as or to the extent that they can be understood to criticize religion. The assumption that there can be no positive relationship between Christianity and intellectual accomplishment encourages emphasizing and valuing the religiously skeptical elements in the Scottish Enlightenment as well as seeing historical instances of intellectually narrow Christians as representative of Christianity's presumed inherent narrowness. So while Hugh Trevor-Roper's assertions that "at the end of the seventeenth century, Scotland was a byword for irredeemable poverty, social backwardness, political faction" and that its universities were "unreformed seminaries of fanatical clergy"<sup>55</sup> have been called seriously into question by scholars such as David Allan, Jeffrey Suderman, Richard Sher, and others,<sup>56</sup> there is still a tendency to believe that "[i]f any credit for the cultural achievements of eighteenth-century Scotland can be assigned to religious elements it must be to this rationalistic and untheological faith [of natural religion]. Any contribution of Calvinism can have been no more than its indirect

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<sup>55</sup> Trevor-Roper, "The Scottish Enlightenment," 1636.

<sup>56</sup> See Campbell and Skinner, ed. *The Origins and Nature of the Scottish Enlightenment*, 4; Cameron, "Theological Controversy: A Factor in the Origins of the Scottish Enlightenment;" Sutherland, "The Presbyterian Inheritance of Hume and Reid;" Jordan, "Religion in the Public Square."

influence as a mould of character through education and habits of discipline.”<sup>57</sup>

Another expression of this attitude may be found in Kivy’s study of Francis Hutcheson in which, after he acknowledges that “one-third of Hutcheson’s first *Inquiry* is taken up with theological topics,” he goes on to assert that:

If sheer bulk is any measure for intellectual interest, then we must conclude that for Hutcheson the most interesting and compelling aesthetic problems were theological ones. But for us, alas, they are the least likely to arouse curiosity of any other kind than the antiquarian. I shall not, therefore, devote anywhere near the space to divine speculations in my book that Hutcheson devotes to them in his. For the judgment of history is that what Hutcheson had to offer to philosophy in general, and aesthetics in particular, did not that way tend.<sup>58</sup>

To see the Scottish Enlightenment as having been made possible only after secularism had cleared away the stultifying effects of religious faith is, however, both simplistic and obfuscating.

Even if the principle were granted that agnosticism is the intellectually superior position, however, the obvious and extensive religious aspects of eighteenth-century rhetorical theory would still merit exploration. As Broadie remarks, “A Scot writing on [any subject] will think in terms of the politics, economics, society, education, law or religious dimension of his country, and it is impossible for his thought not to be affected by these distinctive features of his national context.”<sup>59</sup> As Lois Agnew has recently pointed out, echoing the thought of Gloria Vivencia: “[I]ndirect influences can be seen as

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<sup>57</sup> Drummond, *The Scottish Church, 1688-1840*, 112.

<sup>58</sup> *The Seventh Sense*, 111.

<sup>59</sup> “Introduction,” 2.

having particular power, as they reflect a thorough immersion in systems of thought that ultimately lead to a distinct way of viewing the world.”<sup>60</sup> Anand Chitnis has pointed out that, “Given the nature of later seventeenth-century Scottish society, the degree to which religion formed intellectual life is too obvious to deserve remark”<sup>61</sup> and has unequivocally asserted, “So many different areas of Scottish life were impregnated by religion that to dissociate it from the origins of the Scottish intellectual inquiry would be curious to say the least.”<sup>62</sup>

By influencing the way scholars in eighteenth-century Scotland thought about human nature, the nature of the world, and the meaning and purposes of human communication, Christianity may be assumed to have exerted an important influence on the Scottish Enlightenment. This would even argue that non-believers like Smith, Hume and Kames were influenced by the Scottish religion simply because they were immersed in the culture it had helped create, however questioning or reactive they were to Christian principles and ideas. All the more it can therefore be assumed that the rhetoric theories of Blair and Campbell reflect their own religious beliefs and practices, even if in ways not altogether conscious, acknowledged, explicit, or direct. This examination therefore contributes an over-due analysis of the connections between eighteenth-century Scottish religious ideas and eighteenth-century Scottish rhetorical theories.

## **Methodology**

The methodology to be used in this study is that of closely reading the texts from the time-period that are relevant to issues of religion, rhetoric, and their intersection. To

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<sup>60</sup> *Outward, Visible Propriety*, 2.

<sup>61</sup> “Eighteenth-Century Scottish Intellectual Inquiry,” 84.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

better understand and fairly interpret these texts, they are also considered in light of their historical and sociological contexts and are seen as both receiving and responding to other texts, ideas, and forces. The texts in question also are understood to have pragmatic as well as theoretical intentions.

It is also assumed in interpreting these texts that an author's cultural climate can narrow the range of safe positions he or she is able or willing to argue, and to limit as well the range of acceptable ways those positions can be argued. Without invoking the ideas of Leo Strauss uncritically, it is understood that sometimes an author's ideas can be usefully considered in light of what the author does *not* write, or writes in a hidden and indirect manner. It is not to be assumed, for example, that a simple statement of religious faith can be taken on face value. For instance, it is unwise to take seriously Hume's technical praise for Christianity in his *Dissertation on the History of Natural Religion* (1757) that "happily this is the case with Christianity... that it is free from a contradiction, so incident to human nature" as to "sometimes [degrade God] to a level with human creatures in his powers and faculties; while at the same time... [ascribe] to him suitable infirmities, passions, and partialities of the moral kinds."<sup>63</sup> It is plausible to hear in this nod to the assured truth of Christianity a note of irony or perhaps a self-preserving bid to placate Kirk power. This reading however can be deduced from Hume's other works, his contemporary reputation, and the tenor of the work as a whole. So while a text can be read with awareness of possible insincerity, it should also be read in light of an author's ultimate desire to express and share a vision of reality. Else, why would they write?

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<sup>63</sup> In *Four Dissertations*, 49-50.

This dissertation approaches the texts in three ways: first, with attention to the biographies and social contexts of their authors; second, with attention to the historical, intellectual, and cultural contexts in which the texts were produced; and third, with especially close attention to the words of the texts themselves. Two distinct theoretical approaches are therefore used and integrated in this study: an attention to history and an attention to philosophy. The bulk of attention in the following pages is consequently given to the sources of the *Lectures* and *Philosophy*, the needs and concerns that drove Blair and Campbell to produce those texts, and the theoretical and philosophical content of both works. The particular decisions of eighteenth-century Scottish universities, the long-term effects of their theories, and critiques of the political, cultural, and social implications of their works are certainly important, but lie beyond the scope of this analysis which primarily centers on providing a more clear and accurate understanding of the religious *causes* (in the Aristotelian sense) of Blair's and Campbell's respective theories of rhetoric.

### **The Meaning of "Religious Influence"**

Granting that religious ideas, practices, and institutions can shape a community's intellectual and social geography and, through that community, the ideas of individual scholars, two senses of religion— and therefore religious influence— must be distinguished.

In one sense, religion denotes a set of theological and moral tenets. Religion in this sense is a system of principles about a deity (or deities), the human being's relationship to that deity (or deities), and corresponding moral duties. As a set of

theological and moral principles (however consciously held or carefully considered), it serves as a guide to beliefs and behaviors for both the individual and the community. Religion in this sense influences the moral norms of a community through widespread, repeated influence on the views and decisions of a critical proportion of individuals within a community. In this sense, religion is most fundamentally a set of ideas.

Being just such “a system of faith or worship,”<sup>64</sup> Presbyterianism can therefore be treated as a set of theological doctrines, developed over time, and expressed in a number of texts that shaped the moral and dogmatic theology of eighteenth century Scottish Presbyterianism. These include, but are not limited to: Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (first published in Latin in 1536), Knox’s *First Book of Discipline* (1558), the *Second Book of Discipline* (1560), the Scots Confession (1560), the King James Bible (1611), the Solemn League and National Covenant (1632), the Westminster Confession (1642, 1696), and the records of the Kirk’s General Assembly.

The second sense of religion pertains to the defined social structures— the formal communities or institutions— that exist to promulgate and develop a particular set of religious ideas. It refers to social structures and cultural practices that reflect and sustain a particular theology shared at least in some measure by a social group that is defined by its members’ adherence to those tenets. Religion as an organization of people into a particular church can substantially shape and direct cultural norms, academic developments, and state politics.

Such was especially the case of the Scottish Kirk which, even from its beginning, was closely allied to civil government and the administration of Scotland’s schools. The

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<sup>64</sup> *OED*. “Religion.” [Electronic.]

Scottish national Church had been established in 1560 when the Scottish parliament ratified the Scots Confession. Through the General Assembly, the Kirk's highest governing body that met yearly in Edinburgh, and through Presbyterians holding high offices in government and education, the Kirk exercised powerful influence on civil policies as well as on the academic appointments and affairs of all the major universities in Scotland throughout the seventeenth century even despite being abandoned by James I, threatened by Charles II, and outlawed by Cromwell. It was re-instated as Scotland's established religion by the Revolution Settlement of 1696 and played a key role in ratifying and establishing the 1707 Union. By the middle of the eighteenth century, then, the Kirk had been for almost two centuries a powerful engine of social preferment and status in Scotland, a key player in matters of state and law, and a weighty influence on Scottish cultural and intellectual life—and all this aside from its culturally powerful role in directing the religious and spiritual care of the people through the licensing, ordination and appointment of preachers, its use of disciplinary procedures against wayward souls, and its acts of censorship against theologically problematic texts.

Religion in both these senses— as a set of ideas, and as an organized institution— exerted important influences on the Scottish Enlightenment generally; showing how it influenced Scottish theories of communication in particular is the task of this dissertation.

### **Dissertation Overview**

As a whole, this dissertation examines the theoretical interaction between the religion and the rhetorical theory of eighteenth-century Scotland.

Chapter 2 is an analysis of the place and importance of Calvinism in the Scottish Enlightenment generally and a demonstration of the salient presence of religion and theology in the lives of both Campbell and Blair. This expository background information serves as a prelude to the arguments of the following three chapters.

Chapter 3 analyzes how the Protestant Reformation ascribed to pulpit oratory something very like a sacramental character by making it the central act of public worship and a key source of faith. It is then argued that Scottish rhetoric theory frames rhetoric as fundamentally a matter of conversion of heart, and that this understanding mirrors the Presbyterian understanding of the quasi-sacramental character of pulpit oratory. This leads to the conclusion that Campbell's Calvinist theology of faith is in certain key respects compatible with Hume's theory of knowledge, and that Campbell incorporated Humean ideas not merely despite his religious faith but because elements of his religious beliefs were fundamentally sympathetic to certain aspects of Hume's philosophical views.

Chapter 4 is an argument that Campbell's rhetorical theory philosophically supports characteristically Moderate Presbyterian views of faith and community. Because the theological and doctrinal differences between Moderates and their Evangelical opponents have been widely misunderstood, their differences are first summarized. It is then shown that Campbell's *Philosophy of Rhetoric* speaks, not only from within, but also *to* Protestant theology in that Campbell's theory of language and communication implies that only the most fundamental and important doctrines are certain, that theology is a progressive field of knowledge that evolves over time, and that



religion exists primarily to promulgate morality and virtue rather than to define and teach specific theological doctrines and ideas.

Turning from Campbell's carefully philosophical theory of rhetoric to Blair's more practical, student-oriented *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, chapter 5 argues that the purpose of the lectures is to help form successful, polite, eloquent, British, and *Christian* gentlemen. Blair believed that Christianity provided important incentives to the practice of virtue; in light of Scottish theories of aesthetics and "moral sense" philosophy, he believed that the study of rhetoric and criticism would help young people recognize and love what is good; and as a Presbyterian, there is every reason to believe that he saw goodness, not just as a matter of social graces and civic virtues, but of Christian piety and Christian charity as well. This chapter concludes that understanding the Christian dimension of Blair's lectures enriches, complicates, and in some ways corrects other studies of the lectures.

### **Chapter Conclusion**

Given the ubiquitous presence of Presbyterian religious beliefs and practices within the Scottish Enlightenment as well as the historical power of the Kirk during the period, there is good reason to believe that religious ideas exerted a significant influence on eighteenth-century Scottish rhetorical theories. There exists, however, a significant and surprising lack of scholarship on the connections between Scottish religion and Scottish rhetoric. This study begins to fill that scholarly lacuna by showing that religion was indeed a significant influence on eighteenth-century Scottish rhetorical theory. This dissertation identifies and describes the presence of religious influence in Campbell's and

Blair's respective theories, points out reasonable resolutions to lingering questions about Campbell's *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, and offers a re-appraisal of Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*. In doing so, it contributes to a fuller and more correct understanding of Scottish rhetorical theory and to the history and development of English studies more generally.

## Chapter II

### The Religious Contexts of Eighteenth-Century Scottish Rhetoric

#### Chapter Introduction

In 1696, the Scottish Parliament passed the “Act Against the Atheistical Opinions of the Deists.” That same year, the Kirk’s General Assembly shockingly voted to publicly execute 19-year-old Edinburgh student Thomas Aikenhead on charges of blasphemy. It would appear from this dramatic illustration of Scottish anxiety over the advances of “atheistical opinions” that the religious atmosphere of Scotland was stultifying and oppressive. The deposition of Professor Simson in 1732 on account of holding “insufficiently orthodox” views, and David Hume’s inability to secure a faculty position in any Scottish university in the 1750’s would further indicate that eighteenth-century Scots labored under a rigid and close-minded religious culture.

Yet it is also the case that the Scottish Enlightenment was supported by and flourished *within* Scotland’s political and religious establishment. As a comparative study of the French and Scottish Enlightenments points out:

Scottish reformers often occupied a different place in society from their French-speaking counterparts. ... The fact that a Presbyterian minister with radical ideas [Robert Wallace] was well integrated into Scottish society underscores a major difference between the thinkers of the Scottish Enlightenment and French *philosophes*. Scottish civil society, with its emphasis on tolerance and sociability, was able to accommodate those thinkers whose views departed quite drastically from those of the majority, such as David Hume, who made no attempt to hide his

unorthodox views, whereas in France and Geneva the *philosophes* labored under the constant threat of censorship, imprisonment, and exile.<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, as Chitnis points out, “never before or since has the Scottish Church produced so many distinguished and enlightened men of letters as in the eighteenth century.”<sup>2</sup>

There is, therefore, a paradox here: on the one hand, it appears that the established Kirk was censorious and intolerant and therefore incapable of providing a positive intellectual influence—that the intellectual flourishing in Scotland could only happen after the Act of Union made it so that the Kirk “could not continue its persecuting ways.”<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, the Scottish Enlightenment thrived in large part within the Kirk’s own established centers of learning, by the Kirk’s permission, and among its ordained clergymen.

As this chapter will explain, the Scottish Enlightenment in general and its more particular establishment of English studies was nourished not only by Christian scholars in Scotland, but by Scottish Christianity itself. The followings sections will show that the Scottish drew upon a tradition of philosophical enquiry in which philosophy and science were understood to support and defend Christian belief; that the Scottish Enlightenment emerged from a tradition of Scottish Calvinist scholars who were free to pursue intellectual developments; that the Scottish Kirk essentially supported the Enlightenment; and that Scottish rhetoric was developed by men deeply engaged with the rhetorical challenges of their situation not only as Scottish Britons and Enlightenment scholars, but

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<sup>1</sup> Morere and Dawson, *France and Scotland in the Enlightenment*, 27.

<sup>2</sup> *The Scottish Enlightenment*, 44.

<sup>3</sup> Emerson, “The Contexts of the Scottish Enlightenment,” 14.

as Christians seeking to teach, explain, and defend their religious views. This chapter will therefore argue, in sum, that the Scottish religion not only *can* but *should* be considered an important influence on eighteenth-century Scottish rhetorical theory.

### **Religion and the Scottish Enlightenment**

There are three general ways religion influenced the Scottish Enlightenment: 1.) the religious dimensions of philosophical antecedents to the Scottish Enlightenment; 2.) the religious influence on the intellectual traditions of Scottish education leading up to the eighteenth-century; and 3.) the direct influence of eighteenth-century Scottish Presbyterianism on Scottish Enlightenment thinkers.

#### ***Philosophical Antecedents***

The Scottish Enlightenment owes much to seventeenth-century British philosophy, and it is worthwhile to note that these philosophical precursors largely saw reason, science, and philosophy as supporting Christian faith. For many of the seventeenth century's most important philosophers, religion encouraged science and philosophy while science and philosophy in turn supported religious faith.

Bacon's influence on the Scottish Enlightenment, and on Campbell in particular, cannot be sufficiently stressed, and Bacon had no difficulty harmonizing his Protestant faith with his views on art and science. According to Bacon, "man, by the fall, lost at once his state of innocence, and his empire over creation, both of which can be partially recovered even in this life, the first by religion and faith, the second by the arts and

sciences.”<sup>4</sup> The Cambridge Platonists— also an important and direct influence on the Scottish Enlightenment<sup>5</sup>— are another instance of Early Modern philosophy’s interaction with religious beliefs. The Cambridge Platonists were deeply schooled in theology and wished to reconcile the claims of Christianity and Christian ethics with the discoveries of the New Science:

[They] regarded philosophy as the legitimate concern of *theologians* and are distinguished by the high value they accorded human reason. They devoted their considerable philosophical learning to religious and moral issues, to defending the existence of God and the immortality of the soul, and to formulating a practical ethics for Christian conduct. ... They were... moderns in natural philosophy who accepted post-Galilean science, and propounded an atomistic theory of matter. But they repudiated mechanistic natural philosophy in favour of the view that spirit is the fundamental causal principle in the operations of nature.”<sup>6</sup>

The Cambridge Platonists were not, admittedly, Calvinist, and some who followed them moved toward deism. However, the influence of seventeenth-century British neo-Platonism in general tended to frame philosophical speculation as complementary to the Christian faith.

Many of the British Royal Society fellows also actively worked to defend Christian beliefs and morality and it is significant for the history of rhetoric in particular that it is from among these Christian men of science that the most important seventeenth-

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<sup>4</sup> Bacon. *Novum Organum*. Bk. II. 195.

<sup>5</sup> Hutton, "The Cambridge Platonists."

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

century developments in British rhetorical theory were brought forward. John Wilkins, one of the original group from which the Society initially emerged, was a “clergyman interested in science”<sup>7</sup> whose *Ecclesiastes, or A Discourse concerning the Gift of Preaching As it falls under the Rules of Art* (1646) centered upon the connections between “knowing and teaching... understanding and presentation... enquiry and communication.”<sup>8</sup> Wilkins worked to combine the New Science with the art of elocution (and he was among the first in the English language to use elocution to mean delivery rather than style<sup>9</sup>) for the sake of his more ultimate goal: preaching the Gospel message with greatest possible power and effectiveness. Joseph Glanville, another member of the Royal Society, was likewise a clergyman and also advocated a plain and direct preaching style in *An Essay Concerning Preaching: Written for the Direction of A Young Divine; and Useful also for the People, in order to Profitable Hearing* (1678). Charles Boyle published *Some Considerations Touching the Style of the H. Scriptures* (1661) specifically to give Christians rational arguments to ground their faith, and to answer “objections raised by men of wit and learning against the style... of the Scriptures.”<sup>10</sup> In his rhetorical analysis, Boyle not only defends the style of Scripture, but takes the Scripture as the paradigm and height of eloquence.<sup>11</sup> The Boyle lectures, instituted in his name the year after his death, were intended to provide scholarly discussion of the

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<sup>7</sup> Howell, *Eighteenth-Century British Logic and Rhetoric*, 448.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 452.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 451.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 466.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 477. See chapter 3 for my discussion of how George Campbell similarly saw pulpit oratory as the paradigmatic instance of discourse that kind of eloquence which converts hearts and reforms lives.

connections between religion and science. Finally, the stated purpose of Thomas Sprat's *The History of the Royal-Society of London* (1667) was "to assert the *Advantage* and *Innocence* of this work in respect of all *Professions*, and especially of *Religion*."<sup>12</sup> John Locke too saw no conflict between the methods and standards of science and the religious and moral precepts of the Christian faith.

In general, therefore, Christians saw investigations into nature as lending support to Christianity by revealing the attributes of not only an omniscient and omnipotent but also a truly Provident God. As Roger Cotes wrote, in the introduction to the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the 1713 edition of the *Principia*:

Therefore we may now more nearly behold the beauties of Nature, and entertain ourselves with the delightful contemplation; and, which is the best and most valuable fruit of philosophy, be thence incited the more profoundly to reverence and adore the great Maker and Lord of all. He must be blind who from the most wise and excellent contrivances of things cannot see the infinite wisdom and Goodness of their Almighty Creator, and he must be mad and senseless who refuses to acknowledge them. *Newton's* distinguished work will be the safest protection against the attacks of atheists.<sup>13</sup>

The principle behind this assessment of Newton's work was that atheists are defeated by a reasoned, which is to say an empirical, investigation of nature.

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 482.

<sup>13</sup> Cotes, "Introduction to the *Principia*." (1713).



That reason, philosophy and empirical investigation were Christianity's best defense is likewise a fundamental principle in Scottish philosophy of the eighteenth century.<sup>14</sup> Newton's astronomical discoveries were widely held to be entirely consistent with religious faith, and Newtonian physics taught in the Scottish universities were an important groundwork for the Scottish Enlightenment.<sup>15</sup> With the acceptance of Newton also came acceptance of the view that atheism could and should be defeated on its own intellectual ground. Evidence of this positive view of reason's role in the life of faith may be found both in Campbell's attempted refutation of Hume in the *Dissertation on Miracles* (1762) and in Blair's master's dissertation on natural law. As chapters 3, 4, and 5 of this dissertation will argue, the view that reason and religion are mutually supportive appears in their rhetoric theories as well.

### ***The Calvinist Prelude to the Scottish Enlightenment***

Faith in the reasonableness of the Christian religion was, moreover, characteristic of the specifically Scottish intellectual tradition. The seventeenth-century Kirk's reputation for oppression and intolerance is not without grounds, but it is important to realize the degree to which believing members of the Kirk supported scholarly exploration and progress. As Chitnis suggests, the eighteenth-century Kirk's accommodation of the Enlightenment would be explained if the "writings of a knowledgeable body of divines in the eighteenth century was simply a continuum and

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<sup>14</sup> McCosh, *The Scottish Philosophy*, 21.

<sup>15</sup> "Newtonianism in Scottish Universities in the Seventeenth Century," 83.

marked no break with the past.”<sup>16</sup> Scholars are indeed increasingly uncovering a tradition of scholars within the Kirk who not only maintained the Scottish universities, but actively encouraged the development and progress of ideas at their schools.

Christine Shepherd’s study of why Newtonian physics flourished in the Scottish universities, for example, concludes: “Obviously the flowering of learning in Scotland in the eighteenth century did not happen in a complete vacuum. The developments in the seventeenth century laid foundations solid enough for the universities to be able to build on and to achieve what they did in the eighteenth.”<sup>17</sup> Ronald Cant points out that there was a “general diminution of political and ecclesiastical dogmatism” after the Restoration in 1660, after which the government “in church and state, was for the most part [a pragmatic] ‘accommodation’ between those who conducted it and other elements in society.”<sup>18</sup> And, although “the Whig leaders of the Revolution of 1688 and their Hanoverian successors... demanded political and religious conformity from the universities far into the period of the Enlightenment and beyond,” their purpose “was less to control academic activity than to ensure that holders of university posts did not use them to undermine the existing [political] order.”<sup>19</sup> According to Cant, the years from the Restoration to 1730 were a time of “crucial transition,” and the era of the Scottish Enlightenment owes much to both the Renaissance and the Reformation:

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<sup>16</sup> Chitnis, *Scottish Enlightenment*, #.

<sup>17</sup> “Newtownianism in Scottish Universities in the Seventeenth Century,” 83.

<sup>18</sup> “Origins of the Enlightenment in Scotland: the Universities,” 42.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 43

[T]he belief that education and intellectual achievement should have breadth of involvement as well as height of virtuosity was the joint gift to Scotland of the renaissance and the reformation a century before, an inheritance, furthermore that would ensure that the Scottish form of the Enlightenment would be protected against the kind of brittle elitism that too often predominated elsewhere.<sup>20</sup>

Neil McCormick also cautions against a too-hasty dismissal of Scotland's seventeenth century intellectual culture and argues in his study on Scottish jurisprudence from 1681 to roughly 1830 that, "Scotland had already achieved a high degree of enlightenment before the 'Enlightenment' in its narrow sense dawned."<sup>21</sup> So while the association of seventeenth-century Calvinism with radicalism and violence has given the impression that Calvinist Presbyterians were a force of intellectual oppression (as, indeed, some were), Calvinist Christianity was not in itself hostile to genuine academic progress and clearly not all Presbyterians were intellectually stifled on account of their religious faith.

### ***The Eighteenth-Century Scottish Kirk and the Enlightenment***

Some have argued that the Scottish Enlightenment was rendered possible by the ways the Act of Union mitigated Kirk power. The Presbyterian leadership, according to this way of thinking, was "forced... by English Tories" to become more "docile" and tolerant.<sup>22</sup> Yet even after the Act of Union the Presbyterian Kirk continued to exert great political, cultural, and social power, and despite the rise of deism and religious skepticism in the years leading up to the Enlightenment, as well as the schisms, scandals, and

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>21</sup> "Law and Enlightenment." 163.

<sup>22</sup> Emerson, "The Contexts of the Scottish Enlightenment," 14.

partisan conflicts that wracked the legally established Scottish Church throughout the eighteenth century, Presbyterianism remained a critical cultural, political, and institutional force.

Pro-Hanoverian Presbyterians in particular constituted the most powerful religious influence. Episcopalians were generally “a weak force” because they were suspected of Jacobitism and, consequently were subjected to various “legal constraints.”<sup>23</sup> Since the Reformation, “Catholic enclaves” had long been mostly situated in the Highlands and islands, Catholics tended to go abroad for their education,<sup>24</sup> and the few who lived near the political and cultural centers of Scotland were similarly restricted in their influence. Catholics and Episcopalians did have some influence in Scotland’s intellectual life. The Catholic, Bishop George Hay, was a friend of George Campbell and published a Catholic catechism and a number of shorter works, including *A detection of the dangerous tendency, both for Christianity and protestancy, of a sermon, said to be preached before an assembly of divines, by G. C. (1771)* which argued against statements Campbell had made in his sermon *On the Spirit of the Gospel* (1771). George Turnbull, author of *A Treatise on Ancient Painting* (1740) was an Anglican clergyman. Yet political and institutional discrimination against Catholics and Episcopalians in general limited their influence and gave pro-Hanoverian Presbyterians the run of Scotland’s religious, political, and educational institutions.

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<sup>23</sup> Stewart, “Religion and Rational Theology,” 32.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

The views that the Act of Union tamed and limited the policies of an inherently oppressive and intolerant Kirk, and that Moderate Presbyterians were more secular than Christian<sup>25</sup> has obscured the historical fact that it was believing Christians *within* the Kirk who not only allowed the Enlightenment to happen, but *nourished* the Enlightenment in Scotland and made substantial contributions to the totality of its accomplishment. As James Cameron points out:

The religious controversies that had been raised by deists and rationalists had succeeded, at the hands of Simson, Wallace and Campbell—backed as they were by leaders in the universities—in helping the Church to reconsider its attitude to the theological formulation of its doctrine in its subordinate standards, to reassess the place of creeds and confession, and to consider at the deepest level its attitude to contemporary philosophy. ... Indeed, the Church's most acute thinkers, by challenging the dogmatism of a previous age, prompted by the attacks of the opponents of the Christian religion as well as stimulated by the new departures in philosophy and science, were not only serving the cause of religion but helping to create a liberalizing atmosphere in which the spirit of enlightenment could thrive.<sup>26</sup>

So while it is true that some members of the Kirk demonstrated oppressively dogmatic, authoritarian intolerance, it must also be remembered that Calvinist Christians *within* the Kirk actively repudiated such bigotry and intolerance. The move to greater toleration

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<sup>25</sup> For a discussion of the Moderate-Evangelical controversy in the eighteenth century, and its relationship to eighteenth-century Scottish rhetoric, see Chapter 4.

<sup>26</sup> "Theological Controversy: Factor in Origins of the Scottish Enlightenment." 128.

was therefore not a massive, under-handed loss of faith in the divinity, teachings, and redemptive necessity of Jesus Christ: the cultural movement toward greater toleration, moderation, and intellectual curiosity emerged from believing Presbyterians who wished to understand and practice their faith in a more conciliating, more effective— indeed, one could argue, a more authentically Christian— spirit.

The close connection between the Scottish Kirk and the Scottish Enlightenment is exemplified in the development of Scottish rhetoric during the period. Both the *Philosophy of Rhetoric* and the *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* were authored by men closely associated with Scotland's most important and progressive enlightenment-era philosophers: Campbell was a founding member of the Aberdeen Philosophical Society; Blair was one of Hume's closest friends. Both men were conversant with the philosophical debates of their day as well as steeped in the practice and theology of their religion. They were Christians as much as they were men of the Enlightenment, and both developed their theories of rhetoric not only in light of contemporary philosophical and social issues, but also in light of their vocation to teach future ministers, preach the Gospel, and defend their religious faith.

### **George Campbell (1719-1796) and *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1776)**

*The Philosophy of Rhetoric* has been called “perhaps the most important product of the Scottish Enlightenment's interest in the relationship between the structure of the human mind and the effects of certain uses of language on human emotions.”<sup>27</sup> It is in a number of respects exactly what one would expect a Scottish rhetoric of the time to look

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<sup>27</sup> Daiches, “The Scottish Enlightenment,” 22.

like in its emphasis on polite learning and tolerance. As Howell says, it is also in many respects what one would expect an Enlightenment rhetoric to look like: it takes into account the physical causes of phenomena; it emphasizes induction as a key element of proof and correspondingly disavows the Old Logic; it concerns itself with “human nature” and analyzes how persuasive techniques match the nature of the human mind and heart. Campbell wrote first as a Baconian philosopher interested in producing a rhetoric suited to his times. He also, however, wrote as a Christian. It was positive religious interests combined with the study of forensic rhetoric that initially brought 22-year-old Campbell to the study of pulpit oratory and the ministry, and the rest of his life he showed an abiding interest in the connections between rhetoric, philosophy, and religion.

Campbell was born on December 25, 1719 in the seaside northern town of Aberdeen, the fifth of sixth children to Colin and Margaret Walker Campbell. His father, a pro-Union Presbyterian minister, had been educated locally at Marischal College as well as in the Netherlands; his mother was the daughter of a local Episcopalian, pro-Union merchant. The elder Campbell died in 1728. In 1729, at the age of ten, George Campbell began to attend Aberdeen Grammar School where for four years he was taught a curriculum that emphasized Latin and the classics and assigned readings in “classical rhetoric and logic.”<sup>28</sup> When he was fifteen (an average age to begin university studies at the time), he commenced studies at Marischal College and matriculated with his M.A. in 1738 at the age of 19.

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<sup>28</sup> Walzer, *George Campbell*, 6.; For a wide-ranging study of the Scottish town schools in the seventh and eighteenth centuries, see Scotland, *The History of Scottish Education Volume One*, 71-113.

Campbell grew up in a theologically factious, mostly Moderate-controlled Kirk. The Assembly condemned the *Marrow of Modern Divinity* before he was even a year old. He was twelve when the General Assembly voted to depose Professor Simson on charges of being insufficiently orthodox. During his adolescence, Ebenezer Erskine formed the Associate Presbytery (1733). Erskine was officially deposed by the Assembly in 1740, at which time Campbell was in Edinburgh studying the law. His taking Moderate theological views was therefore nothing radical or rebellious, but simply a matter of taking an entirely respectable position within decades-old religious debates.

At the time Campbell was living in Edinburgh (1739–1742) it was already the undisputed ecclesiastical, political, and intellectual center of Scotland and showing signs of becoming the “Athens of the North.” The Great Awakening had started to excite discussions about religious “enthusiasm” and its contrast to “superstition.” As a member of the Edinburgh clubs and Edinburgh’s growing intellectual scene, Campbell may have been one of the few early readers of Hume’s *Treatise on Human Nature*, first published in Edinburgh in 1740. In 1742, Campbell left off pursuing a legal career and returned to Marischal to prepare for the ministry. As a new divinity student, he formed the Theological Club, a natural move by a young man who had enjoyed for three years the clubs and coffee houses of Edinburgh. It was also the beginning of a lifetime of pursuing intellectual questions by means of discourse with fellow scholars— a practice that matched his theoretical insistence in the *Philosophy of Rhetoric* that discourse is an important and necessary component of a proper philosophical method (see chapter 4).



Describing the Theological Club later in life, he wrote that “the great object of [the Club] was ... mutual improvement, both in the knowledge of the theory of theology, and also in whatever might be conducive to qualify us for the practical part or duties of the pastoral function.”<sup>29</sup> The group of “seven or eight... fellow students” took up pulpit oratory as one of their topics for discussion:

[We took up] an inquiry into the nature of sermons and other discourses proper for the pulpit, the different kinds into which they might fitly be distributed, and the rules of composition that suited each. On this subject, we had several conversations. When these were over, I had the task assigned me to make out a short sketch or abstract of the whole. This, I the more readily undertook, as it had been, for some time before, a favourite study of mine, having, when qualifying myself for another business, given some attention to the forensic oratory of the ancients, and having afterwards remarked both the analogies and differences between it and the christian [sic] eloquence.<sup>30</sup>

His interest in comparing classical forensic oratory and Christian eloquence gains even more significance in light of the importance of pulpit oratory in the Protestant tradition, and the importance Campbell ascribes to pulpit oratory in the *Philosophy of Rhetoric* (see chapter 3).

Campbell’s studies to earn his ministerial license required that he pass “a series of tests, including preparing a sermon on a prescribed text, explicating a text in Greek and

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<sup>29</sup> Campbell, *Lectures on Pulpit Eloquence* (1810), 212-214. qtd. Walzer, *George Campbell*, 7.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

Hebrew, presenting a thesis on the early church, and answering questions on Church history.”<sup>31</sup> These topics— preaching, translation, the early Church, and Church history— were consistent with the interest in the history of ideas, language, and civilization shared by many other Scots of the Scottish Enlightenment, and would remain among Campbell’s keenest interests. They are an important foundation for his approach to reading and interpreting the Bible (see chapter 4).

In the summer of 1746, following the recent British slaughter of Jacobite forces at Culloden, Campbell was licensed as a preacher at the age of 26. Two years later, having gained a good reputation for his preaching, he was ordained and granted a parish at the village of Banchory Ternan some 18 miles from Aberdeen. Although it would not be published until 1776, it was during his time as a pastor that Campbell began in 1755 to write the *Philosophy of Rhetoric*. In 1757, Campbell returned to Aberdeen, population then about 16,000,<sup>32</sup> to become minister of the city. In 1759, amid debates about uniting the two Aberdeen colleges (which union never happened), he became principal of Marischal College, “an important administrative position that involved recruiting and disciplining students, conferring degrees, and overseeing faculty affairs”.<sup>33</sup> He would also go on to serve eight times on the General Assembly.<sup>34</sup>

In the relatively short time between his return to Aberdeen and becoming principal of Marischal, Campbell helped form the Aberdeen Philosophical Society. This

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<sup>31</sup> Walzer, *George Campbell*, 8.; Suderman, *Orthodoxy and Enlightenment*, 26.

<sup>32</sup> Adams, *Cargoes of Despair and Hope*, 213.

<sup>33</sup> Walzer, *George Campbell*, 8.

<sup>34</sup> Horner, *Nineteenth-Century Scottish Rhetoric*, 24.

gathering of scholars soon came to form the impressive Northern branch of the Scottish Enlightenment:

The questions the Society entertained in its twice-monthly meetings reflected the several pursuits of its members, who were professionally interested in natural science and medicine, as well as philosophy, theology, and language. Campbell, who had wide-ranging interests himself, seemed to use the Society to reflect on the ‘philosophy of mind’ in its relationship both to rhetoric and to theology. The society provided good company for Campbell’s psychological reflections (as well as his reflections on rhetoric...). Thomas Reid and Alexander Gerard (among others) were philosophically minded divines.<sup>35</sup>

The works of Hume by then had become quite notorious in Scotland for his very public agnosticism and were a lively topic of discussion within the Society— so much so, that its members even considered him a kind of *in absentia* member of the group. Reid famously wrote to Hume that the “little Philosophical Society” at Aberdeen, of which he and Campbell and Gerard were all members, “is much indebted to you for its entertainment. Your company would, although we are all good Christians, be more acceptable than that of St. Athanasius. ... If you write no more in morals, politicks, or metaphysics, I am afraid we shall be at a loss for subjects.”<sup>36</sup> The influence of both the Scottish School of Common Sense and of Hume’s philosophy on Campbell’s *Philosophy* has been a lively subject of scholarly interest.

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<sup>35</sup> Walzer, *George Campbell*, 9.

<sup>36</sup> J. Y. T. Grieg, *The Letters of David Hume*, 2 vols. (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1932), 1:376n.4. quoted by Bitzer, xi.

By the time the *Philosophy* was published in 1776, Campbell had been working at the intersection of philosophy and religion for over thirty years. In 1762, he had made an international name for himself with the publication of his *Dissertation on Miracles*, a refutation of Hume's attack on the belief in Christian miracles and, according to Walzer, "important as an aid to understanding Campbell's rhetorical theory."<sup>37</sup> It is still considered the best eighteenth-century attempt to refute Hume's essay on the subject, and is the only one to which Hume responded. In 1771, Campbell was elected a Professor of Divinity at Marischal, and in the next few years taught systematic theology and pulpit eloquence to future ministers, as well as published several sermons that assume and advocate a Moderate view of religion. Three sets of his Marischal lectures were published posthumously: *Lectures on Ecclesiastical History* (1800), *Lectures on Systematic Theology and Pulpit Eloquence* (1807), and *Lectures on the Character on the Pastoral Character* (1811). Those lectures reveal Campbell's views that religious doctrine emerges and progresses through scholarly investigation and discourse, that pulpit eloquence is the central task of the Christian pastor, and that virtue is the central task of pulpit oratory. His translation of the *Four Gospels* in 1789 garnered relatively little interest or praise, but it is significant to this study that Campbell thought of it as his most important accomplishment, and that he had been working on it at the same time that he was writing the *Philosophy of Rhetoric*. Campbell died in 1796.

When it was published, the *Philosophy* was noted for its modernity but reviewers did not "single out those features of Campbell's theory that are of interest to us: they

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<sup>37</sup> Walzer, *George Campbell*, 113.

neither probe its basis in empiricism, nor comment on the way Campbell's work synthesizes modern and ancient perspectives."<sup>38</sup> Adam Smith in a note to the publisher William Strahan wrote that, "There is good sense, and learning, and philosophy in Campbell's Book. But it is so unfashioned that I am afraid you will not be a great gainer by it."<sup>39</sup> Because of its philosophical significance, and despite being so "unfashioned," the *Philosophy* proceeded to go through numerous printings over the next century.<sup>40</sup> The most interesting opinion on the book, however, can never be known. James Boswell wrote that on his visit to Hume's deathbed he saw that the philosopher "had before him Dr. Campbell's *Philosophy of Rhetoric*,"<sup>41</sup> but he did not ask Hume what he thought of his old opponent's work on the art and science of persuasion.

The *Philosophy of Rhetoric* is a seminal rhetoric text. Campbell famously defines rhetoric as the art of *all* discourse, and throughout the *Philosophy* employs the principles of Bacon's *Advancement of Learning* (1605) and his *New Organon* (1620). It has been described as a psychological rhetoric, focusing as it does on the hearer, and it is in Campbell's "attempt to link rhetoric with the psychological principles of the human mind that Campbell may, indeed, be said to bring us into a new country."<sup>42</sup> For similar reasons, it is called "managerial." In incorporating Hartley's theory of associationism, Campbell inclines to at least some degree of mechanism. Campbell's "attack on the

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<sup>38</sup> Walzer 11; Also, see Ulman, "Discerning Readers," 82-84.

<sup>39</sup> Entry for 19 June 1775, quoted by Suderman, *Orthodoxy and Enlightenment*, 37.

<sup>40</sup> For a list of the dates and locations of the editions and printings of the *Philosophy*, see Bitzer, "Introduction," liii-lv.

<sup>41</sup> Boswell, qtd. by Walzer, *George Campbell*, 12.

<sup>42</sup> McDermott, "George Campbell and the Classical Tradition," 409.

sylllogism” in the *Philosophy* is also an important moment in the history of rhetoric for, as Horner notes, “he was attacking the base and foundation of traditional logic. In shifting deduction in the syllogism to induction and the scientific method of Bacon and Reid, he was changing the fundamental nature of logic and rhetoric.”<sup>43</sup> Campbell, as a founding member of the Aberdeen Philosophical Society (“the Wise Club”) and close colleague of Reid, Beattie, and Gerard, also clearly incorporates elements of Reid’s Scottish Common Sense Philosophy.

Campbell’s rhetoric theory has been described and analyzed in a number of important works. Howell’s description and discussion of the philosophical background and context of Campbell’s *Philosophy* in his *Eighteenth-Century British Logic and Rhetoric* (1971) is an important point of departure since it offers an explanation of how Campbell’s rhetorical theory compares with other contemporary British rhetoric texts and those of the preceding century. Howell emphasizes Bacon as one of the most important philosophical influences on Campbell, but it is Lloyd Bitzer’s revised introduction to the most recent critical edition of the *Philosophy* (1988) that highlights similarities between Campbell’s epistemology and that of Hume. Howell pays little attention to any religious elements in Campbell’s *Philosophy*, and Bitzer, while acknowledging Campbell’s religious commitments, does not see Campbell’s theology to be germane to his *Philosophy of Rhetoric*:

It is important to recognize that Campbell’s *Rhetoric* does not explicitly announce what he understood to be the greatest and most decisive of all facts: that all of

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<sup>43</sup> Horner, *Nineteenth-Century Scottish Rhetoric*, 40.

nature, including human nature, is God's creation; that God has miraculously interrupted nature in order to speak to His creatures; and that the most important moral and factual truths are vouchsafed by God. Campbell held these views as a theologian and clergyman; but at the same time, as a firm empiricist, he embraced the new science of the eighteenth century. Thus a critical distinction between the natural world and the supernatural—between what we know upon natural grounds and what we know from revelation—underlies his philosophy and theory of rhetoric.<sup>44</sup>

The following chapters show, however, that Campbell's religion did not simply co-exist with his scientific views but that the two intersect in his *Philosophy*, and that an understanding of this intersection can help resolve particular questions Bitzer raises about Campbell's philosophy.

Jeffrey Suderman's discussion of Campbell and his extensive Christian interests in *Orthodoxy and Enlightenment* (2001) develops at great length the fact, initially brought forcefully to attention by Dennis Bormann (1985), that Campbell was above all a theologian. In his book-length study, Suderman seeks to "restore religious thought to its rightful place at the very centre of eighteenth-century Scottish concern"<sup>45</sup> by reconstructing "the George Campbell that eighteenth-century audiences knew" and show "what was representative in his thought."<sup>46</sup> Suderman emphasizes Campbell's contribution to the Enlightenment and shows that Hume's skepticism and philosophy are

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<sup>44</sup> "Introduction," xviii-xix.

<sup>45</sup> *Orthodoxy and Enlightenment*, 7.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

not representative of the Scottish Enlightenment, but he does not note the more particular intersections between religious thought and rhetorical theory that are the contributions of this dissertation.

Art Walzer's biography of Campbell and analysis of Campbell's works in *George Campbell: Rhetoric in the Age of Enlightenment* (2003) is the most recent study of length and importance on Campbell's works. Like Bitzer, Walzer emphasizes its philosophical and epistemological component. His main concern is to show that Campbell's *Philosophy* "should be read as an attempt to provide a modern (eighteenth-century) theory that accounts for classical rhetoric" and, in doing so, "offers... a fresh analysis of concerns fundamental to rhetorical theory since Aristotle."<sup>47</sup> Walzer, however, dismisses the idea that Campbell's theology has anything to do with Campbell's rhetoric. In a 2003 review of Suderman's *Orthodoxy and Enlightenment*, Walzer asserts:

To me, Suderman's seems a wrong-headed approach to Campbell, whose work (except for the *Philosophy of Rhetoric*) is as unremarkable as it is representative, but his perverse accounting of Campbell's achievement does not much compromise the usefulness of a book that is a model of scholarship. ... Suderman claims that he has found in Campbell's interest in empiricism and his commitment to traditional Christianity the basis for a coherent 'moderate' philosophy. He does about as well as can be done in making this case but in the final analysis, his own findings do not bear out this conclusion. ... Campbell was an accomplished scholar, but he took as his mission defending and spreading the Word. As a

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<sup>47</sup> Walzer, *George Campbell*, 4.



thinker, he is most interesting when he feels most free of his mission.<sup>48</sup>

Although Walzer is quite right to resist allowing Campbell's religious beliefs to assume an undue proportion of influence, this dissertation will demonstrate that Walzer is wrong to resist considering what Campbell's religion meant for his *Philosophy of Rhetoric*.

### **Hugh Blair (1718-1800) and the *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (1783)**

Published in 1783, the text of Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* was the other major instance of rhetorical theory to emerge from Scotland in the second half of the eighteenth century. Derived in significant part from French aesthetic theory as found in the works of Rollin, Fenelon, and others, as well as British aesthetic theory as evinced by Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, Addison, Burke, and Kames, Blair's lectures are the best example of how an eighteenth-century belletristic approach to literature would apply principles of criticism, taste, beauty, sublimity, judgment, and cultural difference to the production, and reception, of various types of human discourse. Working within this Scottish tradition of aesthetic theory, as well as the Scottish Common Sense philosophical tradition, Blair held, as Vincent Bevilacqua argues, that "Man has...an internal sense of beauty which, working in concert with the moral sense, allows him to judge the beauty of actions as well as objects,"<sup>49</sup> and that "human nature is so constituted that verbal discourse originates in those faculties, capacities and senses which discoveries in contemporary psychology revealed are common to man— perception, memory, understanding, reason, imagination, judgment, genius— and an amalgam of original

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<sup>48</sup> Walzer, "Review." 310-312.

<sup>49</sup> "Philosophical Assumptions Underlying Hugh Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*." 160.

senses which provides intuitive knowledge of moral, aesthetic, and epistemological truths.”<sup>50</sup>

As Herman Cohen points out, “while Hugh Blair’s theories are derivative of the philosophies of his time, his *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* was the first British work in which these ideas were applied to oral communication.”<sup>51</sup> In taking seriously the task of appreciating and critiquing both the literature and language of his day, Blair also “helped reform rhetoric to make it a useful method of literary criticism, shifting the discipline from concentrating it solely on the ‘creative act’ to addressing issues of ‘the interpretive act.’”<sup>52</sup> Being both more attractively written as well as more practical in purpose, the lectures proved much more popular than Campbell’s *Philosophy of Rhetoric* and have been called “a blueprint for the 20<sup>th</sup> century American Department of English” given the “striking” extent of “parallels between the structure and curriculum and even attitudes of English departments and the lectures...— the concerns for language in general, composition, literary genres, and critically informed taste.”<sup>53</sup>

Assessments of the *Lectures* have widely varied: it has been described as a “wholly mediocre and pedestrian work”<sup>54</sup>; as “intentionally eclectic”<sup>55</sup>; as “adumbrating, as no comparable earlier work does, the range of interests still pursued in many university

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 152.

<sup>51</sup> “Hugh Blair’s Theory of Taste,” *The Quarterly Journal of Speech*. 265.

<sup>52</sup> Horner, “The Eighteenth Century,” 117.

<sup>53</sup> Kneupper, “The Most Significant Passage,” 290.

<sup>54</sup> Ehninger and Golden, “The Extrinsic Sources of Blair’s Popularity,” 16.

<sup>55</sup> Bevilacqua, “Philosophical Assumptions Underlying Hugh Blair’s *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*,” 151.

literature courses.”<sup>56</sup> Some characterize Blair’s rhetorical theory as neo-classical because of its emphasis on standards of beauty,<sup>57</sup> while others see in his lack of interest in the canon of invention and his emphasis on the more personal elements of style and taste a distinctly Romantic flavor.<sup>58</sup> Blair’s analysis of style has been called one of his most interesting and important contributions to rhetorical theory.<sup>59</sup> Some scholars have seen the total effect of his theory to be the narrowing of rhetoric in ways that served to advance cultural elitism (Miller, Crawford, Eagleton, Broadus, Corbett); others have taken a more positive view of what it attempts (McKenna, Agnew, Longaker, McIlvaney). It is clear, however, that to understand Blair’s rhetoric theory is to understand a significant moment in the history of rhetoric and the history of English studies.

It is also clear that Blair’s close affiliation with the Presbyterian Kirk was, as it was for Campbell, ultimately a nurturing and productive force for his rhetorical theory and that he felt no contradiction between his religious beliefs and Enlightenment views. A year older than Campbell, Blair was born in 1718 and attended Edinburgh High School where he was taught classical rhetoric “with special attention to Ciceronian rhetoric,”<sup>60</sup> undertaking especially in his final year there “heavily rhetorical studies.”<sup>61</sup> He enrolled

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<sup>56</sup> Alastair Fowler, “The Leavis of the North: The role of Hugh Blair in the foundation of English literary studies.” *Times Literary Supplement*. August 14, 1998. 4.

<sup>57</sup> Skopec, “The Most Significant Passage,” 297-300.

<sup>58</sup> Ehninger and Golden, “The Intrinsic Sources of Blair’s Popularity,” 20-21; Corbett, “The Most Significant Passage,” 287.; Ehninger, “Campbell, Blair and Whately: Old Friends in a New Light,” 268.

<sup>59</sup> See Schmitz, *Hugh Blair*, 105; Howell, *Eighteenth-Century British Logic and Rhetoric*, 105; Warnick, “The Most Significant Passage,” 301; Cohen, “The Most Significant Passage,” 281-85.

<sup>60</sup> Ferreira-Buckley, “Hugh Blair,” 21.

<sup>61</sup> Schmitz, 9.

at the University of Edinburgh in 1730 and earned a Master of Arts in 1739. Blair's early interest in aesthetic topics appears in an early essay he wrote *On the Beautiful*, and in his dissertation (written in Latin) on *The Principles and Obligations of Natural Law* (1739) which held "that benevolence to man and duty to God constitute the pattern of man's life according to law and nature." Even at the beginning of his studies, then, Blair "showed the strong currents of Shaftesbury, Butler, and Hutcheson."<sup>62</sup> Throughout his life, he continued to work within a network of ideas that included classical rhetoric, Presbyterian theology, and the progressive moral and aesthetic theories of the day.

He was licensed to preach in 1741 and, although reputed by some to be poor at delivery, was nevertheless popular and went on to hold a number of socially prominent positions. He began his ministerial career at Canongate Church in 1743, moved to Lady Yester's Church in 1754, and then took the prestigious position as pastor of the High Church at St. Giles in 1758. In Edinburgh, he associated with some of the most important and influential Scottish scholars of his day. He knew Hume and Kames well, sat on the General Assembly at least nine times, was a close associate of Principal Robertson and other Moderate Enlightenment clergymen, and was sought out by Robert Burns, James Boswell, and other aspiring writers. In 1756, Blair came indirectly under harsh criticism from his old classmate John Witherspoon (later president of Princeton), whose *Ecclesiastical Characteristicks* (1753) was a popular satirical indictment of the secularism among Moderate clergy. Witherspoon's criticisms were provoked in part by

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<sup>62</sup> Schmitz, 15.

the controversial performance of Rev. John Home's play, *Douglas*, which Blair personally supported.

Blair attended Adam Smith's series of lectures on rhetoric and *belles lettres*, delivered by Smith at Kames' invitation perhaps three times between 1748 and 1751.<sup>63</sup> The lectures did much to shape Blair's own rhetorical theory, and to Smith may partially be attributed Blair's incorporation of ideas that Smith had originally received (albeit not uncritically) from Francis Hutcheson while Smith was a student at Glasgow from 1737-1740.<sup>64</sup> In 1751 Smith moved from Edinburgh to Glasgow to become Professor of Logic, a position that traditionally included teaching rhetoric.<sup>65</sup> After becoming Professor of Logic Smith still taught rhetoric privately, but he had all his notes burned before he died in 1790. A set of student's notes from this private class was discovered in a library in Lothian in 1962 and are thought to closely mirror the lectures he gave in Edinburgh during the winter of 1748-51. If so, they do indicate real depth of influence on his Edinburgh successors, Robert Watson and Hugh Blair.

Watson, like Hutcheson and Blair, was also an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Kirk. In 1760, he moved to St. Andrew's to take the position of Professor of Logic, Rhetoric, and Metaphysics that had been established there in 1747.<sup>66</sup> In 1759, Blair took over giving the lectures on rhetoric and *belles lettres* and in 1761 (the same

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<sup>63</sup> McKenna, 15.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>65</sup> Moran, 208.; Bryce, 9.

<sup>66</sup> A few decades earlier, St. Andrews had been the first Scottish university to consider endowing a Chair of Eloquence. (Crawford, *The Scottish Invention of English Literature*, 2.) Watson, at the very least, thus helped create a nationally consistent Scottish rhetoric by bringing to Adam Smith's view of rhetoric to St. Andrews. What he contributed to or developed of Smith's theories, however, remains uncertain.

year Thomas Sheridan delivered a popular course on elocution in Edinburgh) the Edinburgh town council created an “unsalaried university chair specifically for [Blair]” at the University of Edinburgh. At this point, Blair shifted his lectures into the university curriculum, and when George III endowed the chair he then became the first person to hold the newly-minted chair of Regius Professor of Rhetoric and *Belles Lettres*, the “first of its kind” in all of Britain.<sup>67</sup> Effectively, this was the moment in which English Studies became an academic discipline. It was therefore Blair— Smith having gone to Glasgow, and Watson to St. Andrews— who assumed the position that would do most to “define what would become of the English department.”<sup>68</sup>

Upon his retirement in 1783, Blair published his university lectures, which, in Graham’s phrase, “made him the literary pope of Scotland.”<sup>69</sup> Blair’s audience both for his published sermons and his published lectures was diverse. On the one hand, he addressed himself to his friends, colleagues, and parishioners— members all of Edinburgh’s intellectually and socially elite, and including such heterodox luminaries as Kames, Smith, and Hume (all of whom had pews at St. Giles church) as well as leading Moderate clergymen like Principal Robertson, Jupiter Carlyle, and John Home. As a published writer, he wrote also for an international, primarily British, Protestant, but religiously diverse readership. By then he was already famous for his editions of Shakespeare and his enthusiastic analysis and defense of the “ancient” *Ossian* epic that

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<sup>67</sup> Moran, 208.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>69</sup> Graham, *Scottish Men of Letters*. 129

the young poet James Macpherson claimed to have discovered among the Highlanders and translated from the ancient Gaelic.

Blair died in 1800 and his posthumous reputation as a scholar soon sank. The *Ossian* poem was officially judged a hoax in 1805. The withering judgment of Robert Burns came to light: that, “Dr. Blair is merely an astonishing proof of what industry and application can do.”<sup>70</sup> Blair’s *Sermons* (1777), although popular in his day, did not survive the criticism of nineteenth-century Evangelical Presbyterians who disapproved of the degree to which Blair “tended to address moral rather than theological questions likely to offend his audience”<sup>71</sup> rather than proclaim the depravity of man and the necessity of Christ’s redemption. The *Lectures*, however, endured with a life of their own.

Aside from Blair’s more immediate reasons to publish his lectures upon his retirement—namely, the fact that his lectures were circulating among students anyway and that he was offered £1500 for their copyright by London and Edinburgh publishing firms—there were widely-recognized economic, cultural, and social factors that created the conditions for their “immense popularity... unrivaled by any language text for a full half-century.”<sup>72</sup> The growth of popular interest in literary criticism over the course of the

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<sup>70</sup> Schmitz, *Hugh Blair*, vii. Liam McIlvaney has argued that Robert Burns, although usually cited as having been scornful of Blair, in fact saw him “as a fine writer and excellent critic,” and that the relationship between Burns and Blair was “marked by class tension, but also by admiration, a degree of friendship, and mutual— if qualified— respect for the other’s literary abilities.” (“Hugh Blair, Robert Burns, and the Invention of Scottish Literature,” 26.)

<sup>71</sup> Moran, “Hugh Blair,” 21.

<sup>72</sup> Ferreira-Buckley and Halloran. “Editors’ Introduction.” xv; For an important and illuminating study on the publication record of Blair’s lectures, see Stephen L. Carr, “The Circulation of Blair’s ‘Lectures.’” *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*. 32.4 (Autumn 2002), 75-104.

century had created a public market for such works. The more democratic social and political conditions of the eighteenth century and an increasingly established print culture called for a new rhetorical theory to match these new rhetorical circumstances.<sup>73</sup> The cultural and linguistic move away from Latin in scholarship, pulpit oratory, legal debate, and business correspondence meant that students no longer needed to know how to write in Latin but how to speak and write well in English.

In Scotland, this general shift toward the vernacular was complicated and heightened by lively interest in acquiring skills in speaking and writing a purified, London English. While “Scotticisms” were felt to be the linguistic stamp of backwardness, provincialism, and lack of social polish, facility with British English marked a Scot as an educated, properly socialized, respectable Briton and helped gain a more respectful hearing. It was therefore common for Scottish intellectuals like Hume, Reid, and Campbell to scour their work of “impurities.” Blair’s lectures spoke directly to such preoccupations and concerns, and addressed his well-disposed audience persuasively. Blair held that rhetoric improves not only a person’s address, but the mind itself: “True rhetoric and sound logic are very nearly allied. The study of arranging and expressing our thoughts, with propriety, teaches to think, as well as to speak, accurately” (5). The study of criticism, Blair pointed out, is also intrinsically worthwhile: “True criticism,” he wrote, “is a liberal and humane art. It is the offspring of good sense and refined taste. It aims at acquiring a just discernment of the real merit of authors” (6). He then presented his material in a clear and digestible form, beginning with four lectures

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<sup>73</sup> Ferreira-Buckley and Halloran, xv.



“on the nature of taste, and upon the sources of its pleasures.”<sup>74</sup> Blair’s view on the meaning and educational value of taste is characterized by Sher as “a profoundly conservative doctrine, in that it emphasizes the limited extent of human control over the world, the desirability of total resignation to the will of God, and the insignificance of one’s social ‘station’ for the attainment of true happiness.”<sup>75</sup> While this can be characterized as Stoic, it can also be clearly characterized as Calvinist.

Blair continues with four lectures on “the consideration of language”; fifteen lectures on style; ten lectures on “eloquence properly so called, or publick speaking in its different kinds”; and thirteen lectures on the “the most distinguished species of composition, both in prose and verse.” As Howell points out:

Like Adam Smith, George Campbell, and Joseph Priestley, Blair considered that modern rhetoric is rightfully the theory not only of the three spoken kinds of oratory, but also of the kinds of writing as well. He intended his lectures on taste to represent a theoretical approach to compositions primarily designed to please and to move. He intended his lectures on language and style to represent a theoretical approach to the medium in which the effects of pleasure and persuasion and instruction are produced. He intended his lectures on eloquence to represent a theoretical approach to persuasion as it can be accomplished in oratory. And he intended his lectures on the forms of composition to represent an illustrative critical approach to works embodying all the principles by which

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<sup>74</sup> Howell, *Eighteenth-Century British Logic and Rhetoric*, 670.

<sup>75</sup> Sher, *Church and University in the Scottish Enlightenment*, 147.

discourses achieve the capacity to instruct, or persuade, or move, or please mankind.<sup>76</sup>

There is also in Blair's lectures a ubiquitous awareness of morality and religion as he repeatedly points to the ways that the study of rhetoric and *belles lettres* can and should contribute to the development and improvement of moral sensibility.

Recent scholarship on Blair has started to take note of positive moral dimensions in the lectures. Liam McIlvaney has argued that Blair's lectures reflect that the Scottish elite, "[w]hile alert to the advantages of integration into 'Britain' on Anglocentric terms,... remained cognizant of, and anxious about, the moral and cultural cost of 'improvement.'"<sup>77</sup> Mark Longaker has more particularly argued that, "[i]n turning to Hugh Blair, we find an eighteenth-century Scottish rhetorical theorist who proposes that the practice of a virtuous rhetorical style can offset economic excess" and that "among rhetoricians, Blair offers us the most developed answer to the problem of consumptive excess."<sup>78</sup> My own argument about Blair's lectures in chapter 5 similarly revolves around the moral dimensions of Blair's lectures. It shows that Blair not only consciously addressed morality (as McIlvaney indicates) and directly encouraged the virtues of sincerity, moderation, and tolerance (as Longaker argues), but that he also encouraged the specifically Christian virtues of charity and piety. The study and practice of producing effective rhetoric and the acquisition of a correctly formed taste in judging works of

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<sup>76</sup> Howell, *Eighteenth-Century British Logic and Rhetoric*, 670.

<sup>77</sup> "Hugh Blair, Robert Burns, and the Invention of Scottish Literature," 27.

<sup>78</sup> "The Political Economy of Rhetorical Style: Hugh Blair's Response to the Civic-Commercial Dilemma," 180.

*belles lettres* were exterior complements of the inner qualities of the *Christian* British gentleman. This study will therefore help round out the more recent re-appreciation of Blair's *Lectures*, and help fulfill the need to explore the Christian dimension of Blair's lectures noted by Richard Sher in 1985,<sup>79</sup> and again by Gary Hatch in 1998.<sup>80</sup>

### **Chapter Conclusion**

While some members of the eighteenth-century Scottish Kirk were oppressively authoritarian and dogmatic, to take such believers as representative would be to substitute a distorted caricature in place of historical realities. Presbyterianism was not inherently intolerant, unjust and bigoted, and the Scottish Enlightenment did not emerge as a reaction to religion nor despite the presence of religious influence in Scottish society. Rather, the intellectual activity of eighteenth-century Scots was in many cases nourished within the Kirk by sincerely believing Christians whose pursuit of philosophical and scientific enquiries continued Scotland's religious and intellectual tradition and were seen as complementary to Christian faith.

This study therefore does not contend with nor intend to substantially revise Howell's conclusion that "the changes which took place in logical and rhetorical doctrine between 1700 and 1800 are perhaps best interpreted as responses to the emergence of the new science."<sup>81</sup> Nor does it intend to supplant the insights of studies on the sociological, material, and economic conditions of the Scottish Enlightenment. Campbell and Blair clearly developed their rhetorical theories in light of how seventeenth- and eighteenth-

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<sup>79</sup> Sher, *Church and University*. 330.

<sup>80</sup> Hatch, "Student Notes of Hugh Blair's Lectures on Rhetoric," 92.

<sup>81</sup> Howell, *Eighteenth-Century British Logic and Rhetoric*, 5.

century philosophers defined and understood what it means to be human. In doing so, they sought to articulate the science— that is, the universal laws and fundamental principles— behind the arts of communication and criticism. This view of human nature operates as a key generative principle of their rhetorical theory and is precisely what makes it distinctive and unique. Campbell and Blair spoke to a wide audience and incorporated the most current philosophy and studies of language, history, and psychology and their rhetorical theories constitute the most successful and influential effort in the eighteenth-century to ground rhetoric theory in the philosophy of their time.

At the same time, given that Kirk and university were so closely connected, that religion and rhetoric had been so closely aligned in practice since the Reformation, and that Protestants had many strong motivations to defend their belief in Scripture according to natural reason, it was nearly inevitable that relevant New Science philosophical principles would be applied to religious oratory such as an emphasis on empirical and inductive reasoning, a skeptical attitude toward the ability to acquire certainty on many matters, and a “scientific” approach to persuasion. It is to be expected then that Campbell and Blair developed their rhetorical theories also in light of their mission as Christian preachers and that their theories were shaped by the beliefs and principles of Protestant Christianity as well as Empiricist philosophy. Since both Campbell and Blair had taught rhetoric with an eye toward the preaching ministry,<sup>82</sup> the desire to provide a rational defense of religion and make religious oratory more effective can be assumed to have exercised an influence on their respective rhetorical theories. In conclusion, this

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<sup>82</sup> Horner, *Nineteenth Century Scottish Rhetoric*, 33.

chapter has shown *that* Presbyterianism should be considered an important influence on eighteenth-century Scottish rhetoric theory; *how* religion interacted with Scottish rhetoric is the subject of the following three chapters.

### Chapter III

#### Protestant Pulpit Oratory & Campbell's *Philosophy of Rhetoric*

The Scottish Reformation posed a direct and potent influence on the development of eighteenth-century Scottish rhetoric theory in so far it revised the use and purpose not only of reading<sup>1</sup> but of preaching as well. As this chapter will demonstrate, the Protestant and specifically Calvinist-Presbyterian view of pulpit oratory does indeed correlate with a number of key elements in Campbell's rhetorical theory.

It is first argued that as Calvin's theology made pulpit oratory central to the Presbyterian mission, Campbell's *Philosophy* made pulpit oratory the central and paradigmatic instance of rhetoric. That is, Campbell takes the kind of speech and persuasion that are essential to the preacher's task as a Presbyterian minister to be essential to rhetoric as such.

In Calvinism, which is the underlying theology of Presbyterianism, the highest purpose of pulpit oratory is conversion of heart and is taken to have a quasi-sacramental character. It is then shown that Campbell does not theorize *seeing* to be the essence of rhetorical persuasion (as did Aristotle), but *desiring*. This suggests that Campbell's "psychologization" of rhetoric had a specific religious context and motivation.

Finally, it is shown that Campbell's view that *feeling* is a measure of certitude correlates to Calvin's doctrine of assurance and Hume's epistemology. This establishes an important link between Campbell's religious faith and his rhetorical theory and suggests a plausible explanation for the apparent discrepancy between Campbell's appreciation of Hume's philosophy and his religious commitments.

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<sup>1</sup> See Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*, 422-50,

### Centrality of Pulpit Oratory

It is the purpose of this section to demonstrate that Campbell assigns pulpit oratory a central and paradigmatic place in his theory of rhetoric in a way that correlates in substantial ways with the Protestant re-conceptualization of religious rhetoric at the time of the Reformation. The exclusive and central place granted to rhetoric in Reformed worship practice will be discussed, followed by an analysis of how Campbell similarly makes religious oratory the paradigmatic instance of rhetoric (which he understand to include all forms of human communication).

The Reformation demanded, among other things, a new and non-Catholic form of worship. One of the most salient doctrines of the Reformation was that the Scriptures were the sole religious authority, and that the Roman Catholic Church was a corrupt, corruptive, and invalid authority on matters of faith and morals. The Scots Confession (1560) thus opens: “It is God alone to whom we must cleave, whom we must serve, worship, and trust” (I.1). This stricture to cleave to *only* God and the fear “that God’s glory was being eclipsed by false claimants to an honor that belongs to God alone”<sup>1</sup> led Reformers to condemn as idolatrous blasphemy devotion to the saints, prayers to the Virgin Mary, statues, paintings, stained-glass windows and above all the Catholic Mass. According to Catholic belief, in the Catholic Mass bread and wine become “the true body and blood of Christ... whole and entire,”<sup>2</sup> whom the people communally adore as truly present, and who is offered as a “true Sacrifice”<sup>3</sup> to God the Father. The Protestants

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<sup>1</sup> Thompson, “A Conversation with the Reformation Confessions,” 40.

<sup>2</sup> Translated by John McHugh and Charles Callan, *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, 235.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 256.

demanded a radical separation, culturally as well as doctrinally, from these old beliefs and practices. Knox insisted on this point:

For let your honours be assuredly persuaded, that where idolatry is maintained or permitted (where it may be suppressed), that there shall God's wrath reign, not only upon the blind and obstinate idolater, but also upon the negligent sufferers [of the same]; especially if God has armed their hands with power to suppress such abomination. By idolatry, we understand the Mass, invocation of saints, adoration of images, and the keeping and retaining of the same; and, finally, all honouring of God not contained in his holy word.<sup>4</sup>

Knox's views were widely disseminated and in the subsequent void left by the banishment of the worship practices of Catholic Church, the Scottish Reformers had to establish new customs of worship that would give individuals an appropriately unmediated relationship with God.

In the larger Protestant effort to eradicate all unnecessary and correlative mediation between the individual soul and God, pure preaching of the Word was substituted for the richly symbolic liturgy of Catholic religious practice, and the preaching of God's Word became "what is heard by Christians in sermons."<sup>5</sup> Because the preacher brought the Gospel to men, his words acting on souls by grace to inspire faith, pulpit oratory thus came to be situated squarely at the center of religion. The authority of the Roman Church having been replaced by the authority of the Bible text, Protestant worship therefore became primarily about *preaching*. As Nichols has put it,

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<sup>4</sup> Knox, *First Book of Discipline*, Article 3.

<sup>5</sup> Ong, "The Word as History," 20.



“Whatever else it was, the Reformation was a great preaching revival, probably the greatest in the history of the Christian church.”<sup>6</sup> According to Thompson, this was because “the root cause of Catholic errors, as the Reformers saw it, lay in a clergy and laity who were uninformed about what the Bible said and mis-informed about the Bible’s authority.”<sup>7</sup> As a result, “in the sixteenth century, Reformed churches were sometimes practically interchangeable with schools, so much did they stress the educative effect of the sermon.”<sup>8</sup> According to Ong, “[T]he [1566] Second Helvetic Confession makes explicit and strategic use of this meaning [of the Protestant mission] to advertise the high value Protestants generally put on preaching: the Confession states that the preaching of the word of God *is* the word of God.”<sup>9</sup> As the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* (1674) asserted in the century following the Reformation, “The Spirit of God maketh the reading, but especially the preaching, of the Word, an effectual means of convincing and converting sinners, and of building them up in holiness and comfort, through faith, unto salvation.”<sup>10</sup> And thus, as Partee explains, “The [Calvinist] sermon is not a preparation for divine encounter; it is itself the encounter with God.”<sup>11</sup> The way in which Christ is offered in a “rightly ordered Christian worship” in the Protestant tradition differs from the Catholic tradition in that, whereas the sermon of the Catholic Mass “must stop at the

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<sup>6</sup> James Hasting Nichols, *Corporate Worship in the Reformed Tradition*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968) 29. quoted by Partee, 43.

<sup>7</sup> Thompson, “Conversation with the Reformed Confessions,” 41.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ong, Walter. “The Word as History.” 19-20

<sup>10</sup> *Westminster shorter Catechism*, Question 89

<sup>11</sup> Partee, *The Theology of John Calvin*, 43.

portal and point the sinner to the sacraments where true communion between God and human being is realized,”<sup>12</sup> the Protestant sermon is the means of that very communion:

In Rome’s understanding of the Supper, Christ is offered *up*, to the Father; in the Protestant understanding, Christ is offered *down* (as it were), to God’s elect.

Protestants can easily and happily agree, therefore, that there is a true ‘offering’ of Christ in the sacrament; but we believe he is offered again to *us*, not sacrificially to the Father, whose wrath against the elect has been appeased forever by the once-offered sacrifice of Christ on the cross.<sup>13</sup>

The way in which Christ is “offered down” to man in Presbyterian worship is through the preaching of the Word, through religious oratory: that is, through an essentially *rhetorical* event.

The use of rhetoric in religious worship was not the novelty of Protestantism, of course, since the Catholic Mass had always included a homily. St. Paul’s epistles, St. Augustine’s *On Christian Doctrine*, and innumerable sermons and books throughout the centuries preceding the Reformation make abundantly clear that the consciously artful and psychologically sensitive use of public words has always been a feature of Christian proclamation and preaching. What was novel in the sixteenth century, however, was the radical centrality of religious oratory in the religious life of the people and the *newly exclusive* emphasis on oratory as the normal activity of community worship. In effect, Protestant oratory *was* the Protestant mission. In Protestant theology, the sermon, like the Bible itself, came to be a necessary catalyst for faith and the individual’s personal

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Gordon, *Why Johnny Can’t Preach*, 70.

relationship with God; rhetoric was thus placed squarely at the center of religious life.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries there then arose, not surprisingly, a widespread call to improve and reform pulpit oratory. The elocutionary movement, for example, was a response to the problem of poor pulpit oratory. According to Sheridan, it was because “the religion of the antients [sic] consisted chiefly in rites and ceremonies it could derive no assistance from oratory,”<sup>14</sup> and it was because the British religious ceremonies relied so heavily on oratory that ineffective preachers had produced the modern problem of irreligiousness. This irreligiousness was “far more than a theological problem for Sheridan because the decline of education, the neglect of oratory, and the disregard of preaching taken together, threatened the very future of the British state.”<sup>15</sup> Because religion was critically important for the common good, the problems for pulpit oratory were problems for society. Sheridan thus charged preachers with responsibility for “the Avancement of Piety and Virtue, by laying before Men their Duty, and engaging them in the Practice thereof,”<sup>16</sup> and in the Scottish universities, which were dominated by the Kirk and largely directed to forming men for either the law or the ministry, the teaching of pulpit oratory remained a critical part of the curriculum.

It is clear that the theory and practice of pulpit oratory were central to Campbell’s own intellectual and professional life.<sup>17</sup> As a pastor he preached frequently, and as a

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<sup>14</sup> Thomas Sheridan. *British Education*, ([1756] NY: Garland, 1970) 40. quoted by Abbot, “The Genius of the Nation: Rhetoric and Nationalism in Eighteenth-Century Britain,” 114.

<sup>15</sup> Abbot, “The Genius of the Nation,” 116-117.

<sup>16</sup> Sheridan. *British Education*.

<sup>17</sup> Herman Cohen points out that William Leechman, Professor of Divinity at Glasgow University from 1743-1776, gave a series of lectures on composition “designed to assist divinity students in preparing and present sermons” (92). These, however, were “serious discussions of rhetorical theory from which applications could be made to preaching.” Cohen concludes that “Leechman’s theories and Campbells

student, and then professor, he was also closely involved in the work of understanding the principles of pulpit oratory. He became a professor of divinity in 1771, and it was from the lectures he gave in this capacity that his *Lectures on Systematic Theology and Pulpit Eloquence* emerged.

That Campbell in the *Philosophy* places pulpit oratory at the apex of all types of rhetoric is made clear by the following four considerations: First, Campbell defines rhetoric as “that art or talent by which the discourse is adapted to its end” (lxxii), and “the grand art of communication, not of ideas only, but of sentiments, passions, dispositions, and purposes” (xxi). This definition, as Bitzer stresses, excludes “no kind of human communication, nor any subject matter [...]; whether public or private, whether poetic, scientific, religious, philosophical, political, or historical.”<sup>18</sup> Whereas in the classical tradition the term rhetoric was applied to “the territory of practical, contingent, and humane (mainly political) affairs,” Campbell for the first time defines rhetoric to include “the whole territory of human communication,”<sup>19</sup> gathering into its purview all forms of written and oral communication and tracing no distinctions between different types of human communication. In other words, Campbell takes all types of communication as variations on one type. It makes sense that, among all the types

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theories are similar,” but says this is because both were “influenced by the eighteenth century view of man that was very prevalent in Scotland at the time” (99). It is also interesting and potentially extremely significant that two such similar theories emerged from two men who shared not only a similar philosophical background, but *also* the same religion and were both so closely involved in the specific task of teaching pulpit oratory. See Cohen, “William Leechman’s Anticipation of Campbell.”

<sup>18</sup> Bitzer, “Editor’s Introduction,” xx.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

possible, *one* type would reasonable emerge as the paradigm of what all other types more or less seek to achieve and that pulpit oratory would be the mostly likely candidate.

Second, Campbell replaces the entire classical category of epideictic rhetoric with pulpit oratory: “The principal sorts of discourse which here demand our notice, and on which I intend to make some observations, are the three following; orations delivered at the bar, those pronounced in the senate, and those spoken from the pulpit” (98-99). He considers these three types of rhetoric, not because he considers them the only kinds of speech (he mentions, for example, that he will not address “the theatre”), but because he intends to use them (and it his “sole design”) to “assist the mind both in apprehending rightly, and in applying properly, the principles above laid down” (99).

Third, he repeatedly illustrates in his comparisons of the three types of oratory the unique difficulties of the preacher’s rhetorical task. Campbell does not repeat the standard laments over poor preaching in his day; instead, he says that he has been “for a long time more disposed to wonder, that we hear so many instructive and even eloquent sermons, than that we hear so few” (112). The preacher’s character must be impeccable; he speaks to a more diverse and less interested audience; his topic though more noble is more abstruse and therefore more difficult; and not only does the occasion present more challenges, the preacher’s goal is in itself more difficult because he intends to effect lasting change of heart whereas the lawyer or senator seeks only a decision in the short-term. By reason of its difficulty, then, pulpit oratory takes center-stage in the *Philosophy of Rhetoric*.

Fourth, pulpit oratory is made central by Campbell because he sees it as the most noble and important form of rhetoric. Campbell asserts that the end of pulpit oratory is “the reformation of mankind” (107), to make the hearer condemn not a particular criminal (as does deliberative and judicial rhetoric), but crime and vice itself (108). Campbell thus holds the rhetorical task of the preacher to be not only the most difficult, but also the most important. And this makes sense: if all intellectual endeavors are ordered to the welfare of mankind (as Campbell, agreeing with Bacon, had asserted), if the soul is more important than the body (as the Scriptures aver), if a convicted faith is necessary for salvation (as Calvin taught), if how and why one chooses to live is objectively more important than the material circumstances of life (as Christians believe), and if society’s well-being rests upon the majority of men habitually choosing to live their lives as faithful and virtuous Christians (as was generally agreed at the time), then pulpit oratory is, indeed, the single most important use of rhetoric.

Campbell’s treatment of pulpit oratory should therefore not be taken as merely a happenstance circumstance of Campbell being an ordained minister of the Kirk. It was not a quaint clerical pre-occupation. Religion, in theory as well as practice, stood at the center of eighteenth-century society, and pulpit oratory stood at the center of Presbyterian worship. Given the prominent place of religion in Scottish public life and the prominent role of the sermon in Scottish religion, pulpit oratory for Campbell was more than another form of discourse: pulpit oratory was the foundation of his thinking about rhetoric as a whole.

In the *Philosophy*, moreover, Campbell makes pulpit oratory not just the most socially significant type of rhetoric, but the *philosophically paradigmatic instance of discourse* (see next section). He emphasizes pulpit oratory in ways that reflect not just special attention to a form of rhetoric with which he was especially familiar, but a thoughtful and reasoned conviction about the critical significance of pulpit oratory both socially and philosophically. This understanding of the place of pulpit oratory in the *Philosophy* provides a principle of coherence for a number of otherwise seemingly disparate elements of his rhetorical theory (see section 3 of this chapter).

### **The Quasi-Sacramental Character of Presbyterian Pulpit Oratory**

In the Calvinist Presbyterian tradition, pulpit oratory is a quasi-sacramental conduit of grace and faith. Campbell correspondingly theorizes the rhetorician's essential task as a matter of moving and steadying the will of each individual audience member. The goal is to produce not merely *decision*, but *conversion*. To support this claim, it will first be shown that Calvinism ascribes to pulpit oratory something of a sacramental character; it will then be shown that this corresponds to Campbell's view that rhetoric is most fundamentally a matter of influencing the will rather than illuminating the mind.

Preaching in the Calvinist tradition having taken a new and exclusive centrality in worship, it was also called upon to fulfill the role of the banished Catholic sacraments to incite, develop and support the faith of Christians. The sermon was not technically a sacrament for Calvin, who defined a sacrament as, "an outward sign by which the Lord seals on our consciences the promises of his good will toward us in order to sustain the weakness of our faith" and "a testimony of divine grace toward us, confirmed by an

outward sign, with mutual attestation of our piety toward him.”<sup>20</sup> For Calvin, Baptism, Marriage, and the Eucharist are sacraments; not the reading of Scripture or the hearing of preaching. However, for Calvin, “the sacrament requires preaching to beget faith.”<sup>21</sup>

The Protestant understanding of the sermon’s function and power does then fulfill the definition of a *Catholic* sacrament, defined by the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century to be, “a sign of a sacred thing... a visible sign of an invisible grace, instituted for our justification.”<sup>22</sup> It was a key characteristic of the Reformation that grace flows directly to man from God without any intermediary, but there was an implicit exception for the written and spoken word. Pulpit oratory therefore took on the character of a sacrament, in the Catholic sense, in that it functioned as an outward sign instituted by Christ through His Kirk to serve as a conduit of grace to His chosen elect: “through the Sacraments, as through a channel, must flow into the soul the efficacy of the Passion of Christ, that is, the grace which He merited for us on the altar of the cross, and without which we cannot hope for salvation.”<sup>23</sup> Like the Catholic sacraments, pulpit oratory is a concession to the “feebleness of the human mind,” the human tendency to make only “a reluctant assent” to God; to distinguish the faithful believers from the non-faithful; to help Christians “recollect, by partaking of these mysteries in common, [that they] are knit together in the closest bonds and are members of one body.” These things Catholics believed their sacraments accomplished, but after the Reformation these functions largely devolved upon pulpit oratory.

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<sup>20</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, XIV.i.

<sup>21</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*. XIV.iv.

<sup>22</sup> Translated by McHugh and Callan., *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, 143.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.149.



So while Protestant theology shared the Catholic position that grace is necessary for salvation, the Protestant understanding of *how* grace effects salvation and how a Christian participates in his or her own salvation was markedly different. In the Catholic doctrine, there are two kinds of grace: actual grace and sanctifying grace. Actual grace is simply the *help* God gives a soul to find and sustain friendship with Him: a book that inspires faith, a conversation with a friend that guides one away from sin, an invitation to go to confession, and so on. Sanctifying grace, on the other hand, is the grace necessary for salvation, i.e., the divine gift of the actual *friendship* with God that is granted believers by means of their participation in the seven sacraments of the Catholic Church.

Each of these sacraments includes sacred words and actions that, by God's power and through the Church's authority, actualize what they also symbolize. That is, according to Catholic doctrine, the formal words of a sacrament (under the right conditions) carry illocutionary force as the words actually affect what they signify. According to Catholic belief, then, ordination to the Catholic priesthood vests a man with power to perform miracles so that sanctifying grace can be transmitted to the faithful through his priestly mediation: only a validly ordained priest can consecrate the bread and wine at Mass, affect God's forgiveness of sins in sacramental confession, and so on. The Reformers, however, explicitly denied and condemned any such power in the Catholic priest's sacramental language. Calvin denied the validity of priestly ordination in the Catholic sense; he saw the confessional as merely a tool of clerical power, corruption, and exploitation; he considered it blasphemy to believe that any man could bring Christ to earth under the form of bread and wine in the words of consecration at the

Mass.<sup>24</sup> Calvin retained the only two of the seven Catholic sacraments that are affected by the words of the people entering into the sacrament: namely, marriage and baptism. And while he did retain the celebration of the Last Supper, he did so under a much different understanding of what the Eucharist itself really is.

Calvin's redefinition and restructuring of the sacraments is partly rooted in his view that there is really only one kind of grace: the grace of personal salvation which comes through the individual hearing the word of God and responding to it with a saving faith.<sup>25</sup> According to Calvin, "God does not himself come down from heaven to us, nor does he daily send angelic messengers to publish his truth, but he uses the labors of pastors whom he has ordained for this purpose" (Com. 1 Tim. 3:15).<sup>26</sup> He further held that "God has two ways of teaching: He speaks to us outwardly by the mouth of men and inwardly by his spirit. 'These he does simultaneously or at different times as he thinks fit' (Com. Jn. 14:26). Preaching is the instrument of faith (Com. Eph. 1:13)."<sup>27</sup> Thus: "the preaching is the mother who conceives and brings forth, and faith is the daughter who ought to be mindful of her origin."<sup>28</sup> Calvin was educated in rhetoric himself and considered "one of early modern Europe's most powerful rhetoricians,"<sup>29</sup> and it is "a fundamental reality required for understanding him" that he believed "himself called of God in the ministry of the Word (Com. 1 Cor. 13:12)."<sup>30</sup> Knox too was trained in rhetoric, and similarly believed himself especially called by God to bring the Protestant

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<sup>24</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, XVII.14, XVIII, XIX.

<sup>25</sup> Partee, *The Theology of John Calvin*, 43-48.

<sup>26</sup> quoted by Partee, 45.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>29</sup> Jones, *The Rhetoric of John Calvin*, 1.

<sup>30</sup> Partee, 43.

Reformation to Scotland. Through Knox, Presbyterianism was deeply informed by Calvin's theology and teaching and the Calvinist view of preaching was partly why education of the clergy— and especially education in rhetoric— was so important in Presbyterian Scotland. Rhetoric lay at the very heart of the Protestant endeavor, and the Protestant mission was essentially the same *in res* as the Protestant mission. The education of Presbyterian ministers therefore especially came to feature training in how to read Scripture, how to explain it, and how to persuade congregations to take it to heart: in short, skills of intensive literary criticism, literary interpretation, and public persuasion. Such was the education that Blair and Campbell received, and the education they participated in handing on to subsequent generations of preachers.

Campbell's efforts to explain how oratory could use the physical nature of men to reach and move the mind and will was consonant with Calvin's opinion that the physical signs of the Protestant sacraments are useful for "confirming and sealing the promise itself, and of making it more evident to us and in a sense ratifying it."<sup>31</sup> It was not only with the mind of an eighteenth-century philosopher and scientist deeply influenced by Hartley's theory of association, but also as a Calvinist steeped in the traditions and practice of Presbyterian theology and pulpit oratory, that Campbell took such keen interest in the ways that sensible signs reach and move the "affections of the heart:"

A passion is most strongly excited by sensation... as it is this power [imagination] of which the orator must chiefly avail himself, it is proper to inquire what those circumstances are, which will make the ideas he summons up in the imagination

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<sup>31</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*. Bk. IV. XIV.4.

of his hearers, resemble in luster and steadiness, those of sensation and remembrance. For the same circumstances will infallibly make them resemble also in their effects; that is, in the influence they will have upon the passions and affections of the [listener's] heart. (81)

For Campbell, rhetoric is a process of moving systematically through the parts of the mind to terminate in an affected will. The understanding, imagination, passions, and will are not only coordinated; they act in a kind of linear sequence: to move the will the orator must address these parts of the mind more or less in order by meeting the understanding, then touching the imagination, then firing the passions and so moving the will. One addresses the understanding, he says, by communicating knowledge. Knowledge “dispels ignorance” when it informs the mind with perspicuity (2) and “vanquishes error” when the mind is convinced by arguments (3). Knowledge— i.e., the apprehension of *what is*— in turn furnishes “materials for the fancy” (2) and the orator’s lively and beautiful representations, narrations, and descriptions, like a kind of immaterial painting, moves the fancy to terminate “in the gratification of some internal taste” (3). The fancy, then, “culls, compounds, and by her mimic art, disposes these materials [of the imagination] so as to affect the passions” (2). The fancy, when roused, rushes along to the passions “by some secret, sudden, and inexplicable association, awakening all the tenderest emotions of the heart” (4). The passions thus act as the “natural spurs” (2) to the will, which is the seat of judgment.

It is helpful to see here how Campbell’s view differs from the classical view of rhetoric. In Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, the enthymeme, the “rhetorical syllogism,” is “the

substance of rhetorical persuasion”<sup>32</sup> for rhetorical persuasion “is clearly a sort of demonstration, since we are most fully persuaded when we consider a thing to have been demonstrated.”<sup>33</sup> For Aristotle, effective rhetoric is primarily a matter of getting an audience to think they have *seen* something. Campbell, however, does not share Aristotle’s view on the primacy of the enthymeme. He is not primarily interested in convincing the mind or producing “clear and distinct ideas” (which is, on the face of it, is that to which a fully empiricist rhetoric would aspire). He does not look to give the certitude of clear-sight. Rather, he is interested in moving the heart, and in his philosophy the goal of rhetoric is moral regeneration of the will, sanctification of desire, conversion of the spirit.

Thus it is not clarity of argument or adaptability to a particular audience but “*vehemence* of contention” (4) that is, for Campbell, the supreme qualification of the orator. For, although leading others to *see* is important in Campbell’s rhetorical theory, even more important is leading others to *desire* and *choose* the good. This suggests why “Campbell’s unapologetic acknowledgment of the importance of the passions in persuasion is among [the *Philosophy*’s] distinguishing characteristics,”<sup>34</sup> as well as why Campbell places such emphasis on “the hearer, rather than speech itself, at the center of the rhetorical situation.”<sup>35</sup> Campbell as a preacher and a teacher of preaching in the Protestant tradition was habituated to focusing primarily on the mind, and especially the heart, of his hearers. Calvinist theology’s ascribing to pulpit oratory the power of the

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<sup>32</sup> 1354a15.

<sup>33</sup> 1355a5

<sup>34</sup> Walzer, “Campbell on the Passions: A Rereading of the *Philosophy of Rhetoric*,” 72.

<sup>35</sup> McDermott, “George Campbell and the Classical Tradition,” 403.

Catholic sacraments to affect faith by the power of human speech is reflected in Campbell's view that rhetorical persuasion is more essentially a matter of correcting the will rather than of convincing the mind.

As McDermott has rightly noted, awareness of the hearer is not what was revolutionary in Campbell's thought. In rejecting mere method in favor of a more flexible understanding of how the mind works and how human beings are persuaded, convinced, and motivated, Campbell was working within a philosophical tradition wherein the mind of the hearer is given central attention. Campbell's role as a preacher, however, placed him in an ideal position to take notice and interest in this line of thought. It is therefore, perhaps, not a coincidence that it was preachers who were most capable of escaping the impulse in Enlightenment philosophy to condemn figurative language (as Locke did) as well as its impulse to fix and secure the meaning of words for the sake of scientific clarity (a desire much in evidence in the prescriptive grammars and dictionaries beginning to be published around that time). When Campbell set about offering the philosophical and scientific and psychological principles of rhetoric, he approached the topic, not only with the mind of a philosopher and a scientist, but also from the practical perspective of explaining the psychological causes of *religious conversion* and *moral reformation*. He did not focus on reason as "most distinctive of man"<sup>36</sup> as had Aristotle.<sup>37</sup> Rather, as a Protestant Christian, he took man's capacity for faith, charity and morality as the most *important* dimensions of human life.

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 405.

<sup>37</sup> *Rhetoric*, 1355b.

In his emphasis on the will, Campbell echoes something like the spirit of St. Paul, “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become [as] sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.”<sup>38</sup> For Campbell, charity (the virtue of willing the good of others) is the most important thing, and therefore the most important goal of language itself; eloquence that does not *produce* charity is empty, and confirmation that this was Campbell’s fundamental belief may be found in a 1752 sermon preached on *The Character of a Minister of the Gospel* where Campbell asserts that, “the invariable *aim* [a minister] ought uniformly have in eye is the *reformation* of the hearers in heart and life. ... Otherwise he is to his people but as *a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal*.”<sup>39</sup>

### **Calvinist Assurance and the Persuaded Heart**

The third and final point to argue is that Calvinism not only placed pulpit oratory at the center of Presbyterian religious life and established its purpose to be the conversion of the will, it also shaped an approach to emotions that is mirrored in Campbell’s theory of the passions. As will now be argued, Campbell’s view of *pathos* and *logos* reflects Calvin’s theology of faith as expressed by his doctrines of depravity, predestination, and assurance, and that Campbell’s philosophy of rhetoric is able to draw upon Hume’s philosophy of knowledge where it is compatible with this theology of faith.

An important distinguishing characteristic of Calvinist theology is an emphasis on the depravity of the human soul and the glory of God. The *Institutes* opens with Calvin’s assertion that “no one can look upon himself without immediately turning to God... from

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<sup>38</sup> Cor 13:1 (King James)

<sup>39</sup> Campbell, *Character of a Minister*, 23.

the feeling of our own ignorance, vanity, poverty, infirmity and— what is more— depravity and corruption, we recognize that the true light of righteousness rests in the Lord alone.”<sup>40</sup> Taken together, knowledge of self, in all its corruption and inconstancy and knowledge of God in all His greatness and power constitute what Calvin calls “true wisdom.” According to Calvin, simple self-reflection reveals that Original Sin has irrevocably and irreparably misshaped the soul, that man is so permanently warped and corrupt as to be incapable of doing anything good, that he is “naturally abominable to God... naturally depraved and faulty” (II.i.11), “vitiating and perverted in every part of [his] nature,” (II.i.8), “not only destitute and empty of good, but so fertile and fruitful of every evil that it cannot be idle” (II.i.8), “vicious by nature” (II.i.9), “the mind given over to blindness and the heart to depravity” (II.i.9). Even of infants Calvin says “their whole nature is a seed of sin; hence it can only be hateful and abhorrent to God” (II.1.8). All men are so sinful, in Calvin’s view, that, except in the case of Christ, it was effectively a sin against God simply to exist as a human being since every man but Christ inherits a deformed nature— not just a deformed will and a weakened intellect, but a total deformity of being, “so corrupted that it needs to be healed and to put on a new nature as well” (II.1.9).

Calvin’s “insistence on the thoroughgoing sinfulness of human beings” is common “to all Reformation confessions,” but the Scottish reformers of the sixteenth century especially framed human sinfulness “as an assertion of our hostility to God, our

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<sup>40</sup> Bk. I, Ch. 1, 1.



slavery to Satan, and the utter defacement of the image of God [in the soul].”<sup>41</sup> Thus, according to the Scots Confession, “our nature is so corrupt, so weak, and so imperfect, that we are never able to fulfill the works of the law in perfection. Yea, *If we say we have no sin* (even after we are regenerate), *we deceive ourselves, and the verity of God is not into us.*”<sup>42</sup> Thus, “we are not saved by our strength of will or by a self-generated decision,”<sup>43</sup> but only because, “God the Father, beholding us in the body of his Son Christ Jesus, accepts our imperfect obedience, as it were perfect, and covers our works, which are defiled with many spots, with the justice of his Son.”<sup>44</sup> Grace is not just necessary *for* salvation; it is the essence *of* salvation. And, because God does not necessarily elect to save all, the doctrine of predestination is “a necessary implication of *sola gratia*.”<sup>45</sup> In light of its emphasis on man’s depravity and God’s glory Calvinist theology as expressed in the Presbyterian tradition thus emphasized the doctrines of election and predestination: i.e., that it is in purely generous mercy that God grants the gift of salvation to some, and in justice allows others to remain damned by their sins.

On the same principle, the Scots Confession “confesses” and “avows” that “there remains no other sacrifice for sin”<sup>46</sup> beyond Christ’s redemptive death on the cross. Protestants agreed with the Roman Church that Jesus Christ’s redemptive atonement is necessary for salvation, and that it is a wholly free offering granted to whomever God chooses in His inexplicable wisdom, mercy and justice. The difference between Calvinist

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<sup>41</sup> Thompson, “A Conversation with the Reformed Confessions,” 39; also see *Scottish Confession*, 3.3.

<sup>42</sup> *Scottish Confession*, 15.

<sup>43</sup> Thompson, 43.

<sup>44</sup> *Scottish Confession* 15.

<sup>45</sup> Thompson, 44

<sup>46</sup> *Scottish Confession*, 9.

and Catholic theology is therefore not whether God chooses to save some and allows others to go to Hell, nor in the view that grace is necessary for salvation. Calvinism diverged from Catholicism in the understanding of the place and power of faith, charity, hope, repentance—and assurance—in the salvation process.

The Roman Catholic teaching on the theological virtue of faith states that faith is, like the two other theological virtues of charity and hope, both gift *and* choice. Faith in the Catholic tradition is an act of intellectual assent that accepts, “on the word of God,” that certain things are true and good: the divinity of Christ, the truth of His promises, the teachings of the Church. Although the ability and strength to make the act of faith is a grace—a gift of God—faith is not a state of emotion or a feeling, but an assent, a choice to assert the articles of the faith as true. The Council of Trent thus declared that faith in Christ was necessary for a soul to be saved, but declared faith alone insufficient for salvation. Although acts of hope, love and repentance are only rendered salvific by the grace of the Holy Spirit that inspires and sanctifies them, such works are part of the individual’s salvation process as he or she actively cooperates with Christ’s work to heal and perfect his or her entire being. Salvation is not a matter of God ignoring an individual’s sin, but of actually healing the individual’s heart and will. According to this principle, the Catholic Church maintains the necessity of Purgatory and the necessity of the sacraments. To live as a good Catholic requires not just receiving but also participating with God’s grace. According to the Council of Trent, no man can be certain

of his salvation,<sup>47</sup> yet one who lives according to the commands of the Bible and the Church can, through the use of confession and the other sacraments, achieve a kind of “moral certitude” of salvation.

Such assurances, however, were not available to Protestants who, having rejected the Catholic priesthood, had also lost the psychological and spiritual comforts derived from confession and the other sacraments. Good works for the Calvinist Protestant only constitute a kind of striving, groaning evidence of a right spiritual disposition and the possession of a saving faith (i.e., the faith of those for whom Jesus’ atonement for sins has been applied). God does not forgive particular sins or actually purify particular souls; He either saves the depraved sinner, sins and all, or not. Good actions do nothing to merit eternal life and are, at best, only a sign of salvation. For the Calvinist, salvation is, in effect, a matter of operatively transplanting God’s will for the human will; the Lord corrects the depraved will of men by substituting His own will entirely. Salvation is granted to those who possess a saving faith and to live as a good Presbyterian was therefore to have already received God’s grace and to choose the un-meritorious moral good as the appropriate expression of one’s faith and love of God. Although salvation is utterly divorced from action, the possession of true and saving faith does mean that a believer will persevere in faith and live a life that reflects the disposition of a redeemed and grateful soul. So while for Catholics salvation is a work in progress, for Calvinist Christians it is a *fait accompli*; it is not a Calvinist question to ask “what must I do to be

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<sup>47</sup> “If anyone says that man can be justified before God by his own works, whether done by his own natural powers or through the teaching of the law, without divine grace through Jesus Christ, let him be anathema.” (Canon 1. Paul III. *Council of Trent*, VI.)

saved” but, having heard the Gospel and embraced it, to ask: “how can I know if I am saved?” In Calvinist theology, acts of faith are not just one crucial part of an individual’s process of participating in the salvation offered by God through the merits of the suffering and death of Jesus Christ, but the indication that an individual has *already* received the benefit of Christ’s generous Redemption.

This immediately leads to the obvious difficulty that if faith is a sign of election, and if faith is an *act*, the inefficacy of all action still implies the inefficacy even of the act of faith since. A statement of faith made by the depraved will alone cannot be in itself *salvific*; it is the application of God’s atonement to the soul that is salvific. At best, it can serve only as evidence of a person’s degree of conformity to God’s ways and a *sign* of predestination. How, then, can a soul be assured it is one of the elect?

According to Calvin, the proclamation of faith in the heart is a sign that God has applied the grace of atonement to a particular individual, but Calvin held that deeper assurance is possible by defining *saving* faith as “a firm and certain knowledge of God’s benevolence toward us” and asserting that “those who doubt their possession of Christ and their membership in his body are reprobates... the only true faith is that which allows us to rest in God’s grace, not with a dubious opinion, but with firm and steadfast assurance” (Com. 2 Cor. 13:5).<sup>48</sup> Thus, Calvin held that assurance is both true faith and the evidence of election.<sup>49</sup> Salvation is predicated on faith, and faith is gauged by one’s assurance—i.e., an unshakable feeling of confidence—of salvation.

In the Scottish Presbyterian tradition, this doctrine of assurance changed over

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<sup>48</sup> Quoted by Lachman, *The Marrow Controversy*, 9-10.

<sup>49</sup> Lane, “Calvin’s Doctrine of Assurance,”

time. The *Westminster Confession* (1646) softens the doctrine of assurance and speaks of an “infallible assurance [which] doth not so belong to the essence of faith, but that a true believer may wait long [before obtaining it].”<sup>50</sup> Still, however, it held that, “To all those for whom Christ hath purchased redemption he doth certainly and effectually apply and communicate the same”<sup>51</sup> and a Christian may hope to attain “a full assurance, founded upon the truth of the Divine promises, the inward evidence of graces, and the testimony of the Spirit.”<sup>52</sup> Faith therefore remained, at root, a matter of absolute and unwavering confidence:

[W]hereas Calvin taught that faith is fundamentally passive in nature, is centered in the mind or understanding, is primarily to be viewed in terms of certain knowledge, such that assurance of salvation is of the essence of faith, and is grounded *extra nos*, that is, outside ourselves in the person and work of Jesus Christ, Scottish theology, on the other hand, gradually came to teach that faith is primarily active, centered in the will or heart, and that assurance is *not* of the essence of faith, but is a fruit of faith, and is to be gathered through self-examination and syllogistic deduction placing the grounds of assurance *intra nos*, within ourselves.<sup>53</sup>

Bell explains syllogistic deduction: “That is, one must examine oneself for evidence of election and syllogistically deduce one’s election from them as follows, A Christian is filled with peace, love, joy, etc. I am filled with peace, love, joy, etc. Therefore, I am a

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<sup>50</sup> *Westminster Confession*, 18.3. quoted by Lachman, 10.

<sup>51</sup> *Westminster Confession*, 8.8.

<sup>52</sup> Lachman, 11.

<sup>53</sup> Bell, *Calvin and Scottish Theology: The Doctrine of Assurance*, 8.

Christian.”<sup>54</sup> Besides the fact that Bell’s example syllogism is invalid and that Baconian Protestants like Alexander Gerard and George Campbell rejected the utility of syllogistic reasoning in favor of empirical induction, it remains the case that assurance—whether the emotional strength of faith, or a disposition of moral goodness— is something interior and basically emotional, and that sincere believers were driven to scrutinize their hearts for the critical signs of God’s assured favor. Even in its later mitigated form, the doctrine of assurance thus continued to encourage intense and critical self-reflection among the pious.<sup>55</sup>

As Calvinist Protestantism moved away from the Catholic view that faith is primarily an act of intellectual assent to the view that faith is primarily the conviction of a persuaded heart, Calvinist preaching came to replace not only the ancient rites of the Catholic liturgy, but also took over the role of the Catholic sacraments in providing believers peace and hope about their eternal destiny. Since the signs of election were all interior— a clear and certain confidence arising from faith that one truly believes and has been saved— then the Sunday sermon needed to be directed toward disposing the heart to clarity about personal sinfulness, divine glory, and the power of grace. The goal was not simply to explain the Scriptures, nor simply to exhort parishioners to virtue: the great goal of the preacher was to inspire the heart-felt faith of listeners.

Thus, even at the time of the Renaissance, Protestant rhetorics focused on the

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 12. f.n. 5

<sup>55</sup> Such critical self-awareness of emotional and mental states in the Calvinist spirituality is analogous to the intense self-reflection and desire for certainty found in the philosophy of Descartes, Bacon, and Locke. This indicates a congruence of disposition, an inherent compatibility, between Campbell’s religious faith tradition and his philosophical tradition of British empiricism.

emotions:

The majority of Renaissance sacred rhetorics, both Catholic and Protestant, do not favor a dispassionate, unadorned, ‘philosophic’ language [as would later be favored, for example, by John Locke] but, quite startlingly, advocate a deeply emotional and richly figured style. ... These texts unequivocally sanction the emotional power and shimmering surfaces of rhetoric, yet one could scarcely accuse them of being ‘unconstrained by any sense of responsibility either to the Truth or to the Good.’ They are simultaneously rhetorical [i.e., “pathetic.”] and serious.<sup>56</sup>

The Presbyterian preacher’s goal being to make parishioners *feel* their faith invited special attention to the dispositions of the heart and can be seen as culminating in the evangelical “enthusiasms” of the eighteenth century Great Awakening.

Despite his disdain for religious enthusiasm,<sup>57</sup> Campbell’s *Philosophy* essentially provided an explanation—and even a defense—for the powerfully emotional oratory that characterized the preaching of the Great Awakening. Whatever the differences between Presbyterian Evangelicals and Presbyterian Moderates in the eighteenth century, both at root saw the purpose of pulpit oratory to be less a matter of “showing” or “illuminating” the mind than of moving the passions. Evangelicals put greater emphasis on faith, Moderates on morality,<sup>58</sup> but all were after conversion of the will. Campbell was therefore no more interested in producing clear and distinct ideas than was George

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<sup>56</sup> Shuger, “The Philosophical Foundations of Sacred Rhetoric,” 48.

<sup>57</sup> See Campbell, *The spirit of the Gospel neither a spirit of enthusiasm or superstition*. (1771).

<sup>58</sup> Bell, *Calvin and Scottish Theology*, 8.

Whitehead, Jonathon Edwards, or John Witherspoon. Campbell viewed the management of passion (as opposed to the mere inflaming of visceral and unsteady emotions) to be practical and necessary for effective pulpit oratory; in other words, what Whitehead practiced in his revival orations Campbell explained in terms of contemporary philosophy and science. The psychological introspection encouraged by the Calvinist doctrine of assurance having focused the preacher's attention on the management of individuals' emotions (whether to create an assured feeling of faith itself, or the moral dispositions and habits that later Presbyterians took to be the more importance sign of salvation), Calvinist theology and its development in the Presbyterian tradition called for a managerial oratory and a correspondingly managerial theory of rhetoric— just such as that, it turns out, was provided by Campbell's *Philosophy*.

Campbell, however, does not hold that the management of passions is the essential mode of persuasion for pulpit oratory alone. Significantly, he goes on to make it the paradigmatic mode of persuasion for *all* modes of discourse:

To make me believe it is enough to show me that things are so; to make me act, it is necessary to show that the action will answer some end. That can never be an end to me which gratifies no passion or affection in my nature. ... So far therefore it is from being an unfair method of persuasion to move the passions, that there is no persuasion without moving them. (77).

It was not just because he was a Presbyterian minister that Campbell “*could* [italics mine] embrace Hume's view that reason cannot justify values;”<sup>59</sup> being a Presbyterian minister

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<sup>59</sup> Walzer, *George Campbell*, 78.



was the reason why Campbell *would* embrace Hume's view that morals are a matter of felt conviction. As Walzer says, "Whatever the source of Campbell's belief that reason is inert, Hume is certainly the most famous proponent of the doctrine that reason cannot establish motive."<sup>60</sup> Hume held, after all, that "'Tis not contrary to reason to prefer the destruction of the whole world to the scratching of my finger."<sup>61</sup> What is less noticed, however, is that *Calvin also* held that reason is inert. In explaining the role of the Holy Spirit in effecting conversion of heart, Calvin writes:

If you set out to convince anyone by words to do something, you will think of all the arguments by which he may be drawn to your opinion and more or less constrained to obey your advice. But you have accomplished nothing unless he in turn has a keen and sharp judgment by which to weight the validity of your arguments; unless also he is of a teachable disposition and ready to listen to teaching; unless, finally, he conceives such an opinion of your faith and prudence as may dispose him to adopt your opinion. For there are very many stubborn heads which you can never bend by reasoning. And where faith is suspect, where authority is despised, there is little progress even among the teachable. When, on the contrary, all those traits are present, they will immediately cause the hearer, whom you are advising, to obey your advice, which he would otherwise have laughed at. The Spirit does this same sort of work in us. For, that the Word may not beat your ears in vain, and that the sacraments may not strike your eyes in vain, the Spirit shows us that in them it is God speaking to us, softening the

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<sup>60</sup> Walzer. "Campbell on the Passions." 75.

<sup>61</sup> *Treatise* II.iii.3

stubbornness of our heart, and composing it to that obedience which it owed the Word of the Lord. ... (IV.xiv.10).

Campbell's emphasis on the emotions as the most powerful and important means of persuasion thus corresponds with both the Calvinist view that true faith is essentially a matter of assurance *and* the element in Humean epistemology that saw knowledge as essentially a matter of feeling. Calvinist theology disposed Campbell to see faith as a matter of feeling; but Campbell's empiricist and associationist epistemology likewise disposed him to see understanding itself as a matter of feeling as well. This helps explain the very Christian Campbell's controversially positive reception of part of the very agnostic Hume's philosophy.

Campbell did, at the same time, fully recognize the danger of Hume's total philosophy. Campbell as Reid's colleague in the Aberdeen Philosophical Society was "undoubtedly influenced by Locke and Hume," yet also grounded on Reid's "account of human nature"<sup>62</sup> which took Hume's philosophy as a *reductio ad absurdum* of Locke's theory of ideas. Campbell therefore did not accept Hume's denial of "the knowability and existence" of the distinctive powers of understanding, imagination, passions and will. As Wallace argues, "For Campbell, as well as for Reid, human nature is endowed with [these and other] distinctive powers, and it is appeals to these powers that serve to define the very meaning of eloquence and rhetoric."<sup>63</sup> Campbell, like Reid, did not find it necessary to grant Hume's radically skeptical conclusions in so far as his philosophy of human nature "effectively cuts off intellect and will from [the schema of the three

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<sup>62</sup> Wallace, "Thomas Reid's Philosophy as a Basis for Rhetoric," 39.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 40.

classical rhetorical appeals] by reducing intellect to a fuzzy form of sense impression and by denying all causal efficacy to will.”<sup>64</sup>

Campbell did grant causal efficacy to will (albeit not for salvation); but his view of the intellect does indeed have much in common with Hume’s view that an idea is a “feeling of the mind.” As Walzer has aptly summarized:

According to empiricist psychology, a passion is an impression. By evoking an emotion, eloquence can make an idea resemble in impact a present sense impression, thus creating a disposition in the audience to believe that parallels our disposition to believe what we see, hear, touch, taste and smell. Eloquence can make an absent idea have a presence in the minds of listeners or speakers that parallels the presence of an actual, nonverbal sense impression. ... [Campbell’s] comparison of eloquence to a telescope is revealing: it suggests that eloquence essentially functions by changing proportions, not by proving: it makes a situation seem more or less important, closer or farther from us. It works by manipulating circumstances, not by proof.<sup>65</sup>

In Campbell’s theory, then, assured faith and empirical knowledge are almost the same thing. Both are the conclusions not of merely analogous cognitive processes, but of the *same* cognitive process. The difference between an act of faith and an act of rational assent is essentially a matter of proximity. Certitude, in both cases, is a matter of force (i.e., “vivacity”) and proximity: the more immediate an impression, the more powerful, and therefore the more certain. For Campbell, faith and understanding therefore do not

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>65</sup> Walzer, *George Campbell*, 84.

differ in kind; they differ in degree. Assured faith and certain understanding are, for him, essentially the same kind of thing. Assent to the truth of an idea is understanding when it is immediate and powerful (it is hard to deny a lake exists as we jump into it); it is faith when it is not so immediate or powerful, when it is something we can more easily choose to deny (we *believe* a lake exists in Montana because somebody said it was there, but it is much more possible to question the claim). Hume held that all knowledge has the nature of faith, and therefore nothing is certain. Campbell went the other way. He held that all faith is a kind of knowledge, based in significant part on his theory of testimony (see chapter 4).

In short, Campbell's entire theory of knowledge lead him to see discourse itself in psychological rather than enthymematic terms, to theorize rhetoric as a technique of managing thoughts and emotions, and to see pulpit oratory as the paradigmatic instance of discourse (see section 1 of this chapter). In such emphasis on emotions, Scottish rhetoric falls into the category of those Aristotle criticized for neglecting the enthymeme to focus instead on "how to put the judge into a given frame of mind." Such views, according to Aristotle, are only "About the orator's proper modes of persuasion" and they "have nothing to tell us; nothing, that is, about how to gain skill in Enthymemes."<sup>66</sup> In the eighteenth-century understanding of *logos*, however, reason was a matter of experience, intuition, and common sense far more than a matter of syllogistic or enthymematic deduction. In light of Hartley's theory of associationism, an idea was, in

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<sup>66</sup> *Rhetoric*, 1354b20.

Hume's telling phrase, not an apprehension of the intellect but a "feeling of the mind."<sup>67</sup>

In this view, to be persuaded is to *feel convinced*<sup>68</sup> and it is no wonder that Ulman finds Campbell and his peers' "depiction of imagination, memory, and the passions as the handmaids of reason" representing not only "a truly new contribution to rhetorical theory," but "a wholly different understanding of human nature."<sup>69</sup>

That understanding of human nature, moreover, is both Calvinist and Humean. As Calvin made faith assurance of heart, so did Hume make knowledge a "feeling of the mind." It is true that "Campbell is willing to accept Hume's conclusions only in so far as he is able to reconcile them with his Christian faith."<sup>70</sup> It is also true that Campbell's views on emotion and knowledge are in some respects markedly similar to Hume's. To understand how Campbell could both accept Hume's principles while remaining a Christian, it is important to realize that Campbell's religious beliefs were in key respects fundamentally sympathetic to aspects of Hume's philosophy: In Hume's philosophy, understanding is a kind of faith based on feeling. In Calvin's theology, faith is a kind of understanding based on feeling. In Campbell's rhetorical theory, faith and understanding are indeed differentiated, but they differ only in their degree of the feeling of assurance and persuasion is essentially a matter of reaching out and impressing a feeling into the heart. Where philosophical certainty of reality ends for Campbell is where religious faith begins, and that point is significant precisely because it is so blurry.

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<sup>67</sup> *Treatise of Human Nature* I.vii:146.

<sup>68</sup> The Protestant rhetoricians' turn toward the heart can be seen as both a culmination of Empiricist philosophy *and* the beginnings of Romantic sensibility. For discussion of the relationship between Scottish Philosophy and the rise of Romanticism, see, for example, Rex L. Veeder, "Romantic Rhetoric and the Rhetorical Tradition." (*Rhetoric Review* 15.2 [Spring 1997]).

<sup>69</sup> Ulman, "The Most Significant Passage in Campbell's 'Rhetoric': The Handmaids of Reason," 27.

<sup>70</sup> Walzer, *George Campbell*, 78.

## Chapter Conclusion

In sum, Campbell's philosophy correlates with Calvinist theology in three important ways. First, in Calvinist theology pulpit oratory is at the center of religious worship; in Campbell's philosophy, pulpit oratory is the apex of rhetoric and it is held up as the most arduous, noble, and important type of rhetoric. Second, Calvinism ascribes to pulpit oratory a quasi-sacramental character; Campbell theorizes all rhetoric primarily to be most essentially a matter of converting hearts and "reforming mankind." Third, Calvin defines saving faith in terms of a feeling of assurance; Campbell makes a feeling of assurance the goal of rhetoric. This suggests that Campbell's Calvinism encouraged his emphasis on psychology and the management of feelings. Moreover, assuming that Campbell accepted Calvin's definition of faith, Campbell could accept aspects of Hume's epistemology not *despite* his religion, but rather *because* his Presbyterian formation, beliefs, and practices were fundamentally sympathetic to key elements of Hume's theory of human nature.

## Chapter IV

### Moderate Presbyterianism & Campbell's *Philosophy of Rhetoric*

#### Chapter Introduction

As shown in chapter 3, Protestant emphasis on the preaching of the Word and the nature of faith correlate in important ways with Campbell's theory in the *Philosophy of Rhetoric*. Campbell, however, does not only speak from *within* the religious practices and beliefs of his time; he also speaks *to* them. In particular, the question of authority as it touched upon the religious controversies of his day forms a rich sub-text in Campbell's work. This chapter will therefore analyze the theological implications of Campbell's *Philosophy*, demonstrate their relevance to the Moderate-Evangelical debates of his day, and call into question the idea that the Scottish Enlightenment "contributed not at all to original theological thought."<sup>1</sup>

Tensions between Moderates and Evangelicals arose from eighteenth-century Presbyterians trying to mediate a balance between the authority of reason and the authority of the Bible, the General Assembly, and the Presbyterian tradition. A brief synopsis of the Moderate-Evangelical controversies in eighteenth-century Scotland will therefore be given as a prelude to the following arguments theological positions intersect with and illuminate Campbell's rhetorical theory in three ways.

First, Moderates took seriously the philosophical questions and ideas of their time and tended to prioritize the need to effectively respond to the challenges modern philosophy posed to their Presbyterian-Christian tradition. In the *Philosophy of Rhetoric*,

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<sup>1</sup> Chitnis, *The Scottish Enlightenment*. 44.

Campbell articulated a philosophy, derived primarily from Francis Bacon, Scottish Common Sense Philosophy, and Hartley's associationist theory of the mind, in which reason points to the factual truth of the Scriptures and their reliability as the Word of God. It will be shown in this first section that Campbell founds his Protestant faith on his Baconian philosophy by positing a philosophical framework and an epistemological method in which empirical evidence precedes and checks religious beliefs, philosophy precedes theology, and human reason, as the interpreter of God's Word, operates as a final authority in matters of religious doctrine. Campbell's empirical mode of philosophical enquiry (that is, a close and unbiased reading of natural phenomena) thus neatly dove-tails with the Protestant mode of theological investigation (that is, a close and unbiased reading of Scripture).

Second, Moderates were widely accused by their Evangelical opponents of doctrinal latitudinarianism. This second section argues that Campbell's "Common Sense Empiricism" incorporates not only a Baconian emphasis on empirical evidence (as argued in section one) but also Bacon's view (strongly shared by the Scottish "Common Sense" philosophers) that discourse and communication are necessary for the development of knowledge. In his theory of testimony and common sense, Campbell posits discourse as a necessary and natural part of the human method of acquiring and developing knowledge. As Whiden, Walzer, and Manolescue have noted, Campbell's epistemological method is important for maintaining the reasonableness of Christian faith (contra eighteenth-century skeptical philosophy). What has not been noted, however, is that Campbell's theory implies that human knowledge—including knowledge of



theology— evolves over time, and that this in turn implies the necessity of doctrinal flexibility (contra eighteenth-century Evangelical dogmatism). It is further argued that as a Biblical scholar, Campbell was well aware of his rhetorical theory's logical consequences for theology.

Third and finally, Evangelicals criticized the Moderates for diminishing to an heretical extent the importance of redemption and salvation. The crux of Evangelical criticism of Moderate theology was not their use of reason to defend religion, but their substitution of reason *for* faith, for making Jesus a wise teacher *instead of* a redeemer, and for making religion a *means* to virtue rather than a virtue in its own right. Without denying Christ's redemptive power and the role of grace in salvation, Campbell, as this third and final section argues, offers a philosophical justification for the view that religion is an essentially rhetorical endeavor and that the Scriptures were given by God more to encourage men and women to live virtuous lives than to resolve niggling theological questions. Campbell's view was, again, consistent with Bacon's philosophy; it was also consistent with the Presbyterian tradition. Thus, as this final section will argue, Campbell's *Philosophy* is not only a revolution in rhetorical theory but also extends and continues the Protestant Reformation's revolution in theology.

In sum, this chapter shows that Campbell's *Philosophy of Rhetoric* delineates an epistemological theory and a philosophical method grounded in Campbell's eighteenth-century, Baconian view of human nature. Campbell sees people as sensing individuals and is therefore empiricist; he also, however, sees people as social animals, and therefore sees social discourse as an epistemologically necessary component of philosophical

method. His philosophy of rhetoric— which could, in some respects, be better characterized as a science of communication— carried significant implications for the theological and religious controversies of his day. These have been largely overlooked and mis-understood by scholars who have held that any theological dimensions in Campbell’s work pertain exclusively to his defense of Christianity against skeptical critics. Campbell, however, also defined a reasonable Christian religion for and within his own Protestant Christian community: namely, as a religion that was latitudinarian, doctrinally evolving, and primarily oriented toward real moral *action* rather than theological contemplation.

### **Evangelicals, Moderates, & the Question of Authority**

Over the course of the eighteenth century, Presbyterians were increasingly divided between the Moderate and Evangelical parties.<sup>1</sup> Some characterizations paint depict Evangelicals as rigid, ideologically Christian, intolerant, blindly orthodox, “severe and anti-intellectual.”<sup>2</sup> These broad-stroke characterizations do have some basis in reality, but such over-simplifications can be misleading and often fail to appreciate the theological substance of Moderate-Evangelical differences. Before entering into a more particular discussion of how Campbell’s *Philosophy* takes a stance on the religious controversies of his day, this section will briefly define the issues that provoked strife and division within the Kirk and offer a brief correction of common misconceptions about both parties. It will summarize the differences by defining each group according to what

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<sup>1</sup> Mechie’s close analysis traces four groups in “The Theological Climate in Early Eighteenth Century Scotland.” Also see Lachman and Bell.

<sup>2</sup> Ferreria-Buckley, “Hugh Blair,” 21.

each valued, believed, emphasized, and opposed.

Evangelicals tended to emphasize personal devotion and piety, the kindness and mercy of God, and the necessity and power of Christ's redemptive sacrifice. They tended to be suspicious of emphasizing theories of natural religion and rationalist moral systems fearing that such emphasis would reduce attention to dogmas of redemption, grace, and salvation and diminish the spirit of devotion. In a sermon given for the Scottish Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SSPCK) in 1758, Witherspoon preached that, "We live in an age in which... infidelity greatly prevails, but yet in which the cause of truth hath much less to fear from the assaults of its open enemies, than from the treachery of its pretended advocates."<sup>3</sup> Witherspoon also accused as most dangerous "that class of men, who, being nominal Christians, disguise or alter the gospel, in order to defend it. These often endeavor to give such views of Christianity, as well render it palatable to a corrupt worldly mind; and instead of abasing, will sooth and gratify the pride of man. Hence the unnatural mixture to be seen of modern philosophy with ancient Christianity."<sup>4</sup> In other words, the Evangelical problem with Moderates was not their defending the reasonableness of Christianity; their problem was that they saw the Moderates as defending only a heretically desiccated version of the Christian religion.

Evangelicals emphasized personal piety and were therefore offended by the condemnation of Edward Fisher's *Marrow of Modern Divinity*.<sup>5</sup> They also tended to be anxious to preserve doctrinal purity and traditional Presbyterian spirituality and morality

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<sup>3</sup> John Witherspoon. *A Sermon, Preached Before The Society in Scotland for propagating Christian Knowledge*, 2-3.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>5</sup> The definitive study on the Marrow controversy is Lachman, *The Marrow Controversy*.

and encouraged the Assembly's deposition of Glasgow professor John Simson who advocated theological views that looked to many like something rather different from orthodox Presbyterianism.<sup>6</sup> Evangelicals tended to oppose the performance of John Home's *Douglas* because it was not in keeping with traditional Calvinist spirituality to support idle entertainments like stage-plays. They also tended to sympathize with a more democratic view of ecclesiastical organization (a practice that was traditional by the eighteenth century, although it was not in keeping with Knox's view on the matter who had originally assumed the Scottish Church would be formed on the lines of an episcopacy). Their opposition to patronage explains the relatively lenient position taken by many Evangelicals in the case of Thomas Gillespie, a minister censored by the Assembly for receiving a call from the people rather than the patron of the parish at Inverkeithing. Being more traditionally minded, Evangelicals earlier in the century also tended to have greater sympathy for the Covenanting tradition and the old patriotic and nationalistic loyalty to Scotland—and therefore to harbor Jacobite sympathies. The fact that anyone who did not support the Hanoverian king was legally excluded from university positions is a plausible reason for the Moderate ascendancy over the course of the eighteenth century, especially if events at Marischal College earlier in the century are any indication.<sup>7</sup>

At best, Evangelical-minded Presbyterians simply emphasized the tender and personal mercy of God. Some, however, emphasized God's mercy to the chosen few and

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<sup>6</sup> Sher, *Church and University*, 49n.

<sup>7</sup> See Scotland, *The History of Scottish Education: Volume I*. 160-61. Marischal was closed for three years on account of the faculty being overly Jacobite. It re-opened with a soundly Hanoverian faculty.

the doctrine of election and were spiritually as well as doctrinally rigid in ways that even their fellow-Evangelicals found stultifying. Because they invoked the confessions, the Scriptures, and orthodox dogmas, the more radical “High-Flying” Calvinists of the period who embraced a particularly harsh and rigid form of Calvinism that emphasized predestination are considered part of the Evangelical party. Although the party is sometimes caricatured as pietistic and zealously puritanical, in their own day they were also accused of laxity and Antinomianism, the heresy that salvation is simply a matter of election and that works are so pointless and grace so salvific that a man may be saved regardless of whether he lives a virtuous life. Ebenezer Erskine, founder of the Associate Presbytery, was radical and hostile; more temperate and socially well placed Evangelicals included John Witherspoon, Thomas Halyburton, and John Jardine. Although neither Scottish nor Presbyterian, George Whitefield did preach in Scotland, and he and Jonathan Edwards can be considered important representatives of the movement.<sup>8</sup> Toward the end of the century, the Established (Moderate) Church began to be challenged by Evangelicals doing missionary and relief work of various kinds who eventually came to be regarded as “liberal” relative to the Moderate establishment. Such Evangelicals “were not primarily ecclesiastical politicians, as many earlier seceders had been, but they were driven to ecclesiastical politics because the existing system frustrated their higher aims,”<sup>9</sup> their involvement in the Kirk ultimately led to the Disruption of 1843 when about a third

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<sup>8</sup> For an example of Evangelical preaching, see George Whitefield, “Aaron blessing the children of Israel: a farewell sermon, preached at Edinburgh, in the Orphan-Hospital-Park, 13<sup>th</sup> September, 1762 ” (Edinburgh, 1762).

<sup>9</sup> Donaldson, *Scotland: Church and Nation*, 98.

of the people and over a third of its clergy left the national Kirk to form Free Church of Scotland.<sup>10</sup>

The Moderate Party is generally depicted as open-minded, secular, tolerant, holding “liberal views that contrasted markedly with the zealous piety of many Presbyterian ministers,”<sup>11</sup> and altogether more sympathetic to present-day academic values. Moderates emphasized the contributions and questions of modern philosophy, were anxious to demonstrate the reasonableness of Christianity, were interested in the congruities between natural and revealed religion, and valued classical Stoic ethics in part for being a kind of further evidence for the truth of the Gospels. While Witherspoon is renowned for his diatribe against the ways the Moderate clergy were diluting Christian dogma, it was Blair who wrote a pamphlet defending the un-churched Kames and Hume from strictures by the General Assembly:

The freedom of inquiry and debate, tho’ it may have published some errors to the world, has undoubtedly been the source from whence many blessings have flowed upon mankind. ... The proper objects of censure and reproof are not freedom of thought, but licentiousness of action; not erroneous speculations, but crimes pernicious to society. Against these ought the clergy to exert their utmost efforts; and by such a conduct they will more advance the cause of religion, than by engaging in

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ferreira-Buckley, “Hugh Blair,” 21.

metaphysical disputes, which may perplex the understanding, but can never impair the morals of men.<sup>12</sup>

Blair's defense of Hume (and, even more scandalous, his authorship of a Deist prayer for Kames *Essays*<sup>13</sup>) represents the general emphasis by Moderates on the importance of virtue over the importance of "metaphysical disputes." In McCosh's summary, "The boast of the moderate party was that, that they were introducing into Scotland a greater a greater liberality of sentiment on religious topics, and a greater refinement of taste."<sup>14</sup> Thus, Adam Ferguson, a minister of the Kirk, Edinburgh's professor of natural philosophy (from 1759) and then of moral philosophy (1764-1795), and according to some the father of Sociology, "preached the 'religion of virtue' in the classroom much as Blair and other Moderate ministers expounded on the 'virtue of religion' from the pulpit."<sup>15</sup> Moderates also tended to emphasize that, while Christ's salvation atones for all, election is only granted to those who choose to accept and respond to God's grace and stressed the importance of virtue in a fully Christian life; Evangelicals, however, suspected such lines of thought to at times reduce Christ to only a remote and impersonal example of human greatness.

Moderates favored patronage as a means of improving society by raising the quality of the clergy and were responsible for the relatively stern disciplining of Gillespie in the Inverkeithing affair, which they took as a "victory of the forces of 'order' over the

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<sup>12</sup> *Observations upon a pamphlet entitled "An Analysis of the moral and Religious Sentiments ... of Sopho [Lord Kames] and David Hume."* (1755), 1-2. quoted by Schmitz, *Hugh Blair*, 32.

<sup>13</sup> McGuinness, *Henry Home, Lord Kames*. 55.

<sup>14</sup> *The Scottish Philosophy*. 18.

<sup>15</sup> Sher, *Church and University*, 174.

proponents of ‘conscience.’”<sup>16</sup> They also opposed the religious “enthusiasm”<sup>17</sup> of the Great Awakening brought to Scotland by George Whitehead, and it is a paradox of names that the theologically non-traditional Moderates were known as Old Lights and the more spiritually traditional Evangelicals as New Lights. Moderate leniency toward intellectual dissenters such as Simson is evidence of a more latitudinarian and less strictly Calvinist approach to dogma, as is their support for stage-plays in the *Douglas* controversy. The furor over Home’s play was also significant because, according to Crawford, “The controversy surrounding the play brought to the surface tensions in Scottish intellectual life, and led to the eventual triumph of the Moderate party in the Kirk to whose views many leading Scottish Enlightenment figures subscribed.”<sup>18</sup> Moderates also generally supported the British government, which not only matched their doctrinal latitudinarianism<sup>19</sup> but also contributed to their advancement in the universities.

Moderates were accused of being “Neonomian,”<sup>20</sup> that is, of following Richard Baxter’s view that “faith, repentance and good works and not the righteousness of Christ are the proper conditions of the Covenant of Grace [i.e., atonement].”<sup>21</sup> They were suspected of ignoring the necessity of grace and the value of developing a spiritual, personal relationship with the person of Jesus Christ. As McCosh puts it:

The charge against them is that they abandoned the peculiar doctrines of the

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>17</sup> For the definitive study on enthusiasm in the eighteenth century see, Knox, *Enthusiasm*.

<sup>18</sup> Crawford, *Scotland’s Books*, 288. Crawford notes that, “there are major collections of documents and campaigning pro- and anti-*Douglas* pamphlets in the National Library of Scotland and in the Folger Library, Washington.” (288).

<sup>19</sup> See Allan, “Protestantism, presbyterianism and national identity in eighteenth-century Scottish history.”

<sup>20</sup> Mechie, “The Theological Climate in Early Eighteenth Century Scotland,” 259.

<sup>21</sup> Lachman, *The Marrow Controversy*, 38.



gospel, that they could not draw towards them the affections of the people who, in rural districts, sank into a stupid ignorance of religious truth, and, in the crowded lanes of the rising cities, into utter ungodliness and criminality,— except, indeed, in so far as they were drawn out by the rapidly increasing dissenters, or by the evangelical minority within the Established Church.<sup>22</sup>

Thus, when Archibald Campbell and other Moderates argued that “Christian doctrine, its precepts, its rewards and its punishments, [were]... useful and beneficial, and of consequence in the promotion of peace, order and happiness among men,”<sup>23</sup> they were greeted with dismay, not because this was not true, but because there was concern from certain quarters that highly placed men in the Kirk had come to think that was *all* Christianity was good for.

Both Moderates and Evangelicals could argue that their positions were consistent with the Presbyterian tradition, the Bible and their traditional Confessions. Many Moderates considered themselves authentic Christians; many Evangelicals were educated intellectuals and scholars. Moderates (although usually characterized as liberal) favored a more elitist ecclesiastical organization; Evangelicals (although sometimes characterized as intolerant) favored a more democratic church. What lay at the heart of Evangelical anxieties about Moderate ways of thinking then was not a tension between bigotry and fair-mindedness. The real difference between the two parties lay in how their “members” understood the nature and purpose of the Christian religion (emphasis on eternal salvation vs. emphasis on temporal civic goods), how they understood the relationship of scientific

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<sup>22</sup> McCosh, *The Scottish Philosophy*, 18.

<sup>23</sup> Cameron, “Theological Controversy: Factor in Origins of the Scottish Enlightenment.” 128.

authority and Biblical authority (empiricism vs. faith), and what authorities they thought were right to invoke in mediating tensions between new circumstances and old beliefs (traditional and more dogmatic interpretations of Scripture vs. modern and more latitudinarian interpretations)

This background material will make the following sections more clear by showing that conflict between Moderates and Evangelicals did not arise from direct disagreement about *whether* faith matters or *that* morality is important. Nor was it a conflict between intellectuals and anti-intellectuals. The Moderate-Evangelical controversy ultimately stemmed from questions about the balance of religious authority and religious purpose: Moderates emphasized the authority of human reason (implying no denigration of God) and the importance of moral goodness for a good society, while Evangelicals emphasized the authority of God and their own tradition of Scriptural interpretation (implying no denigration of human reason) and the importance of faith for moral goodness.

### **Campbell's Common Sense Empiricism and the Authority of the Bible**

Campbell's discussion of reasoning in Book I of the *Philosophy* offers an epistemological theory that is (or at least Campbell considered to be) consistent with Bacon's scientific method,<sup>24</sup> Hartley's associationist psychology,<sup>25</sup> and Reid's common

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<sup>24</sup> Campbell explicitly acknowledges Bacon as "the most comprehensive genius in philosophy that has appeared in modern times" (*Philosophy of Rhetoric*, lxxiii).

<sup>25</sup> Campbell's views on association are often linked with David Hume's associationism (Suderman, *Orthodoxy and Enlightenment* 80-81; Walzer, *George Campbell*, 21-22), but David Hartley's *Observations on Man* articulates a theory of the association of ideas that would have appealed to Campbell's empiricist-scientific tastes as well as his Christianity, since Hartley was, like Campbell, an opponent of Hume on religious grounds as well as a scientist. See Richard Allen, *David Hartley on Human Nature*. (1999). Hartley worked "to wed Lockean psychology and Newtonian physics" but did not take Locke's view uncritically (Allen 422-23). The extent to which Hartley's views shape those of Campbell merits study. It is worth noting, however, that Campbell: 1.) defends mechanism (48), of which Hartley was accused and

sense philosophy.<sup>26</sup> For Campbell, the study of rhetoric—i.e., the study of persuasion—is the essence of philosophical enquiry. Campbell believed his system rendered the Christian belief in the Bible’s testimony reasonable and that it dismantled Hume’s radical skepticism that, if granted, would destroy all rational basis for Christian faith and, indeed, for all forms of knowledge.

Campbell’s philosophy proposes an alternative epistemology to Hume but is not (and did not need to be) entirely different in all its parts. Like Hume, Campbell’s view of reasoning is profoundly empiricist (i.e., he roots philosophy in individual, physical, and self-conscious experience); unlike Hume, however, Campbell takes belief in the Bible as entirely rational and the *Philosophy of Rhetoric* does not contradict the arguments in favor of revelation that Campbell had earlier made against Hume in his *Dissertation on Miracles* (1752). The *Philosophy* is therefore consistent with Campbell’s endeavors to defend the reasonableness of the Christian faith. Moreover, as this section will argue, Campbell’s discussion of reasoning in the *Philosophy of Rhetoric* speaks also to Campbell’s fellow-believers by invoking the Reformation’s rejection of all religious authority save the Bible—and grounding the authority of the Bible in close scholarly reading of the Biblical texts (such as Campbell himself was doing in working on his *Translation of the Four Gospels*, and encouraged his pupils to do in his *Lectures on Pulpit Eloquence and Systematic Theology*). The *Philosophy of Rhetoric* therefore

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which he was able to maintain while saying that “A man may speak, handle, love, fear, etc entirely by mechanisms (OM 1. Conclusion; quoted by Allan 138); and 2.) Campbell cites the learning of beasts and children (48), which is a salient and distinctive feature of Hartley’s theory. It is also unique to Hartley, since the works of Hume, Reid, “and other associationists are largely empty of the voices of children” (Allan 17).

<sup>26</sup> See Bormann, “Some ‘Common Sense’ about Campbell, Hume and Reid.”

directly connects Bacon's empiricism with Calvin's individualism in a way that intends to satisfy the challenges of scepticism, but also articulates an approach to Presbyterian faith that is doctrinally progressive as well as consistent with the spirit of the Reformation.

Campbell explicitly approached rhetoric as a way to investigate the philosophy of the mind:

[T]his study, properly conducted, leads directly to an acquaintance with ourselves; it not only traces the operations of the intellect and imagination, but discloses the lurking springs of action in the heart. In this view it is perhaps the shortest and pleasantest way of arriving at the science of the human mind. It is an humble attempt to lead the mind of the studious inquirer into this tract that the following sheets are now submitted to the public. (lxxiv)

The system of reasoning he sets out is as follows:

#### LOGICAL REASONING

Intuitive Evidence	Deductive Evidence (i.e., "Reasoning")
a. pure intellection	a. scientific (math / algebra)
b. consciousness	b. moral (about things)
c. common sense (includes memory)	1. experience
	2. analogy
	3. testimony
	4. (calculation of chances)

The end of logical reasoning is logical truth, and logical truth, says Campbell, is "the conformity of our conceptions to their archetypes in the nature of things" (35). It is

comprised of two kinds of evidence: intuitive and deductive. Notably, Campbell holds that deductive evidence is called “reasoning,” but is essentially the same thing as the process of intuition (the significance of this will be discussed below). It is important that Campbell carefully and firmly establishes reasoning in an empirical experience of nature. Intuitive evidence is when “conformity... is perceived by the mind... immediately on a bare attention to the ideas under review” (35). Of these three types of first principles of reasoning: “The first may be denominated metaphysical, the second physical, the third moral; all of them natural, original, and unaccountable” (45). This is the realm of sensory experience by which “the mind acquires an early perception of the most obvious and necessary truths, without which bodily organs would be of little use” (49). This is the foundation of all certitude for Hume; Campbell, however, sees the sphere of sensory experience as only a *part* of “logical reasoning,” rather than the whole and entire basis (and, for Hume, also therefore the stumbling-block) of all philosophy and all certainty.

Deductive evidence— that sphere of evidence that Hume discounted, but Reid did not— is for Campbell a “conformity... perceived by the mind... mediately by a comparison of [intuited truth] with other related ideas” (35). Scientific reasoning provides one kind of deductive evidence, but it strictly limited in scope to “quantity concrete or discrete” (46). Moral reasoning, however, is also a legitimate kind of evidence, but takes in its purview “the whole world... comprehends the laws and the works of nature, as well as the arts and institutions of men; in brief, all the beings which fall under the cognizance of the human mind, with all their modifications, operations and effects” (46).

Campbell, as mentioned above, does not distinguish induction and deduction as differing in kind. Rather, they differ in degree. The process of drawing conclusions as a result of moral (and scientific) reasoning (i.e., deductive evidence) differs from the immediate apprehensions of inductive evidence as a matter of speed and distance. Deduction is, for the mind, a “less important” and “much slower” procedure than intuition, and “more the result of voluntary application.” It is an exertion “more deliberate” and the mind is “more conscious of her own activity.” But, essentially, reasoning and apprehension are the same *kind* of thing: “It is... only... in common style we honour her [i.e., the mind’s] operation with the name of *reasoning*; though there is no essential difference between the two cases” (49). Direct apprehension of reality, then, is the ultimate foundation of knowledge, and sensation is not only the source of knowledge, but the paradigmatic instance of all knowledge acquisition.<sup>27</sup> The importance of this is that Campbell roots all knowledge in empirical experience, including his theory of common sense and of testimony.

Others have recognized this feature of Campbell’s epistemology. Walzer, for example, says that, “what is most important in Campbell’s discussion of intuitive evidence is that he emphasizes the speed of mental operations, not conventional validity.”<sup>28</sup> He notes that Campbell’s confidence in intuitive evidence derives from “the nature of our response— its involuntary nature and its speed.”<sup>29</sup> And in explaining Campbell’s theory of deduction, he points out, “The key difference between deductive

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<sup>27</sup> In this, Campbell demonstrates a likely intellectual debt to Hartley’s *Observations on Man*.

<sup>28</sup> Walzer, *George Campbell*, 55.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

and inductive for Campbell is the speed of the mental operations and the degree of consciousness,”<sup>30</sup> and that the process of moral reasoning for Campbell “though it is subconscious and involuntary, differs in degree, not kind, from the more deliberate process of the experiential reasoning, including the experimental method.”<sup>31</sup> Bitzer notes that in Campbell’s theory “no ideas purported to represent a reality can have legitimacy unless founded in sensation.”<sup>32</sup>

Campbell’s view is rather curious and not altogether philosophically satisfying (although fruitful for explaining and understanding Campbell’s emphasis on imagination and vivacity in the *Philosophy*). But many Campbell scholars make a curious leap at this point and assert that Campbell believes he is able to evade the problems of skepticism by making God the final guarantor of the truth of sensations, as did Descartes. Bitzer, for example, claims that “Campbell abandons his classical empiricism when he makes provision for revealed truths”<sup>33</sup> and that “the empirical theory of human nature, belief and action expressed by Campbell in the *Rhetoric* is inadequate unless it is supplemented by the reality of God and by His beneficent designs and revelations.”<sup>34</sup> Bitzer does not, however, offer any textual evidence to source to support his claim that Campbell so thought. Walzer, similarly, claims that Campbell relies on God’s benevolence, yet can only cite a congruence in sentence structure between Campbell’s saying that “the properties of our clear and adequate ideas can be no other than what the mind clearly

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<sup>30</sup> Walzer. *George Campbell* 56

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. 57 Suderman does not note this particular element of Campbell’s theory of evidence in his discussion of Campbell’s associationism. See *Orthodoxy and Enlightenment*. 92-100.

<sup>32</sup> “Editor’s Introduction.” xxxi.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., li.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.,

perceives them to be” and a sentence in Descartes’ *Discourse on the Method* which makes God “the guarantor of the truth of our clear and distinct ideas.”<sup>35</sup> Walzer thus puts words into Campbell’s mouth in saying he thought that it is God-the-Designer who has “helped reconcile psychology with epistemology by having the mind take pleasure in the truth.”<sup>36</sup> Thus, Walzer concludes that Campbell asserts that mental processes can be trusted “because the Designer has assured that our faculties, though imperfect, can, if informed by faith and disciplined by reason, still be trusted.”<sup>37</sup> Even Suderman says, in his discussion of the element of associationism in Campbell’s epistemology, that “Campbell was implicitly arguing something more, with which Hume could not readily agree: that the natural influence of testimony on belief is a consequence of the Creator’s benevolent design.”<sup>38</sup> Suderman then cites Campbell’s appeal to an “original principle of our nature (analogous to that which compels our faith in memory), ... to give an unlimited assent.”<sup>39</sup> Suderman further argues that Campbell defended his position by positing a “mechanism in human nature capable of equating our natural propensity to believe testimony with our need for metaphysical and moral truth,” and that he “implicitly argued” that “Humanity... is obliged to believe that the Creator does not deceive his creatures concerning their fundamental sources of knowledge.”<sup>40</sup> For this, Suderman does not cite the *Philosophy*, but *A Dissertation on Miracles* in which Campbell argues that “God cannot contradict himself” because God would “never use

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<sup>35</sup> Walzer 62-63

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. 63

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Suderman *Orthodoxy and Enlightenment*, 99.

<sup>39</sup> *ibid*; quoting Campbell, *PoR*, 55.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.



false means to achieve his ends.”<sup>41</sup> (This statement about God, of course, is no more than what Plato or Aristotle could have said; more, however, will be said of Suderman’s source below.)

Campbell, however, does *not* claim God as a final guarantor of the fact that we may trust our senses in the *Philosophy of Rhetoric*. Other philosophers had done so but Campbell himself argues instead that, “no human creature hath been found originally and totally destitute of [common sense], who is not accounted a monster in his kind” (39-40). Thus, Campbell looks toward the evidence of language— of the community— to grasp and verify nature.<sup>42</sup> What this means is that Campbell introduces into his philosophical theory the intellectual value and validity of society, discourse, and communication. It is trust in the testimony of the group, of *communis sensus*, rather than trust in God’s benevolence that first assures us of the truth of our senses, and corrects people of their mistakes.

This is even more explicitly expressed in his theory of testimony. Testimony, for Campbell, is a part of moral reasoning— a form, that is, of deductive evidence— and is “a serious intimation from another, of any fact or observation, as being what he remembers to have seen or heard or experienced” (54). Campbell clarifies that the evidence of testimony is not a species of deferred experience. Rather, it is a propensity to

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 100 f.n.

<sup>42</sup> James McCosh’s analysis of Scottish Common Sense philosophy merits quoting on this point: “He who would obtain an adequate and comprehensive view of our complex mental nature must not be satisfied with occasional glances at the workings of his own soul: he must take a survey of the thoughts and feelings of others so far as he can gather them from their deeds and from their words; from the acts of mankind generally, and of individual men, women, and children; from universal language as the expression of human cogitation and sentiment; and from the commerce we hold with our fellow-men by conversation, by writing, or by books” (*The Scottish Philosophy*, 5-6).

believe the word of others and it is, *in itself*, a natural principle of knowledge for human beings. That is, how a person acquires knowledge corresponds to the kind of beings people are. Man is a physical being, and therefore he learns through his senses; but he is also a social being, and so he also learns through discourse. Man's physical nature is in certain respects prior to his social nature; thus, the "defects and misrepresentations" (54) of testimony (like those of memory) are "corrected by experience" (54); yet, at the same time, the faculty of memory and the faculty of trusting the testimony of others "hath an innate evidence of its own" (54). History, he points out, is designated a kind of knowledge rather than a kind of speculation, for an amplitude of testimony "is accounted a positive proof of the fact" (55). We are, "when we have no positive reasons of mistrust or doubt... by an original principle of our nature (analogous to that which compels our faith in memory), led to give an unlimited assent" (55).<sup>43</sup> Campbell acknowledges the question of credibility and discusses that there are indeed degrees of credibility; but it is a principle with him that the concurrence of witnesses, no matter their credibility, by the simple fact of such concurrence can in some cases be, in itself, reasonable proof that the attested event or phenomenon is a fact—that such belief is, in other words "natural, original, and unaccountable." Campbell illustrates the practical importance of testimony by pointing out the extent of knowledge to which we are indebted to the evidence of testimony, namely, "all the branches of philosophy, such as history, civil, ecclesiastic, and literary; grammar, languages, jurisprudence, and criticism; to which I may add

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<sup>43</sup> It is significant at this point that Campbell uses as his example the "revolutions of the heavenly bodies" (55). He is working to correct Hume's epistemology by trying to explain how the spectacularly fruitful and promising scientific method of his day actually works. His base-line here is not the Bible, but would appear to be something like the *Principia*.

revealed religion, as far as it is to be considered a subject of historical and critical inquiry, and so discoverable by natural means” (56). In short, in Campbell’s *Philosophy*, testimony is a powerful and important part of human reasoning and a powerful species of evidence. In this, Campbell is profoundly and explicitly anti-Humean and, it is clear, believes he has successfully evaded the problem of Hume’s descent into complete skepticism by appealing to philosophical principles shared in common with Hume himself (55).

Campbell, therefore, does *not*, explicitly nor even implicitly, make God the final guarantor of truth. The only text offered to support this claim is given by Suderman. In that source, Campbell is indeed discussing God as a cause of our certainty, but he is talking in that passage about moral certainty, not philosophical certainty:

The cause of God is the cause of rectitude: That it must ever continue such arises from the immutability of God. This is the law of our nature, and founded in the moral perfections of its author. This, by the concurrent voice of *conscience*, [emphasis mine] and of revelation, we are taught to revere as the *invariable rule of our conduct* [emphasis mine].<sup>44</sup>

That Campbell is talking about morality rather than truth is made clear when he says, several sentences later, that, “the voice of *conscience* [emphasis mine], therefore, is the voice of God; and God cannot contradict himself.”<sup>45</sup> In other words, Campbell argues in this passage that God’s Revelation teaches a morality that does not contradict natural moral law and that the Bible does not command anything contrary to human nature.

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<sup>44</sup> *Dissertation on Miracles*, 371.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 372.

Now, it is one thing to say that God may be trusted to proffer a sensible religion, and another thing to posit God's benevolence as a reason for believing in God's existence. To do so is not only circular, but quite obviously so. Such reasoning would have certainly not convinced Hume, and it is telling that Campbell is the one interlocutor that Hume took seriously.<sup>46</sup> Such an obvious error, it seems, Hume would have been quick to point out. Finally, it bears recalling that the defense of Christianity, although certainly important to Campbell, was not his only reason for disagreeing with Hume. It must be remembered that Hume's skepticism destroys a rational basis for *every* area of thought and enquiry. As Reid wrote:

I am persuaded, that absolute skepticism is not more destructive of the faith of a Christian, than of the science of a philosopher, and of the prudence of a man of common understanding. I am persuaded, that the unjust *live by faith* as well as the *just*; that, if all belief could be laid aside, piety, patriotism, friendship, parental affection, and private virtue, would appear as ridiculous as knight-errantry; and that the pursuits of pleasure, of ambition, and of avarice, must be grounded upon belief, as well as those that are honorable and virtuous.<sup>47</sup>

Reid's point, shared by Campbell (54-55), counters the idea that Campbell rejected Hume's conclusions *simply* because Hume threatened his religious beliefs. Rather, Campbell, like many others of his time, saw Hume's philosophy as a *reductio ad absurdum*. His response to Hume was therefore also a response to Locke whose

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<sup>46</sup> According to Boswell, Hume was reading *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* on his deathbed. See Dennis R. Bormann's "Some 'Common Sense' about Campbell, Hume, and Reid: The Extrinsic Evidence." 395.

<sup>47</sup> Reid, "Dedication," *An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense*, 4.

philosophical principles were called into question, not only to preserve religion, but to preserve philosophy from ending in such absurdities as Hume's infamous denial that we can "know" causation. Campbell's clear regard for the importance and value of religion should not obscure his attempt in the *Philosophy* to explain how the mind works in a way that preserves the validity of *all* science and learning. This includes— but is by no means restricted to— what he would consider the most important knowledge, namely, the knowledge of the religious truths contained in the Scriptures.

It is important to note, therefore, that Bitzer mis-reads Campbell when he states that, in Campbell's view, "reason does not test the truths themselves."<sup>48</sup> Bitzer's assessment is important to confront in this dissertation, because he credits Campbell's religious commitments as the source of "problems in his theory,"<sup>49</sup> i.e., that Campbell's empiricism is compromised by the fact that he asserts a belief in revelation that "provides truths of fact beyond those known naturally,"<sup>50</sup> that "Campbell abandons his classical empiricism when he makes provision for revealed truths,"<sup>51</sup> and that "the empirical theory of human nature, belief and action expressed by Campbell in the *Rhetoric* is inadequate unless it is supplemented by the reality of God and by His beneficent designs and revelations."<sup>52</sup> Bitzer points out that other philosophers, like John Locke, provided for both natural and supernatural principles of knowledge, so he concludes that "Campbell obviously intended that his *Rhetoric* should treat exclusively the *natural* logic

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<sup>48</sup> Bitzer, "Introduction," xlix

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 1-1i.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., li.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

and *natural* processes of belief, conduct, and communication; but why he made that choice remains puzzling.”<sup>53</sup> Bitzer therefore raises the question why Campbell, in the *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, “failed to treat God’s revelations and designs and failed also to describe the whole territory of what can be known through natural and supernatural means.”<sup>54</sup> This problem ceases to exist, however, in light of the recognition that Campbell (as shown above) did not see his theory of “human nature, belief and action” as resting on faith in God; he saw it as resting on human nature, which in itself offers sufficient proof of the truth of Scriptures.

This resolution leads to a number of other clarifications. First, it must be granted that in some measure Campbell departed from Reid’s theory if it really was Reid’s opinion that it is faith in God that allows us to trust sensation.<sup>55</sup> Descartes, of course, made God’s benevolence a crucial step in his philosophical process.<sup>56</sup> Campbell, however, quietly does away with such a principle by simply neglecting to mention it.

Second, it ought to be noted that even an empirical account of reasoning must accept certain truths as conclusions, and that these conclusions may not be able to be verified by empirical, sensory evidence. In many cases the epistemological test can only be applied to the principles and to the method; not to the conclusions. For example, Newton’s conclusions about the size of Jupiter did not admit of further empirical verification; they could not be accepted only by Newton’s traveling to Jupiter and taking

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Reid wrote, for example: “...I yield to the to the direction of my senses, not from instinct only, but from confidence and trust in a faithful and beneficent Monitor, grounded upon the experience of his paternal care and goodness” (*Inquiry*, 170).

<sup>56</sup> Descartes, *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*, #.#.

the necessary measurements. By denying the philosophical certitude of causation, Hume denied the philosophical certitude of all conclusions about the material world. His fellow-Scottish philosophers therefore wanted to argue that causation can be known in a philosophically valid manner.<sup>57</sup> A sound method produces certain knowledge, so once the Word of God is shown to merit belief by a sound philosophical method, its statements may be taken as true.<sup>58</sup> For Campbell, faith in revelation follows (or, for those inclined to think it through, *can* follow) from faith in the empirical process of verifying their reasonableness. The God of nature is one with the God of revelation, and that God does not command humans to believe anything that reason can contradict. Revelation only clarifies what men and women ought to *do*. Campbell does not see the Bible as providing any *philosophical* principles, and therefore has no need to devote a section of the *Philosophy of Rhetoric* to such “revealed principles.” In fact, Campbell therefore does not see that there *are* any “supernatural principles of knowledge” that are not ultimately grounded in the epistemological method laid out in the *Philosophy*. For Campbell, human reason is the authority that rationally grants the authority of the Scriptures; similarly, his philosophy of rhetoric does not rely on theological principles but on human reason.

And third, in his description of human reasoning Campbell asserts two critical principles: First, individual experience is the foundation of every individual’s reasoning; therefore, Campbell begins in a position of radical intellectual autonomy. Every individual starts, intellectually, *from* their individual sensory experiences and

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<sup>57</sup> See Reid, *Inquiry*, 122.

<sup>58</sup> Campbell’s response to issues of Biblical interpretation will be addressed below.

apprehensions. Campbell also holds, however—and without contradicting the first principle—that human beings reason *according to* their nature, and for Campbell human beings are as much members of society as they are individuals. Man is, in other words, a social animal. Because human beings are *animals*, are individual physical beings, philosophy can and should rely on “inductive evidence” as a source, including individual sensations and experiences. Because the human being is, however, also by nature *social*, the natural human method of philosophy must also, and just as legitimately, rely on “deductive evidence,” including the evidence of certain kinds of testimony. A sound philosophical method, in other words, must acknowledge that the human being is both a physical individual *and* a social creature.

As Campbell made clear in the *Dissertation*, testimony is the rational basis for assenting to the truth of Scriptural revelation and his *Philosophy of Rhetoric* does expand upon the basis of his argument against Hume that the miracles recorded by the Bible ought to be taken as true. As Bitzer says, it is because Campbell believes “there exists fully convincing evidence that the miracles actually occurred” that therefore people can “know that the Christian revelation is true; and knowing that the revelation is true, one must conclude that Christianity is God’s authorized religion.”<sup>59</sup> Campbell’s defense of Christianity, however, is ultimately grounded on a philosophical method that seeks to understand what the human being is, how the human being works, and therefore incorporates as principles both empiricism *and* human discourse.

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<sup>59</sup> Bitzer, “Introduction,” xlviii.



Campbell's philosophy is insistently and rigorously empirical (as shown above); it follows that Campbell would therefore have to assert for the sake of consistency an approach to religion that is based on empirical research. As it turns out, this is indeed the case. In his *Lectures on Pulpit Oratory* he holds that "*biblical criticism* [italics his] ... I consider as the first branch of the theoretical part of the study of theology, and as particularly calculated for the elucidation of our religion, by leading us to the truth meaning of the sacred volume, its acknowledged source."<sup>60</sup> In his preface to his translation of the Matthew's Gospel, he lays it down as a principle that Scriptural interpretation begins with an immediate, unbiased openness to the Word of God.

I have always laid it down as a rule, in my researches, to divest myself, as much as possible, of an excessive deference to the judgment of men; and I think that, in my attempts this way, I have not been unsuccessful. I am even confident to say, that I can with justice apply to myself the words of the poet: *Nullius addictus jurare in verba magistri* ["I am not bound to swear allegiance to the word of any master"]; or rather the words of one much greater than [Horace]; I have learnt, in things spiritual, to *call no man Master upon earth*. At the same time that I have been careful to avoid an implicit deference to the judgment of any man, I have been ready to give patient hearing, and impartial examination, to reason and argument, from what quarter soever it proceeded.<sup>61</sup>

Notably, Campbell does not discuss the Holy Spirit as the great guide of individual judgment. He does not hold up Calvin as a theological precedent. He does not look to

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<sup>60</sup> 7.

<sup>61</sup> George Campbell. *The Four Gospel, translated from the Greek*. Vol 2. (London, 1789), iii.

the General Assembly for direction. He looks, directly and plainly, at the Scriptures themselves—precisely the same attitude with which Bacon approached the material objects of scientific enquiry, and the same attitude that Campbell brought to his work as an amateur botanist. For Campbell was much more a man of science than what we typically think of as a man of letters. He did not write poems about the seasons, or necessarily even read them; he spent time, instead, gathering and categorizing botanical specimens and was familiar with the work of Linnaeus who had revolutionized biology with his binomial nomenclature system in the *System of Nature* (first Netherlands printing, 1735).<sup>62</sup> Like the true Baconian he was, Campbell establishes empirical investigation of Scripture at the heart of doctrine.

Campbell is here consistent with similar movements among Protestant theologians in England. As Shapin writes:

In Protestant England, advocates of a reformed natural knowledge argued that a proper reading of the Book of Nature could support Christian religion by purifying it. ... The techniques of intellectual quality control recommended for a reformed natural history could be used to winnow out testimonial wheat from

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<sup>62</sup> Suderman traces the connection between Campbell and Linnaeus:

"[In a letter, dated August 1, 1770, Campbell wrote about his] expeditions into a remote corner of Aberdeenshire, where he examined geological phenomena and identified plant species with more than mere amateurish skill. The recipient of the letter, David Skene, was one of the many correspondents of the Swedish taxonomist Linnaeus; this linked Campbell, along with thousands of other amateur botanists, into the most important network of eighteenth-century naturalists. ... Campbell's interest in natural history, particularly in the systematic classification of nature, suggests that he shared with Reid and with many thinkers of the Enlightenment a rather taxonomic view of the whole of creation, including the human mind. Their notion that human classificatory systems represented a purposeful organization scheme built into the natural world by the Creator had significant religious and apologetic undertones" (27-28).

In short, Campbell brought to his theory of rhetoric the mind of an observer and classifier, having very much adopted the scientific attitudes and assumptions of his day.

chaff, to purge Protestant Christianity of idolatrous elements and restore it to its primitive purity. Bacon agreed with Galileo that Scripture was a book demanding expert interpretation if its true meaning was to be discerned. But if the parallel Book of Nature could be read aright – with the discipline of proper method – then the natural philosopher could contribute as much as the theologian, if not more, in establishing religious truth and in ensuring right belief.<sup>63</sup>

Campbell was also following the Kirk's lead in making rhetorical issues such as clear language, proper wording, correct interpretation *the* central philosophical issues in theology. In 1710, the General Assembly addressed problems of theological division with an *Act for Preserving the Purity of Doctrine* which stated that purity of doctrine should be maintained and preserved by “avoiding all expressions in matters of Faith, contrary to the Form of sound Words.”<sup>64</sup> The *Scottish Confession* held that theological truth is found in “neither antiquity, usurped title, lineal succession, appointed place, nor the numbers of men approving an error” (Article 18). It also maintained:

When controversy arises about the right understanding of any passage or sentence of Scripture, or for the reformation of any abuse within the Kirk of God, we ought not so much to ask what men have said or done before us, as what the Holy Ghost uniformly speaks within the body of the Scriptures and what Christ Jesus himself did and commanded. For it is agreed by all that the Spirit of God, who is the Spirit of unity, cannot contradict himself. So if the interpretation or opinion of any theologian, Kirk, or council, is contrary to the plain Word of God written in any

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<sup>63</sup> Shapin, *The Scientific Revolution*, 138.

<sup>64</sup> See Lachman, *Marrow Controversy*, 74.

other passage of the Scripture, it is most certain that this is not the true understanding and meaning of the Holy Ghost, although councils, realms, and nations have approved and received it. We dare not receive or admit any interpretation which is contrary to any principal point of our faith, or to any other plain text of Scripture, or to the rule of love. (Article 19)

How to determine with precision the “principal points of our faith,” however, remained unclear—embedded, presumably, in the text of Scripture rightly read and interpreted.<sup>65</sup>

### **Implications for Religion of Campbell’s Theory of Testimony**

Campbell does not—as seen in his theory of testimony and common sense—assert complete autonomy for the individual intellect. In his view, human reason needs a community of fellow-thinkers and communicators for its actualization and growth. This has important consequences for the development of Protestant theological doctrine.

Campbell’s theory of reasoning, as argued above, includes the principle that the human being is the sort of being who requires other human beings in order to learn. Individual, empirical questioning and the judgment of others work together to balance and counter-act each other: while the individual should submit his conclusions to the test of other minds, the individual is also able to test received opinions against his own experiences. To this, Campbell further added his view that knowledge is cumulative and progressive—that is, knowledge evolves. Although he did not use the word, nor would it have had the connotation it has taken on since Hegel, Darwin and Marx, Scots at the time were nevertheless acutely conscious of the fact that sciences as well as civilizations and

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<sup>65</sup> See also the *Westminster Confession*, articles 1 & 25.

culture have a progressive history.<sup>66</sup> Cultural developments were not considered to be inevitably or altogether for the better (hence the discussions over the “Ancients and Moderns” at the beginning of the eighteenth century), but the breadth and depth of knowledge about the material world does improve, as Bacon had argued and Newton (among others in other fields) demonstrated.

The notion of “progress in knowledge” was key to Bacon’s theory (as was the principle that knowledge is advanced by means of the shared efforts of a community of empiricist-observers), and this applied not only to knowledge of the natural world; it also applied to the interpretation of Scripture. Did Campbell see this and grasp its practical theological consequences? There is good reason to believe he did.

As a Biblical scholar, Campbell knew that clearly correct and sure interpretation of the Scripture would be impossible without divine intervention. Although the problem of textual ambiguity would be resolved if one could argue that God continues to teach in time and provides a means to clarify the meaning of His written Revelation throughout history (e.g., through a special grace granted the Bishop of Rome), Campbell knew this would grant too much to the Catholic position.<sup>67</sup> Campbell, however, remained staunchly Protestant in this matter.

Rather than grant that the Bishop of Rome has any divinely-granted ability to speak authoritatively on matters of faith and morals, he followed the Reformers in

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<sup>66</sup> Blair’s rhetoric theory is more explicit about this, asserting directly that “among nations in a civilized state, no art has been cultivated with more care, than that of language, style and composition. The attention paid to it may, indeed, be assumed as one mark of the progress of society towards its most improved period... we find, that, in all the polished nations of Europe, this study has been treated as highly important, and has possessed a considerable place in every plan liberal education.” (*Lectures*, 3-4)

<sup>67</sup> Suderman, *Orthodoxy and Enlightenment*, 212. Also, see Walzer, “Review,” Suderman, 229-32.

holding that all religious authority derives from the texts of Scripture alone— and, therefore, as he knew as a Biblical scholar, are discovered progressively over time. As he argued in a preliminary dissertation to his *Four Gospels*:

By the invention of printing, and by the many discoveries and improvements which have extended the intercourse of nations, the acquisition of knowledge is, at present, so much facilitated and accelerated, in all civilized countries, that it will not be checked in its progress, nor will truth be overborne...<sup>68</sup>

In another passage he writes:

...to do violence to the rules of construction, and distort the words, for the sake of producing the solutions of a difficulty, is, in effect, to substitute our own conjectures for the word of God, and thus to put off human conceit for celestial verity. It is far better to leave the matter as we found it. In solving difficulties to which we find ourselves unequal, *future expositors may be more successful* [italics mine].<sup>69</sup>

And in another passage, perhaps the most telling, he writes (and it is worth quoting in full):

What greatly retarded the progress of [biblical criticism] in the first age of the reformation, was the incessant disputes in which the reformers were engaged... This led them insensibly to recur to the weapons which had been employed against them, and of which they had at first spoken very contemptuously, the metaphysical and unintelligible subtleties of school-divinity. This recourse was

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<sup>68</sup> *The Four Gospels*. xi.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 257.

productive of two bad consequences. First, it diverted them from the critical study of the sacred languages, the surest means for discovering the mind of the Spirit; secondly, it infused into the heads of the disputants, prepossessions in favour of such particular word and phrases as are adapted to the dialect and system of the parties to which they severally attached themselves; and in prejudice of those words and phrases which seem more suitable to the style and sentiments of their adversaries. ... Men's minds were then too much heated with their polemic squabbles to be capable of that impartial, candid, and dispassionate examination, which is so necessary in those who would approve themselves faithful interpreters of the oracles of God.<sup>70</sup>

His theory of progressive development of doctrine was consistent, then, with the Reformation's *true* spirit of correction and purification.

It was, it ought to be noted, also consistent with the text of the Presbyterian creeds. Article 19 of the *Scottish Confession* regarding "The Authority of the Scriptures" reads:

As we believe and confess the scriptures of God sufficient to instruct and make the man of God perfect, so do we affirm and avow the authority of the same to be of God, and neither to depend on men nor angels.[1 Tim. 3: 16-17] We affirm, therefore, that such as allege the scripture to have no authority, but that which is received from the kirk, to be blasphemous against God, and injurious to the true

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 210.

kirk, which always hears and obeys the voice of her own Spouse and Pastor, but takes not upon her to be mistress over the same.[John 10:27]

This article meant to deny that the Catholic Church grants authority to the Scriptures— a principle with which Campbell agreed. However, in holding that the Kirk “always hears and obeys the voice of her own Spouse and Pastor, but takes not upon her to be mistress over the same” the Scottish Kirk implicitly affirmed that religious authority lay in a close reading of the Scripture. The question, of course, is how a fallible human intellect can correctly interpret Scripture. To combat the obvious problem of anarchy inherent in private interpretation, Presbyterians had created the General Assembly, arguing that its structure derived from the practices of the earliest Christians.

Yet, the question of authority was not thereby wholly dispelled, for, according to the *Scottish Confession*:

The cause... why general councils convened, was neither to make any perpetual law (which God before had not made), nor yet to force new articles of our belief, neither to give the word of God authority—much less to make that to be his word, or yet the true interpretation of the same, which was not before by his holy will expressed in his word [Acts 15:1, etc.] But the cause of councils (we mean of such as merit the name of councils), was partly for confutation of heresies, and for giving public confession of their faith to the posterity following: which both they did by the authority of God’s written word, and not by any opinion or prerogative that they could not err, by reason of their general assembly.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Article 19.



Thus, embedded in the very confessions of the Kirk was the principle that the assembly could develop and clarify doctrine, so long as that doctrine was grounded in the Scriptures. As a committed Protestant Biblical scholar and a committed Baconian philosopher, writing in an intensely history-conscious age, Campbell was able to see the definition of doctrines as a matter of progressive discovery, something unfolded, and revised, slowly and over time and by a process of study and collaboration. As he wrote in the Introduction to his *Philosophy*, “men of every age have made great an unexpected improvements on the labours of their predecessors. And it is very probable that the subsequent age will produce discoveries and acquisitions, which we of this age are as little capable of foreseeing, as those who preceded us in the last century were capable of conjecturing the progress that would be made in the present” (lxxii).

Campbell’s views of the mind, language, Scripture, and religion culminated, therefore, in the conclusion that only the most obvious and important doctrines must remain ever open to correction, that the various less-clear doctrines developed over time can only be accepted as sort of working hypotheses. Significantly, therefore, he argues that heresy in the fifth century was not a matter of “error alone, however gross”, but that “malignity, or perverseness of disposition was held essential to the crime.”<sup>72</sup> As Campbell himself concluded: “If I can safely reason from experience, I do not hesitate to say, that the least dogmatical [of biblical scholars], the most diffident of their own judgment, and moderate in their opinion of others, will be ever found the most

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<sup>72</sup> *The Four Gospels*. 160.

judicious.”<sup>73</sup> This, of course, is clearly latitudinarian in spirit and a theologically important implication of the rhetorical and philosophical theory set down by Campbell in the *Philosophy of Rhetoric*. Any Evangelicals paying attention would have been right to worry that Campbell had called into question the stability of their spiritual and doctrinal traditions. Yet Campbell did so by invoking the Reformation principle that tradition, as such, is not an absolute authority and was simply viewing the authority of Scripture with an enlightened awareness of the principles of literary analysis and the cumulative progress of human knowledge.

### **Baconian Pragmatism & Moderate Moral Preaching**

The *Philosophy* is an important explication of Moderate principles in another way as well: as a latitudinarian Protestant and a Baconian philosopher, Campbell’s views lead to the further conclusion that religion is not about the resolution of theological and philosophical questions so much as it is about benefiting mankind with a sure knowledge of what people ought to *do*. In other words, Campbell believed that the Bible is not so much a deposit of plain and perspicuous doctrinal truth, so much as it is a Word of encouragement; the implication of Campbell’s *Philosophy of Rhetoric* is therefore that the Bible itself is primarily rhetorical and is more for encouraging people to live virtuously than it is for telling them what they ought to think.

Campbell’s Introduction to the *Philosophy of Rhetoric* explicitly prioritizes action and moral living above and beyond mere knowledge:

All art is founded in science, and that science is of little value which does not

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<sup>73</sup> *The Four Gospels*, 257.

serve as a foundation to some beneficial art. On the most sublime of all sciences, *theology* and *ethics*, is built the most important of all art, *the art of living*. ...

Valuable knowledge... always leads to some practical skill, and is perfected in it.

On the other hand, the practical skill loses much of its beauty and extensive utility which does not originate in knowledge. There is, by consequence, a natural relation between the sciences and the arts, like that which subsists between the parent and the offspring. (Ixix)

What is interesting here is that Campbell, in a manner reminiscent of Bacon and Descartes, has argued that theology itself (deemed a science to the scholastics) is “of little value” except that it serves “as foundation” to “some beneficial art,” and namely “the most important of all arts, *the art of living*.” Thus, the knowledge of God, as well of human behavior, is of little value unless it leads to a good life. Valuable knowledge is ordered to and perfected in some skill; knowledge is perfected in action.

It is clear that Campbell likewise saw religion as ordered to the inculcation of morality and radically de-emphasized the importance of the intellectual content of faith. In a sermon on the character of a minister, Campbell preached that, “If [the Scriptures] were designed not for *amusement*, but the REFORMATION of the world; they must infallibly have a PRACTICAL tendency, and serve either as a *directory* in right behaviour, or as *incentives* mediately or immediately to it.”<sup>74</sup> He makes this point more than once in the sermon, repeating later that, “This I conceive is the natural *use* of our religious *tenets*, whence it is that the *gospel* is term’d a *doctrine according to godliness*,

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<sup>74</sup> *On the Character of a Minister of the Gospel*, 16.

and a *most holy faith*, its every *principle* being a distinct *incitement* to a good life.”<sup>75</sup>

Thus, the point of religion— not just preaching, but religion itself— he says is “improving the heart” and “amending the manners;” to expel vice and instill virtue.<sup>76</sup>

Although obviously religion involves some intellectual content, Campbell is insistent that religion is not about doctrines, but about virtue. In fact, emphasis on doctrine is only specious and wasteful:

Yet *vain man would be wise*... so *prevalent* in him is the *appetite* for *forbidden* knowledge, that the very *arcana* of heaven, he will with matchless temerity be trying every method to *investigate*, even tho’ the *fields* of science assign’d him as his proper portion should lie *barren* and *uncultivated*. ... And truly as we have no sufficient *data* for the solution of such recondite aerial *problems*, so neither is *religion* at all *concerned* in them, which was never intended to gratify our *curiosity*, but to regulate our *lives*.<sup>77</sup>

And not only is the minister’s primary goal to inculcate virtue *by means of* preaching the Scriptures, he is to bear in mind that too much insistence on points of dogma will only confuse and enhance the culpability of the faithful:

... the invariable *aim* [a minister] ought uniformly to have in eye, is the *reformation* of the hearers in heart and life. In such a manner he must always teach, as to make them sensible, that it is not the bare *assent* of the understanding to those important verities he expounds, that will conduce to their *salvation* (than

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 18-19.

which I know not a more *dangerous* error that christians [sic] can entertain; other errors strike at the *branches* of religion, this at the *root*; others weaken or cut off some particular *motives*, this destroys the *aim* of all) that on the contrary, this *assent* can only be *available*, in as far as it operates a *change* upon the *disposition*; that if it have not this effect, it will but *inhance* [sic] their guilt, and *aggravate* their condemnation.<sup>78</sup>

Campbell's view that religion is about preaching morality rather than teaching theology he even taught as a principle to his students:

It has not been duly attended to by any party, that a revelation from God was not given us, to make us subtle metaphysicians, dextrous at solving abstruse and knotty questions, but to make us good men, to inform us of our duty, and to supply us with the most plain and most cogent motives to a due observance of it. ... we should learn, at least, to be modest in our conclusions, and not over dogmatical or decisive, in regard to matters which may be justly styled of doubtful disputation or of deep research.<sup>79</sup>

In short, Campbell's view that rhetoric ought to above all move the heart, achieve action, and benefit mankind is the same as what he thought religion ought to above all accomplish.

The Protestantism of Campbell's theology is made more evident by seeing how it diverges from the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas. In answer to the question "Whether Sacred Doctrine is a Practical Science," St. Thomas wrote:

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>79</sup> *Lectures on Pulpit Eloquence*, 12.

Sacred doctrine, being one, extends to things which belong to the different philosophical sciences, because it considers in each the same formal aspect, namely, so far as they can be known through the divine light. Hence, although among the philosophical sciences some are speculative and other practical, nevertheless sacred doctrine includes both; as God, by one and the same science, knows both Himself and His works.

Still, it is more speculative than practical, because it is more concerned with divine things than with human acts; though even of these acts it treats inasmuch as man is ordained by them to the perfect knowledge of God, in which consists eternal beatitude.<sup>80</sup>

Aquinas, like Aristotle, sees desire for knowledge as the highest human desire, and knowledge about God as the highest form of knowledge. For this reason, the contemplation of the highest truths is an end in itself. Campbell, however, does not take this attitude. Knowledge is not, for Campbell, an end in itself; knowledge is, rather, a means to other ends such as the reformation of souls, increased power over nature, or inventions and discoveries that are beneficial to mankind.<sup>81</sup>

Campbell saw religion as far less about the contemplation of Divine mysteries of the resolution of theological questions than about inciting Christian to virtue, and in this he was true to another critical element in Bacon's thought. For Bacon did not only cause

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<sup>80</sup> *Summa Theologicae*. Q1 A4 – 8-9

<sup>81</sup> Robert Norton describes this as a character of the Enlightenment generally: "The practitioners of Enlightenment, to say nothing of their adversaries... thought, or rather they passionately believes, that knowledge—the mature fruit of rational inquiry—ought never to be sought for its own sake, but that its value should be judged by its ability to change and, one may hope, to improve the various subjects to which it was applied." (*The Beautiful Soul: Aesthetic Morality in the Eighteenth Century* 9).

a shift in philosophical method; he also insisted on a change in philosophical goals. He wrote in the *Novum Organum*, “man, by the fall, lost at once his state of innocence, and his empire over creation, both of which can be partially recovered even in this life, the first by religion and faith, the second by the arts and sciences.”<sup>82</sup> Bacon further asserted that “the real and legitimate goal of the sciences is the endowment of human life with new inventions and riches.”<sup>83</sup> Thus, for Bacon, knowledge is for the sake of power—and, indeed, “there is a most intimate connection, and almost an identity between the ways of human power and human knowledge”<sup>84</sup>—but this is only as much as God has ever intended for humans: “Only let mankind regain their rights over nature, assigned to them by the gift of God, and obtain that power, whose exercise will be governed by right reason and true religion.”<sup>85</sup> Campbell’s purpose in the *Philosophy* is similarly to provide a correct description of the mind *for* the common welfare of mankind: i.e., to discover a more effective rhetoric that will help direct, move, and shape the will and produce authentic conversion of heart and life. Rhetoric, according to Campbell, “is absolutely necessary for diffusing valuable knowledge, and enforcing right rules of action upon others” (lxxiii). Thus, “we do not argue to gain barely the assent of the understanding, but, which is infinitely more important, the consent of the will” (6). The theory of rhetoric that emerged from eighteenth-century Scotland was therefore developed both according to enlightened emphasis on reason, but also a keen emphasis on *action*.

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<sup>82</sup> *The New Organon*. II.195.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, I.81.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, II.4.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, I.129.

This emphasis on knowledge as power over nature, and a desire to set aside questions of knowledge in order to open man's activities toward the more beneficial tasks of controlling nature for the benefits of all mankind appears also in a philosopher much closer to Campbell. Hume insisted on the pointlessness of philosophical speculation in favor of a vigorous application of minds to problems of health, wealth, and social well-being, and extended this principle to religion as well. In his *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals* (1751)—which, later in life, he would call the best of all his works<sup>86</sup>—Hume wrote that “The end of all moral speculations is to teach us our duty, and, by proper representations of the deformity of vice and the beauty of virtue, beget correspondent habits, and engage the one, and embrace the other.”<sup>87</sup> He also advocated a nationally established religion in the interest of encouraging virtue in the populace<sup>88</sup> and believed that religion exists solely *for the sake of* virtue and civil peace (rather than to direct men, say, toward faith in Jesus Christ and eternal beatitude in the Christian sense). As he wrote in his “Dissertation on the History of Natural Religion” (1757):

[T]here is no *man* so stupid, as that, judging by his natural reason, he would not esteem virtue and honesty the most valuable qualities, which any person could possess. Why not ascribe the same sentiments to his deity? Why not make all religion, or the chief part of it, to consist in these attainments?<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Norton, *The Beautiful Soul*, 51.

<sup>87</sup> *Enquiries concerning Human Understanding and concerning the Principles of Morals*, 171.

<sup>88</sup> See Jordan, “Religion in the Public Square: A Reconsideration of David Hume and Religious Establishment.”

<sup>89</sup> *Four Dissertations*, 105.



Hume, therefore, would have religion exist *solely* for the sake of encouraging and inculcating virtue. “As [theism] supposes one sole deity, the perfection of reason and goodness, it should, if justly prosecuted, banish every thing frivolous, unreasonable, or inhuman from religious worship, and set before men the most illustrious example, as well as the most commanding motives of justice and benevolence.”<sup>90</sup>

Campbell’s Moderate latitudinarianism and consequent emphasis on moral living similarly sought to suppress quarrels over religious doctrine and direct attention toward a non-divisive, non-sectarian preaching of morality and virtue. Religion, like science and like rhetoric, was less a matter of doctrine than of taming and cultivating nature. Thus, Campbell did follow Hume’s philosophy more carefully than Bitzer, Suderman, Walzer and others have realized, and it appears that he also shared Hume’s view that moral living and a peaceful, prosperous, well-ordered society is more important than philosophical or theological quibbling. Campbell’s work in many ways is the fulfillment of Hume’s quizzical reflection that, “To be a philosophical skeptic is, in a man of letters, the first and most essential step towards being a sound, believing Christian.”<sup>91</sup>

## Chapter Conclusion

In conclusion, Campbell’s *Philosophy of Rhetoric* defined the philosophical foundation for the Moderate’s liberal interpretation of Christianity. In this interpretation, priority was accorded to reason: that is, to a theory of knowledge derived from an epistemology owing much to Bacon. In Campbell’s system, knowledge is discovered by

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<sup>90</sup> *Natural History of Religion*, 59.

<sup>91</sup> *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, in *Essays on Treatises and Several Subjects* (London: J. Jones, 1822). Quoted in Norton, *The Beautiful Soul*, 57; 57 f.n..

a combination of empirical exploration and discursive sharing. In light of such an epistemology, Campbell could hold it rational to believe the Scriptures to be the Word of God. At the same time, however, the Scriptures (being, after all, a text open to interpretation) are in many respects doctrinally unclear. In Campbell's theory (again, in a way consistent with a Baconian perspective) Scripture ought to be read according to a generally empirical method that involves approaching Scripture with an open mind and allowing interpretations to be tested and improved over time by a community of Biblical scholars. Thus, for Campbell, religious doctrine, just like scientific knowledge, evolves and progresses over time. In light of his life-long study of Protestant theology and after forty years of textual analysis of the Bible he was in many respects more theologically skeptical than is generally recognized— although such latitudinarianism is the logical conclusion of the Protestant endeavor to determine, by means of textual criticism alone, a clear and final interpretation of Scripture.

For Campbell, then, the purpose of religion and of preaching, as of science and law and studies of all kinds, is to encourage people to live virtuous lives and promote the “benefit of mankind.” Campbell's Baconian principles applied to theology and religion via his philosophy of rhetoric frame the Bible essentially as an act of Divine rhetoric: it is expository, exhortative, persuasive. God reveals Himself to man to teach and to persuade more than to describe intellectual principles or “metaphysical subtleties.” The Bible has been given by God to help people understand what to *do*, and help society itself progress toward a more virtuous— that is, a more peaceful, tolerant, and civilized— state. The preacher, according to Campbell, must therefore not overly emphasize doctrine or

Scriptural exegesis but encourage people to live good lives. The details of doctrine—those finer points theoretically resolvable by a “true reading” of the original Word of God—are best set aside as unsolvable and are, for all practical purposes, unimportant anyway since religion is not really about revealed *truths* so much as it is about revealed *directives*.

In the *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, then, Campbell delivered a practical philosophical description of how knowledge advances, and a practical, philosophically sound method of turning that knowledge into socially beneficial action. It delineates a theory of rhetoric that is philosophically cautious and earnestly directed toward social wellbeing, and Campbell no more takes Scripture as a source of philosophical principles than he takes Hume as a source of philosophical conclusions.

## Chapter V

### Christian Virtue & Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric & Belles Lettres*

#### Chapter Introduction

Chapters 3 and 4 analyzed how Campbell's rhetorical theory was influenced by his Presbyterianism and how it spoke to the religious controversies of the time. This chapter, in turn, shows that Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* was also informed by specifically Christian beliefs and analyzes how understanding this Christian dimension illuminates and clarifies the content and significance of his theory of rhetoric and criticism.

In the first section it will be argued that Blair's *Lectures* reflect the view, common in his day, that education's highest purpose is to teach and encourage morality. It will show that, although Blair's lectures served to diminish classical rhetoric and encouraged a more belletristic approach to English studies, in his lectures rhetoric is treated as "created for extrinsic purposes... making truth and virtue prevail through specific directives," but that Blair's view of poetics is not therefore limited only to concerns "with language that [exists] as an object of contemplation, apart from any practical consequences."<sup>1</sup> On the contrary, Blair sees the study of rhetoric and literary criticism as morally edifying, and therefore having extrinsic and practical purposes. Blair's lectures need not be taken as encouraging political indifference or inaction; rather, for Blair, the

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

study of rhetoric and criticism are *both* “concerned with language designed to bring about action in the material world.”<sup>1</sup> In the second section it will be argued that Blair’s lectures not only have moral purpose, but specifically *Christian* moral purposes. Blair did not advocate merely some version of classical Stoic ethics, but a morality rendered Christian by Blair’s emphasis on the Biblical law of love. Blair’s lectures thus aim to foster not only the natural virtues of sincerity, tolerance, and moderation,<sup>2</sup> but also the characteristically Christian virtues of piety and charity.

Finally, in the third section, it will be argued that in so far as Blair’s *Lectures* manifest a Calvinist-Christian view of a person’s obligations to society, this means that civic responsibility is an expression of piety and a religious obligation. For Blair, to foster the character of a Christian was to foster the character of a good British citizen, and within Blair’s religious moral system the aspiration to Christian piety and charity is more important than any aspirations to social advancement or political hegemony. This means that Blair’s lectures included principles that inherently contradict the so-called “fundamental elitism of his... social vision”<sup>3</sup> and his supposed aim of merely “promoting the acculturating the self-interest of his students.”<sup>4</sup>

### **Moral Education, Rhetoric and *Belles Lettres***

The first part of this chapter’s argument is to show that Blair’s *Lectures* were intended not only to help individuals accrue social and material benefits, but also to

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<sup>1</sup> Berlin, “Rhetoric and Poetics in the English Department,” 522.

<sup>2</sup> See Longaker, “The Political Economy of Rhetorical Style: Hugh Blair’s Response to the Civic-Commercial Dilemma.”

<sup>3</sup> Einhorn, Lois, Herman Cohen, Edward P. J. Corbett, Charles W. Kneupper, Eric Skopec, and Barbara Warnick. “The Most Significant Passage in Hugh Blair’s ‘Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres,’” 289.

<sup>4</sup> Court, *Institutionalizing English Literature*, 37.

inculcate virtue. For Blair, the formation of a correct taste fosters virtue by exercising the heart in morally correct emotions. Teaching students the art of critical appreciation of *belles lettres* (that is, training students how to *receive* belletristic writing) not only empirically demonstrates the qualities of clear and polite English style, but positively forms moral sentiments; similarly, the process of learning how to communicate with perspicuity and elegance (that is teaching students how to correctly *produce* belletristic writing) forms the mind in moral and intellectual excellence. Thus, the two-fold aim of Blair's lectures— that is, teaching students how to make apt aesthetic judgments and teaching them how to produce effective writing— was intended to make students not only more effective communicators and more discriminating consumers of belletristic literature, but also more *virtuous* individuals.

It was a common view in Blair's day that education generally, and aesthetic subjects in particular, can and should teach "a moral vision of the world,"<sup>5</sup> and that education in rhetoric and *belles lettres* had an especially important and potent ability to inculcate correct moral sentiments. At least since the sixteenth century, Christian humanists had claimed that "their art of reading and composition"<sup>6</sup> was able to "make its recipients better people... [and] guarantee a classroom product of moral uprightness and good character."<sup>7</sup> John Locke, in his widely influential *Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693), placed virtue "as the first and most necessary of those endowments that belong to a man or a gentleman; as absolutely requisite to make him valued and beloved by others,

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<sup>5</sup> Horner, "Writing Instruction in Great Britain," 123.

<sup>6</sup> Crafton and Jardine, *Humanism to the Humanities*, 145.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 148-49

acceptable or tolerable to himself. With that, I think he will be happy neither in this nor the other world.”<sup>8</sup> Over the course of the eighteenth century, it became commonplace for educators to see the development of judgment and taste as an especially important source of moral teaching and encouragement. In his *Treatise on Ancient Painting* (1740), George Turnbull held that, “it is evident that pictures as well as poems have a very near relation to philosophy and a very close connection with moral instruction and education,” that “good moral paintings, whether by words or by the pencil, are proper samples in moral philosophy, and ought therefore to be employed in teaching it, for the same reason that experiments are made use of in teaching natural philosophy,” and that “...a fiction that is consonant to nature may convey a moral lesson more strikingly than can be done by an [sic] real story.”<sup>9</sup> Kames’ dedicatory epistle that prefaced his influential *Elements of Criticism* (1762) asserted without controversy that:

The fine arts have ever been encouraged by wise princes, not singly for private amusement, but for their beneficial influence in society. By uniting different ranks in the same elegant pleasures, they promote benevolence: by cherishing love of order, they enforce submission to government: and by inspiring delicacy of feeling, they make regular government a double blessing.<sup>10</sup>

Thomas Sheridan, held that “you cannot separate education ... from the moral and political life of the individual. Education must have two ends in view: first, to make

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<sup>8</sup> Locke. *Thoughts Concerning Education*. §135, 123.

<sup>9</sup> Turnbull, George. “On Ancient Painting.” *Art & Enlightenment*. 44-45.

<sup>10</sup> “To the King.” *Elements of Criticism*. a2.

young people good men; and second, to make them good subjects and useful citizens by shaping their talents according to the requirements of their future office or profession.”<sup>11</sup> Setting aside the question of whether religion was necessary for morality, *that* morality was a primary goal of education remained uncontroversial.

Blair’s unique expression, incorporation and synthesis of commonplace views on education, morality, and beauty thus drew upon the equally commonplace view that education, and aesthetic education in particular, ought to encourage moral attitudes and behavior. Even a cursory perusal of the *Lectures* demonstrates that Blair holds this view. In the first lecture, Blair says:

... the exercise of taste is, in its native tendency, moral and purifying. From reading the most admired productions of genius, whether in poetry or prose, almost every one rises with some good impressions left on his mind; and though these may not always be durable, they are at least to be ranked among the means of disposing the heart to virtue. (9)

Blair thus held that an acquaintance with *belles lettres* and the principles of aesthetic criticism— i.e., skill in correctly judging of the beautiful and the sublime— are a helpful and philosophically sound means of forming the heart and mind to delineate, admire, and favor not only the aesthetically beautiful in art, but also the morally good in life.

Blair applies this principle in his analysis of various genres. In discussing epic poetry, for example, he argues that, “Epic Poems are, and must be, favourable to the cause of virtue” (480-81). And in discussing tragedy, he asserts that: “Taking Tragedies

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<sup>11</sup> Benzie, *The Dublin Orator*, 5.



complexly, I am full persuaded, that the impressions left by them upon the mind, are, on the whole, favourable to virtue and good dispositions” (516), that “no reasonable person can deny Tragedy to be a moral species of composition”(516), that “in its general strain and spirit, it is favourable to virtue” (515), and that “the intention of Tragedy may, I think, be more shortly and clearly defined, To improve our virtuous sensibility” (516). Blair further asserts that, “If an Author interests us in behalf of virtue, forms us to compassion for the distressed, inspires us with proper sentiments, on beholding the vicissitudes of life, and by means of the concern which he raises for the misfortunes of others, leads us to guard against errors in our own conduct, he accomplishes all the moral purposes of Tragedy” (516). For Blair, then, the belletristic is not just a matter of aesthetics divorced from action, but also very much a matter of virtue.

In Blair’s theory, literary criticism also requires moral virtue as a principle of a just critical taste. In discussing history, for example, Blair specifically asserts that, “As history is a species of Writing designed for the instruction of mankind, sound morality should always reign in it. Both in describing characters, and in relating transactions, the Author should always show himself to be on the side of virtue” (408). Thus, Blair says, even though Voltaire’s history of seventeenth-century France merits “the attention of all who either read or write the History of those ages” (412), he is also compelled to point out that it “is tinged with those particularities which unhappily distinguish Voltaire’s manner of thinking on religious subjects” (412).

Blair also uses the language of moral praise and condemnation in his discussions of style. For example, in cautioning against floridity, Blair's vocabulary includes words like "contempt," "affectation," "luxury," "childishness," "dazzling" and "gaudy":

Nothing can be more contemptible than that tinsel splendor of Language, which some writers perpetually affect. It were well, if this could be ascribed to the real overflowing of a rich imagination. ... But the worst is, that with those frothy writers, it is a luxuriancy of words, not of fancy. ... It has escaped these writers, that sobriety in ornament, is one great secret for rendering it pleasing; and that, without a foundation of good sense and solid thought, the most Florid Style is but a childish imposition on the Public. The Public, however, are but too apt to be so imposed on; at least, the mob of Readers, who are very ready to be caught, at first, with whatever is dazzling and gaudy. (205)

Good writing, however, is a matter of "sobriety," "good sense," "solid thought."

Although this is analogical language, given eighteenth-century views on the morally formative power of aesthetics and given that Blair and his audience saw aesthetic judgment as bearing upon moral disposition, Blair's theory suggests that style reflects character. Technically Blair only says that style reflects the writer's "particular genius and turn of mind," (197) but the phrase "turn of mind" is suggestive of habit, and therefore moral character. It also suggests that failings of style— like lapses in propriety— are shadowy reflections of a writer's *moral* disposition much like failures of fashion-sense sometimes reflect negative qualities in a person's actual mind and character. Blair's further analysis encourages such an interpretation:

As there is a natural congruity between dress, and the character or rank of the person who wears it, a violation of which congruity never fails to hurt; the same holds precisely as to the application of figures to sentiment. The excessive, or unseasonable employment of them, is mere foppery in writing. ... For, as in life, true dignity must be founded on character, not on dress and appearance, so the dignity of composition must arise from thought, not from ornament. The affectation and parade of ornament, detract as much from an author, as they do from a man. (159)

To teach a student to rid his prose of foppery is to improve not merely his style, but his mind.

In Blair's theory, then, to develop and purify self-expression is to develop and purify the character behind it. Barbara Warnick has said that she believes Blair "was motivated by a belief that the thoughts we have and the words in which we express them are so closely related that we can improve the quality of our thoughts by improving the quality of our expression,"<sup>12</sup> and that, "In Blair's system... language use had an inherently epistemological function."<sup>13</sup> And, indeed, Blair does say that "when his arrangements become loose and his sentences turn feeble, the defects of [a writer's] style can, almost on every occasion, be traced back to his indistinct conception of the subject: so close is the connection between thoughts and the words in which they are clothed" (6). He also asserts that, "in the study of composition, we are cultivating reason itself. True

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<sup>12</sup> Einhorn, et al., "The Most Significant Passage in Hugh Blair's 'Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres,'" 301.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

rhetoric and sound logic are very nearly allied. The study of arranging and expressing our thoughts with propriety teaches to think, as well as to speak, accurately” (5). And it is not only in matters of perspicuity that Blair sees rhetorical training as shaping the individual. As Cohen argues, Blair distinguishes between language and style and sees style as an expression of the speaker *as* an individual: “Style cannot be separated from the individual. ... [style] is more than mere clothing of thought. ... The representation of thought [for Blair] comes through style and not through language by itself. Language as a means is universal but style as an end is personal and individualistic. ... is related not only to thought but to sentiments as well.”<sup>14</sup> As Longaker argues, the aesthetic training given in Blair’s lectures serves to shape not only social ability, but moral character, and more specifically the virtues of moderation, tolerance, and simplicity.

Blair, it should be noted, did not take this too far. While Blair says that “Mr. Harvey’s” style in the *Meditations* shows a “perpetual glitter of expression,” a “swollen imagery,” and abounds with “strained description,” he nevertheless praises his “pious and benevolent heart” and “lively fancy” (205). Swift’s writing style and personal character are similarly assessed. Swift, says Blair:

...knew, almost, beyond any man, the Purity, the Extent, the Precision of the English Language; and, therefore, for such as wish to attain a pure and correct Style, he is one of the most graceful models. But we must not look for much ornament and grace in his Language. His haughty and morose genius, made him despise any embellishment of this kind as beneath his dignity. He delivers his

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 284-85.

sentiments in a plain, downright, positive manner, like one who is sure he is in the right; and is very indifferent whether you be pleased or no. (203)

Swift demonstrates a displeasing manner; yet because he speaks the truth, Blair pointedly does not condemn Swift's thought. Bolingbroke, however, has a more attractive style but due to the content of his thought comes in for much sharper censure. Although Bolingbroke is an author of "parts and genius," Blair says that Bolingbroke's "merit, as a writer, would have been very considerable, if his matter had equaled his Style," but because he was "miserably perverted by faction and passion" Blair finds it certain that "his productions will soon pass, and are, indeed, already passing into neglect and oblivion" (159). Blair finds in the content of Bolingbroke's writing, therefore, "hardly... any thing to commend. In his reasonings, for the most part, he is flimsy and false; in his political writings, factious; in what he calls his philosophical ones, irreligious and sophistical in the highest degree" (214), and his "Philosophical Works, wherein he attacks religion, have still less merit [than his political works]" and are as "loose in their style as they are flimsy in the reasoning" (214). Blair's readers are thus expected to exercise moral judgment of the content of their reading quite as much as to judge its beauty.

For Blair, then, English studies can and should encourage virtuous attitudes and principles: forms of *belles lettres* such as history and tragedy are specifically valued because they encourage virtue; improving style is a way to improve one's thoughts and sentiments and, by extension, character itself; literary criticism itself involves applying moral judgments to belletristic writings. But to say Blair had moral intentions in the

*Lectures* does not mean he had religious intentions. The following section therefore argues that Blair's moral principles were in fact specifically Christian, and this chapter's final section show that understanding this is important for a correct assessment of the *Lectures*.

### **Stoicism, Christianity, and the Virtue of Piety in Blair's *Lectures***

Blair's lectures not only have moral intentions, those moral intentions are specifically religious and specifically Christian: that is, Blair saw morality not only in terms of natural law (i.e., in a strictly Stoic or secular Enlightened sense), but also in terms of Christian piety. This element of Blair's perspective has been obscured by Evangelical criticisms of the ways Blair did depart from certain elements of traditional Calvinism. As argued below, however, he did not depart from Christian ideas so much as express a *different* Christian view. Moreover, although ostensibly Blair did not see religion as *necessary for* morality, he did see religion as an important help to virtue and as necessarily leading *to* virtue, and especially the virtue of charity. Given how Blair understood the nature of piety, i.e., the "virtue of religion," piety therefore ought to be numbered among the most important virtues that Blair sought to teach and encourage, and Blair's treatment of virtue and morality in the *Lectures* must be understood to have a specifically Christian signification.

Blair's reputation for harboring views inimical to orthodox Presbyterianism, although exaggerated, stemmed, first, from Blair's very public emphasis on taste, propriety, and beauty rather than salvation doctrine, grace, and eternal judgment. He wrote sermons that were models of literary taste and that reflected as much his studies of

Scottish moral philosophy as of Scripture; he was a key and vocal supporter of Home's production of *Douglas*; he had an organ installed in St. Giles church. Blair, in other words, did not fall into step with the orthodox Calvinist-Presbyterian tradition of eschewing the worldly and sensuous. Knox had specifically condemned Catholic liturgy and art on the principle that they mediated and diminished the Christian's relationship with God. Following Calvin's line, Knox preached what he claimed was a rediscovered, original, purified, simple Christian religion: the same, he argued, that Christ Himself had taught and that the "Romane Antichrist" had corrupted and with which it "halth... overcovered this poore Realme" such that "idolatrie that bein manteined, the bloode of innocentis hath bene sched, and Christ Jesus his eternall treuth hath bene abhorred, detested, and blasphemed."<sup>15</sup> For the glory of God and the purity of doctrine, Scottish Reformers had stripped Catholic churches, outlawed and raided Catholic liturgies, and destroyed works of Catholic art. Long after the iconoclastic violence ended, Knox's strident suspicion of the sensuous symbolism that characterized Roman Catholic religious devotion remained an entrenched element of Presbyterianism.

Blair's enthusiasm for art, sentiment, symbol and imagination therefore scandalized his more traditionally Calvinist contemporaries. Blair's appreciation of metaphor and symbol really reflects a philosophical appreciation of physical experience and imagination. Campbell's predecessor Blackwell wrote in the *Letters on Mythology* that "There be no science unadorned by allegory."<sup>16</sup> Hume's *Treatise on Human Nature* "establishes that our understanding can be understood only in terms of vivifying

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<sup>15</sup> "Preface to the History of the Reformation in Scotland" (1566), 61.

<sup>16</sup> Blackwell. *Letters concerning Mythology*. 285.

analogies drawn from classical politics.”<sup>17</sup> Campbell held vivacious appeals to the imagination to be important for persuasion as well as instruction. It was therefore unremarkable for Blair to assert:

Of all the Figures of Speech, none comes so near to painting as Metaphor. Its peculiar effect is to give light and strength to description; to make intellectual ideas, in some sort, visible to the eye, by giving them colour, and substance, and sensible qualities. In order to produce this effect, however, a delicate hand is required for, by a very little inaccuracy, we are in hazard of introducing confusion, in place of promoting Perspicuity. (158)

Beauty, Blair saw, is uniquely powerful not only for moving the emotions, but for addressing the intellect and Blair’s implicit argument here is that metaphor, beautiful language, and imaginative analogies are a natural and religiously acceptable mode of persuasion. His views partially reflected those of his friends, Hume and Kames.

Although both were dead by the time Blair’s lectures came to press (Hume died in 1776; Kames in 1782), Kames’ *Essays on the Principles of Morality and Natural Religion* (1751) and Hume’s *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*<sup>18</sup> (also published in 1751) and his *Essay on Taste* (1757) are generally understood to be important influences on Blair’s thought. To their views, however, Blair could have added the principle that since the God of Nature is the God of Revelation, such just, natural, and wholesome means of persuasion cannot be contrary to true religion.

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<sup>17</sup> Potkay. *Eloquence in the Age of Hume*. 186.

<sup>18</sup> Robert Norton points out, and it is worth noting here, that later in life Hume claimed this as his best and most important work.



Evangelicals were, however, right to suspect that Blair's sensibilities were not altogether consistent with those of the Scottish Reformation for his hearty appreciation for poetry, music, and drama clearly had more in common with Roman Catholic and Anglican attitudes. Tellingly, many of Blair's most important influences were French Catholics,<sup>19</sup> and Blair assigned special praise to the sermons of Bossuet, Massillon, Bourdaloue, and Flechier<sup>20</sup> — every one a member of the Roman Catholic clergy. Blair's appreciation for art and beauty and French eloquence did not signal Blair's defection from Christianity as such, then, but it was a return to a pre-Reformation appreciation for how beauty is conducive to religious belief and devotion.<sup>21</sup> Blair's love of art and beauty thus lay beyond the pale of strict Calvinism, but his views still fell within the realm of Christian thought and by themselves should not earn him a reputation for being a closet secularist.

The second reason Evangelicals questioned Blair's orthodoxy was that, because his sermons often treated morality in philosophical rather than Scriptural terms, they saw his preaching as little more than mere "heathen morality."<sup>22</sup> One of many similar passages from his sermons in which Blair mingles moral sense philosophy with Scriptural references may be found in his sermon "On Devotion":

Happy is man, who, in the conflict of desire between God and the world, can oppose, not only argument to argument, but pleasure to pleasure; who, to the

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<sup>19</sup> See Barbara Warnick's *The Sixth Canon*; Dawson and Morere, ed. *Scotland and France in the Enlightenment*.

<sup>20</sup> See Brinton, "Hugh Blair and the True Eloquence."

<sup>21</sup> See Howard, *Evangelical is Not Enough*.

<sup>22</sup> Schmitz, *Hugh Blair*, 15.

external allurements of the sense, can oppose the internal joys of devotion; and to the uncertain promises of a flattering world, the certain experiences of that peace of God which passeth understanding, keeping his mind and heart. – Such is the temper and spirit of the devout man.<sup>23</sup>

Blair's view that there is in human nature a deep sense of the morally good was simply a reflection of the moral philosophy of his day, and helped to define the Moderates as those who "cultivated a refinement and elegance of diction, and dwelt much on the truths common to both natural and revealed religion; and... were fond of depicting the high morality of the New Testament, and of recommending the example of Jesus."<sup>24</sup> Blair's belief in the power of man's natural inclinations to goodness leads him even to assert that, "If there be any impression which man is formed by nature to receive, it is a sense of religion." The moral sense for Blair thus not only includes a sense of religion, but lack of piety is a *natural* failure which "argues depravity of heart; and... infers an irregular discharge of the duties of morality."<sup>25</sup> While this might appear simply an innocuous assertion that man is a "religious animal" besides being social and rational, his more rigorously Calvinist brethren in the Kirk were quick to detect that such a position granted all too great a measure of goodness to weak, ignorant, depraved, and sinful human nature and could easily foster the attitude that faith is *merely* a virtue rather than a pure gift of God's choice to save the soul to whom it is granted. The extent of Blair's departure from Calvinist theology, however, is not germane to this argument; it is sufficient simply to

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<sup>23</sup> Blair, "On Devotion," quoted by Schmitz 40-41

<sup>24</sup> McCosh, *The Scottish Philosophy*, 18.

<sup>25</sup> Blair, *Sermons*, Vol 1. 4.

note that, whatever Blair's views on the relationship between grace, virtue, and salvation, it is clear that he did not think piety strictly necessary *for* morality, but that he did think true piety necessarily *leads* to moral behavior. So although Blair was not as supportive of orthodox Calvinist sensibilities as some wished, and it seems the more orthodox Calvinists of his day were right to think that Blair had slipped into a kind of Hutcheson-inspired, quasi-Pelagian Neomonianism, even so, Blair was no atheist, and his implicit heterodoxy on some issues does not mean that Christian notions were extraneous or irrelevant to his *Lectures*.

Having shown that Blair was certainly a Christian, albeit not a strictly Calvinist one, it is clear that his lectures reflect Christian beliefs in two ways. First, the lectures address the religious controversies of his day both regarding attacks on Christianity for being non-rational and regarding disagreements within the church itself about the limits of philosophy and reason as a religious authority. Blair was familiar with both types of religious debates and he seeks to demonstrate that his endeavor is supported both by current moral philosophy as well as Christianity. In doing so, Blair walked a fine line between satisfying his friends outside the Kirk and not offending opponents within. The result is a rhetorical stance that tends to give serious consideration to secular opinions (which makes sense in light of the fact that he was educating young men, many of them for the ministry, in a world already beginning to grow hostile to the Christian religion) yet is also responsive where possible (that is, where he can be agreeable) to the more salient criticisms of his fellow Kirk-men.

Blair conscientiously aligns himself, for example, with the “pious men” who question the moral effects of dramatic productions.<sup>26</sup> While distinguishing himself from what he saw as an excessive and indiscriminate zealotry, he tactfully sides with them on critical points: “And, therefore, the zeal which some pious men have shown against the entertainments of the Theatre, must rest only upon the abuse of Comedy; which, indeed, has frequently been so great as to justify very severe censures against it” (516).

Blair also drew many of his illustrations and example from the Bible, and these served not only to draw upon a shared religious culture and widely-familiar writings, they also conveyed to Blair’s audience that the Bible itself as a matter of art and symbol justifies, and even requires, the study of rhetoric and *belles lettres*. After all, as the preface to Tobias Smollett’s *Roderick Random* would point out, its own “best Precedent and Sanction is derived from the several Parables, divinely affecting, throughout the Old and New Testament.”<sup>27</sup> Blair’s use of Scripture framed the Bible as a work of literature susceptible to the secular arts of literary interpretation and criticism, following the lead of Moderate Biblical scholars like Campbell. At the same time, it established a posture of rhetorical antagonism to anti-Christian detractors of the Bible by conscientiously explaining the natural dignity and beauty of the Scriptures. Blair’s incorporation of Scripture and his praise for their aesthetic qualities thus served to establish his Christian credentials to a widely Christian audience, granted dignity to his own lectures in ways that would soothe Evangelical readers, and rhetorically advocated the Moderate revision of the Calvinist iconoclasm.

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<sup>26</sup> See Witherspoon, *A serious enquiry into the nature and effects of the stage* (1757).

<sup>27</sup> Preface, *The adventures of Roderick Random*. In two volumes. Vol 2, iv.

Blair's response to his theologically and religiously mixed audience also appears in a fascinating passage on the power of personification in which Blair discusses a sermon on the reasonableness of Christianity. Only a few passages earlier Blair had mentioned the theory (it was, in fact, Hume's) that the pagan religions originated in the imaginations of primitive peoples. In the sermon Blair analyzes there is a personified figure of Natural Religion who discusses the differences between Mohammed and Jesus Christ. Blair's analysis of the text supports the sermon's point that Christianity is consistent with the principles of Natural Religion, and Blair calls the passage "more than elegant; it is truly sublime. The whole passage is animated; and the Figure rises at the conclusion, when Natural Religion, who, before, was only a spectator, is introduced as speaking by the Centurion's voice"(175-76).<sup>28</sup> Throughout the passage, Blair practices a complex rhetorical task: he strikes against the iconoclastic notion that philosophy and imagination are inimical to religious faith; he implicitly asserts the reasonableness of religion by asserting the rhetorical legitimacy of imagination against Hume's suggestion that religion is little more than, as Freud would later figure it more bluntly, the expression of an infantile need; and he establishes his own religious conservatism by practicing a deft bit of Biblical exegesis in suggesting that the centurion represents the way that natural religion leads to an acknowledgment of Jesus' divinity.

Blair elsewhere also argues that the study of epic poetry helps show by a kind of empirical evidence that virtuous conduct is a matter of a natural law:

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<sup>28</sup> The passage to which Blair refers is presumably the story Matthew 8:5-13, in which a centurion's faith in Jesus's power brings healing to the centurion's servant.

It is, indeed, no small testimony in honour of virtue, that several of the most refined and elegant entertainments of mankind, such as [epic poetry] must be grounded on moral sentiments and impressions. This is a testimony of such weight, that, were it in the power of skeptical Philosophers, to weaken the force of those reasonings which established the essential distinction between Vice and Virtue, the writings of Epic Poets alone were sufficient to refute their false Philosophy; showing by that appeal which they constantly make to the feelings of mankind in favour of virtue, that the foundations of it are real, deep and strong, in human nature. (480-81)

In this passage, Blair again simultaneously addresses both Evangelical critics of natural religion theories as well as anti-religious views, and it is again curiously unclear if Blair means to disagree with philosophical skeptics, anti-philosophical Evangelicals, or both. Blair thus rhetorically figured himself as a Christian and a man of the Enlightenment, and in both capacities aligned his lectures with the goal of encouraging morality. It needs now be argued that the Blair's understanding of morality was made specifically Christian by his taking Christian piety and Christian charity as virtues.

As McNeill has noted, the word piety has only to the modern mind come to connote "ineffectual religious sentimentality or canting pretense."<sup>29</sup> For the Reformation-era writers, however, "as for ancient pagan and Christian writers, *pietas* was an honest word, free from any unsavory connotation. It was a praiseworthy dutifulness or faithful

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<sup>29</sup> McNeill. "Editor's Introduction." lii.

devotion to one's family, country, or God.”<sup>30</sup> The full title of the first edition of the *Institutes* (March 1536) is telling in this regard. Translated from the Latin, it reads: *The Institute of the Christian Religion, Containing almost the Whole Sum of Piety and Whatever It is Necessary to Know in the Doctrine of Salvation. A Work Very Well Worth Reading by All Persons Zealous for Piety, and Lately Published*. Within his guidebook for “Persons Zealous for Piety” Calvin writes:

I call ‘piety’ that reverence joined with love of God which the knowledge of His benefits induces. For until men recognize that they owe everything to God, that they are nourished by his fatherly care, that he is the Author of their every good, that they should seek nothing beyond him— they will never yield him willing service. Nay, unless they establish their complete happiness in him, they will never give themselves truly and sincerely to him.<sup>31</sup>

For Calvin, then, piety stood at the pinnacle of the moral virtues (and on this particular issue, it is worth noting, shared the Roman Catholic view<sup>32</sup>). Piety includes for Calvin the practices of religious worship: “Here indeed is pure and real religion [i.e., piety]: faith so joined with an earnest fear of God that this fear also embraces willing reverence, and carries with it such legitimate worship as is prescribed in the law.”<sup>33</sup> He further asserts, however, that Christian piety “commands us to love God with pure faith and to embrace

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Translated by McNeill, *Institutes*. I.2.i.

<sup>32</sup> Thomas Aquinas’ held that “religion is chief among the moral virtues”<sup>32</sup> and that “sanctity does not differ from religion essentially, but in idea only.” (See Thomas Aquinas. *On Prayer and the Contemplative Life*. Question LXXXI “On the Virtue of Religion,” and VIII “Is Religion the Same as Sanctity?”)

<sup>33</sup> Translated by McNeill, *Institutes*. I.2.ii.

other people with sincere affection.”<sup>34</sup> That is, love of God commands and leads to love of neighbor.

The Calvinist emphasis on piety figured largely in Presbyterianism. The *Scots Confession* similarly asserted the primacy of the virtue of religion (i.e., piety) and its implicit command to practice virtue:

We confess and acknowledge that God has given to man his holy law, in which not only are forbidden all such works as displease and offend his godly Majesty, but also are commanded all such as please him, and as he has promised to reward. And these works are of two sorts: the one are done to the honour of God, the other to the profit of our neighbours; and both have the revealed will of God for their assurance. (14.1)

The principle that the honoring of God means “the profit of our neighbours” is not as clearly expressed in the *Westminster Confession* (1646), but does appear in the Shorter Catechism in a variety of ways, such as in the section, “Of Communion of Saints”:

All saints that are united to Jesus Christ their head by his Spirit and by faith, have fellowship with him in his graces, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory. And being united to one another in love, they have communion in each other’s gifts and graces; and are obliged to the performance of such duties, publick and private, as do conduce to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man. Saint, by profession, are bound... in relieving each other in outward things, according to their several abilities and necessities. (XXVI.1-2)

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<sup>34</sup> Partee 294; see Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.20.



In the Presbyterian tradition, then, the Christian's primary duty is to God, but the Christian duty to honor God is expressed by charity towards other men. Benevolence is therefore not simply a natural instinct to restrain passions of violence or the desire to exploit other people, but an active solicitousness for one's fellows.

This point needs to be emphasized since Blair is often called a "Christian Stoic." The difference between classical and Christian stoicism, however, is that the Christian is obligated not only to tolerate and respect but to actually *love* his neighbor. Classical Stoicism (at least as found in the writings of Cicero, Marcus Aurelius, and Epictetus) is essentially a philosophy of self-control and emotional equilibrium. It is a philosophy of how to conduct oneself and take in stride the vicissitudes of life far more than it is a philosophy of love and self-sacrifice. Christianity, however, teaches that actual *love* is owed the members of God's invisible church on earth, and provides uniquely powerful and compelling intellectual, spiritual, and social motivations to pursue goods beyond social and material self-interest.

In explaining Blair's "Christian Stoicism," Broadie gestures toward this difference in perspective:

Only through exercise of self-control is a virtuous life possible [for Blair], and only through virtue can we attain happiness. He adds that the search for worldly pleasure is bound to end in disappointment and that that is just as well. For it is through the failure of the search that we come to a realisation both of the essential vanity of the life we have been living and also of the need to turn to God and to virtue. For many, the fact of suffering is the strongest argument there is against

the existence of God. Blair on the contrary holds that our suffering provides us with a context within which we can discover that our true nature is best realised by the adoption of a life-plan whose overarching principle is religious.<sup>35</sup>

The overarching principle of a Stoic's life-plan is self-discipline, self-control, justice—a life in accord with the law of nature, the principles of beauty, and the so-called “moral sense.” The Christian's “overarching principle” of a “life-plan,” however, is scripturally rendered by the gospel scene when a scribe asks Jesus what is the most important law:

And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.<sup>36</sup>

As a Christian and a minister, it is reasonable to assume that Blair considered such pious love of God to be a moral obligation that implicitly commanded, among other virtues, love of neighbor.

That he was a Christian and not simply a modern Stoic adds an important dimension to the context of Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*. It means that he saw morality as ordered to not only self-perfection, self-control, and a life lived in accordance with the natural law, but also as ordered to love, to “the profit of neighbours,” to the honoring of God. As Blair wrote in his sermon “On the Union of Piety and Morality”:

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<sup>35</sup> Broadie, “Scottish Philosophy in the 18th Century.”

<sup>36</sup> Mark 12:29-31. (King James)

For what purpose did thy Creator place thee in this world, in the midst of human society, but that as a man among men thou mightest cultivate humanity; that each in his place might contribute to the general welfare; that as a spouse, a brother, a son, or a friend, thou mightest act thy part with an upright and tender heart; and thus aspire to resemble Him who ever consults the good of his creatures and whose *tender mercies are over all his works*?<sup>37</sup>

The *Lectures* therefore must be read with the understanding that when Blair talks about virtue he means not only the Stoic virtues of toleration, politeness and self-control, but also the Christian virtues of piety and charity. For a Presbyterian minister, if teaching rhetoric and applied literary taste is a way of teaching moral habits and principles, such study can and should be consistent with the honoring of God, should invite awareness of others, and should involve taking concern for society's spiritual well-being. In this view, aesthetic education would not be individualizing, politically dis-empowering, or elitist, nor would it fundamentally encourage narrow social conformity. Blair's Christianity is therefore important to modern assessments of Blair's rhetorical theory, as will now be shown in the third and last section of this chapter.

### **The Civic Dimension of Calvinism in Blair's *Lectures***

Some rhetoric scholars have held that the advent of belletristic study in the universities disempowered rhetoric.<sup>38</sup> In Miller's account, the Scottish institutionalization of English literature reduced rhetoric education from training boys in the art of civic discourse to training them simply how to self-interestedly recognize their

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<sup>37</sup> Blair, *Sermons*, Vol. I, (1807), 15.

<sup>38</sup> Franklin, *Institutionalizing English Literature*, 13. Also, see Miller; Court; Crawford; Eagleton.

elite position in society, listen and read with discrimination, and speak in ways conducive to their material and social success within the cultural milieu of the dawning British Empire. This, Miller argues, eventually led to the diminishment of rhetoric's prestige in education and allowed the study of literature to devolve into mere aestheticism: "With the adoption of Blair's *Lectures* as a standard text, college English came to concentrate on stylistic proprieties; literature and rhetoric moved toward the personal domain; and the productive capacities of discourse became 'natural' aptitudes that were beyond the reach of most individuals."<sup>39</sup> Blair, according to Miller, thus helped mold English studies into a means of creating a citizenry that would embrace cultural hegemony, social conformity, and political obeisance. For Miller, Blair's belletristic study of rhetoric therefore diminished the classical equation of the public with the political, and there is good reason for this view. After all, King George III would not have supported the establishment in Scotland of the first chair of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres had he thought the study of language and literature would incite political unrest.

Other scholars have resisted the negative tenor of these perspectives.<sup>40</sup> Lois Agnew, for example, has argued that "Blair's cultivation of the inborn capacity of taste can... be seen as a type of rhetorical enterprise... that assumes from the outset that the cultivation of virtue will lead to participation in civic life that simultaneously reflects civic commitment and social restraint."<sup>41</sup> But although Agnew argues that Blair more

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<sup>39</sup> Miller, 250.

<sup>40</sup> See Agnew; Longaker; McKenna; Fowler.

<sup>41</sup> Lois Agnew. *Outward, Visible Propriety*. 106

intends to politically empower students than Miller gives him credit for, she ascribes this entirely to his Stoicism without reference to his Presbyterianism.

Blair's Christianity, however, has consequences for the political dimensions of his theory that Agnew fails to recognize and Miller does not take into account. This is first of all apparent in the political implications of Presbyterian theology and the political effects of Presbyterianism in Scottish history. The Church of Scotland had a long tradition of identifying the God of revelation with the God of society based on Calvin's principle that "the divinely established order produced a twofold government. The spiritual pertains to the inner man and eternal life, the political pertains to civil justice and outward morality. [*Institutes* IV.20.1] While the church is chiefly responsible for holiness, and the state for peace, justice, and freedom, there can be no final separation because Jesus Christ is Lord of both church and state."<sup>42</sup> Calvin asserts that the state:

...has its appointed end, so long as we live among men, to cherish and protect the outward worship of God, to defend sound doctrine of piety and the position of the church, to adjust our life to the society of men, to form our social behavior to civil righteousness, to reconcile us with one another, and to promote general peace and tranquility.<sup>43</sup>

The Scottish Parliament asserted in the *Scots Confession* (1560) that, "to kings, princes, rulers, and magistrates, we affirm that chiefly and most principally the conservation and purgation of the religion appertains; so that not only they are appointed for civil policy,

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<sup>42</sup> Partee, *The Theology of John Calvin*, 293.

<sup>43</sup> *Institutes*. IV.20.2, qtd. by Partee, 293.

but also for maintenance of the true religion.”<sup>44</sup> Presbyterianism, in other words, very much construed civil power in terms of divine authority and religious devotion.

It also tended to construe religion in terms of inherently democratic ideas. The Scottish Reformation itself, and the development of Presbyterianism over the following two centuries, was a distinctly populist and nationalistic movement. As early as 1557, a number of lords signed a Covenant pledging their “whole power, substance and very lives”<sup>45</sup> to the Protestant cause, but it soon developed into “a great popular revolution backed by a large number of articulate men of every class discontented with the political and religious environment in which they lived.”<sup>46</sup> Then in 1574, Andrew Melville returned to Scotland, bringing with him from Geneva a “new and rigidly academic theology”<sup>47</sup> that did much to shape the Scottish Kirk strongly in the direction of Presbyterianism in ways that Knox never envisioned.<sup>48</sup> Melville saw episcopacy as unscriptural and believed that the old hierarchical system should be replaced with “a system of church courts composed of ministers and life-appointed elders and consisting of kirk-session, presbytery, synod and General Assembly”<sup>49</sup> to be composed of representatives from the lower church courts rather than the three estates. He also held that the Church’s authority was separate from the State, and a higher authority in spiritual and moral matters. This set Presbyterianism on the path to a distinctly democratic-republican ecclesiastical structure.

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<sup>44</sup> *Scots Confession*, “Of the Civil Magistrate,” 24.2

<sup>45</sup> Qtd. from un-named source by T. C. Smout, *A History of the Scottish People*, 60.

<sup>46</sup> Smout, *A History of the Scottish People*, 53.

<sup>47</sup> Smout, *A History of the Scottish People*, 64.

<sup>48</sup> Donaldson 111

<sup>49</sup> Smout, 65.

Almost eighty years after the Scottish Parliament adopted the Scots Confession, this quality of the Scottish religion manifested itself forcefully when Charles attempted to impose Archbishop Laud's papist-seeming liturgical directives on the Scottish Kirk. Provoked, the General Assembly drafted the National Covenant (1638) to protest Charles' failure to duly consult either the General Assembly or the Scottish Parliament before issuing decrees effecting Scottish religious practice, and proved further cause of Scots blending their religious fervor with patriotic passions. The Covenant circulated widely and earned thousands of signatures, some written in blood, becoming for "countless thousands of Scots, ... an extension of the vows they took 'banding' them with God in the kirk," so that "the document itself rapidly assumed the status of a kind of patriotic scripture, a way of determining who was truly Christian... who was a true Scot."<sup>50</sup> The continued political and theological tussles of the sixteenth century went on to form the basis of the eighteenth-century Presbyterian Kirk as the Reformation worked itself over the course of 130 years, "changing and developing, twisting in its ecclesiastical polity first to one side and then to another to accommodate differing shades of religious opinion until finally, in 1690, it emerged as the classic Presbyterian church of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with its elders, deacons and ministers, its kirk-sessions, presbyteries, synods, and General Assembly, its frequent but not invariable association with sabbatarianism and Puritanism, and its convictions of ecclesiastical parity."<sup>51</sup> Throughout, this process, however, it remained an article written into the very confessions of the Presbyterian religion that religion and the state were meant to be

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<sup>50</sup> Schama, Simon. *The History of Britain Volume 2*, 93.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 62.

mutually supportive and Presbyterianism, consistently leading to conjunctions of religion and politics.

Influenced by Calvin's theology of society, Melville's democratic interpretation of the relationship between church and State, and the history of Presbyterianism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, by the eighteenth century the Scottish Kirk thus had a long history of alliance with Scotland's government and Scottish citizenship itself was inevitably cast in a religious light so that civic power, response to authority, and social conformity were all intimately connected with the duties of Christian piety itself. In the Presbyterian tradition, then, education not only serves religion and the state; it also serves religion *by* serving the state and the formal, academic study of *belles lettres* was, in retrospect, a near-inevitable development in light of its widely granted power to encourage socially desirable virtues. Thanks to the theologically and historically democratic and patriotic character of Presbyterianism, Scottish pulpit oratory by the eighteenth century already possessed a long and lively political history. This is something Miller misses when he asserts that, "Blair's idealization of the democratic eloquence of classical rhetoric becomes ironic when one considers that the only modern examples of popular oratory that he cites are in the 'narrower range' of pulpit eloquence."<sup>52</sup> Pulpit oratory was not particularly "narrow" at all and was, in eighteenth-century Scotland, a critical site of political discourse even beyond the ways the Moderates supported the Union and the Hanoverian regime.

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<sup>52</sup> Miller, *The Formation of College English*, 236.



Within Blair's Presbyterian tradition, "participation in civic life" as well as "civic commitment and social restraint" are, therefore, *religious* virtues. Civic participation was not merely an effect of virtue (as Agnew characterizes it), but a virtue *in itself*. Blair's foundational Christian view of the human being means that his theory of rhetoric and *belles lettres* is implicitly concerned with both the private and the common good. In Blair's day, the political significance of this did not go unexamined. Many believed Christian piety was the foundation of all moral virtue, that it was not just conducive but *necessary* for civil order, peace and prosperity because it not only commanded virtuous living but also provided powerful incentives to live virtuously.<sup>53</sup> In the Scottish tradition in particular, Calvin,<sup>54</sup> Knox and the Presbyterian confessions all specifically emphasized the need to develop and perfect the Christian virtues of justice, obedience and charity in the populace.<sup>55</sup> In the British philosophical and scientific tradition, Richard Bentley, the first Boyle professor at Oxford, maintained in 1693 that:

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<sup>53</sup> It is worth mentioning that Plato concludes both his dialogues on rhetoric—the *Gorgias* as well as the *Phaedrus*—with expressions of piety. The *Gorgias* ends with a description of the after-life as a place of final punishment or reward—the only answer Socrates can finally give to the tyrannical Callicles. The *Phaedrus* concludes with a prayer which emphasizes the virtue of temperance and self-control that Longaker has noted is one of the moral values Blair especially seeks to encourage in his readers and students.

<sup>54</sup> The extent and nature of Calvin's contributions to the development of democratic political theories, ideals and popular rights is both complicated and controversial. Some have credited Calvinism with the rise of democratic political theory over the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. See, for example, Roland Boer, *Political Grace: The Revolutionary Theology of John Calvin*. Louisville, Westminster John Knox Press, 2009.

<sup>55</sup> See McNeil, *The History and Character of Calvinism*. Regarding the differences between Calvinism and Stoicism, McNeill argues that Calvin "admires the Stoic moralist [Seneca] but makes it very clear that he is not himself a Stoic. He repudiates in Seneca what is contrary to 'our religion.' Seneca condemns the emotion of *miser cordia*, compassion or mercy, which for him is no part of clemency but 'a vice of the mind.' Calvin as a Christian holds that *miser cordia* is a virtue, and that no man is good who does not possess it." (105).

...if Atheism should be supposed to become universal in this nation... farewell all ties of friendship and principles of honor; all love for our country and loyalty to our prince; nay, farewell all government and society itself, all professions and arts, and conveniences of life, all that is laudable or valuable in the world.<sup>56</sup>

Locke located the source of virtue specifically within a reverent belief in God: “As the foundation of [virtue], there ought very early to be imprinted on [the child’s] mind a true notion of God, as of the independent Supreme Being, Author and Maker of all things, from Whom we receive all our good, Who loves us, and gives us all things.”<sup>57</sup> Almost a century later, Blair’s friend Principal Robertson maintained that it is Christianity which must be credited for modern civility because it “not only sanctifies our souls, but refines our manners; and while it gives the promise of the next life, it improves and adorns the present.”<sup>58</sup> Thus, at the time Blair was delivering his lectures in Edinburgh it was common and unremarkable to consider the Christian faith an important foundation to civic order, peace and prosperity and to see piety as both personally empowering and socially beneficial.

In Blair’s theory, the study of rhetoric and *belles lettres* helps bring society’s young into full adulthood as responsible, self-disciplined, and Christian citizens because it encourages the habits of piety and morality by which students become fully actualized persons (in light of their eternal destiny), and citizens able and willing to individually

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<sup>56</sup> Bentley, *The Folly and Unreasonableness of Atheism Demonstrated*,

<sup>57</sup> Locke, *Thoughts Concerning Education*. §136.

<sup>58</sup> William Robertson, *The Situation of the World at the Time of Christ’s Appearance, and Its Connexions with the Success of His Religion Considered* (1755) in *The Works of William Robertson*, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1829), 1: lxxvii-lxxxvi. quoted by Sher, 63.

follow the dictate of Christian charity of bringing peace, kindness, and justice into their own lives and into the life of their society and the state. It therefore truly impoverishes Blair's theory to read his lectures without awareness of their religious context. If some later scholars turned the formal study of rhetoric and *belles lettres* into a merely elitist endeavor, it should still be remembered that Blair's rhetorical theory originally intended to teach students the civic virtues and social graces of a Christian gentleman and to foster their powers of individual judgment in light of their Christian duties. That the study of English was originally instituted for the sake of making British citizens better neighbors of one another and better stewards of God's gifts is especially significant in light of Bruce Ward's recent argument that "the liberal virtues themselves prove chimerical without a love that is both transcendently real *and* immanently efficacious."<sup>59</sup> Ward's argument raises the question of whether the liberal virtues fostered by language, communication, literature, and rhetoric studies are sufficient for creating and sustaining a virtuous society, and whether piety does not, after all, have an important role to play in the well-being of society.

### **Chapter Conclusion**

In Blair's theory, the study of rhetoric criticism is meant to shape the manners, mind, and morals of a polite, polished, civilized, rational, learned, tolerant, enlightened, pious (yet neither enthusiastic nor superstitious) Christian gentleman. He brings to this endeavor typically Scottish Enlightenment views of nature, morality, and beauty and the conviction that Christian morals are grounded in natural law. He saw revelation to be

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<sup>59</sup> *Redeeming the Enlightenment*, 198.

necessary for morality, however. It discloses things *beyond* what can be known by nature, such as that the God of nature is a personal, loving, and redeeming God, and that to the law of “Love thy neighbor as thyself” must be added the simple but significant clause “for the love of God.” Moreover, it provides important and compelling incentives to virtue. The Christian duty to love God and obey the Scriptural commands and the Christian hope for eternal beatitude mean that, although Christians and Deists share many of the same moral views, the Christian is motivated to practice love of neighbor not just because such behavior is more peaceful or more in accord with human nature, but because loving one’s neighbor expresses the *religious obligation* to render obedience and honor to God. Christian morality as such is thus not simply a matter of politeness or self-interest, but at root an expression of piety. The Christian approach to the study of rhetoric and criticism therefore inherently requires looking outside the self and beyond private comfort, invites questions about the good of conforming to cultural conventions, and considers the good of others both for their own sake and also because the good of the self ultimately depends on the charitable offering of that self to God and neighbor.

## Chapter VI

### Conclusion

#### Recapitulation

This dissertation has argued that religion was an important influence on George Campbell's 1776 *Philosophy of Rhetoric* and Hugh Blair's 1783 *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*. This argument has been developed in three ways.

First, the consideration of pulpit oratory in the Protestant tradition, especially in light of Campbell's own work as a preacher and a teacher of future ministers of the Kirk suggests that the ways in which pulpit oratory was central in the religious life of Presbyterian Scots parallels its centrality in Campbell's rhetoric theory. Also, the near-sacramental quality ascribed to pulpit oratory in Presbyterian worship parallels Campbell's focus on influencing the will and emotions. These parallels then suggest a solution to the puzzle of Campbell's reception of Hume's philosophy: Although Campbell rejected Hume's conclusions and posited a different philosophical method to avoid reducing all philosophy to the absurdities of utter skepticism, Campbell's Presbyterian view that faith is a blend of knowledge and emotion is like Hume's view that knowledge is a blend of faith and emotion. Thus, puzzling philosophical connections between the devout preacher Campbell and his infamously skeptical philosophical opponent Hume may be explained by little-noted likenesses between Campbell's Calvinist theology of faith and Hume's empiricist philosophy of knowledge.

The second way this examination improves the understanding of Campbell's *Philosophy* is in the analysis of how Campbell's rhetorical theory speaks to the religious issues of his day. Like many of his fellows who contributed to the cultural phenomenon that was the Scottish Enlightenment, Campbell accepted both Bacon's empiricist scientific method as well as Bacon's view that knowledge grows and is refined through communication and collaboration among scientist-philosophers. Campbell's inclusion of community and communication in his epistemological theory was meant to provide a realistic explanation of the natural activities and intellectual mechanisms by which a society grows in beneficial knowledge; it simultaneously posed a solution (if not necessarily a wholly satisfying one) to the problems of Hume's philosophical skepticism and individualist epistemology (which was skeptical, Campbell saw, *because* it was individualist). This epistemological theory had important ramifications for the development of Biblical exegesis and, by extension, Protestant theology. Bacon's revolt against his perceptions of philosophical tradition and his assigning scientific authority to private readers of the Book of Nature paralleled the Protestant reformers' revolt against ecclesiastical tradition and their assigning religious authority to readers of the Bible. Both Protestant Biblical scholar and Baconian scientist thus bring to their material (the book of God's Word or the Book of Nature) an autonomous open-mindedness to the evidence presented; both depend heavily on the application of an appropriate method of discovery; both acknowledge a wholesome degree of self-doubt and therefore seek verification and correction of their results from a community of similarly devoted scientist-scholars.

Campbell, being both Baconian and Protestant, brought to his scholarly study of the Bible an empirical method and the tools of linguistic, critical, and historical interpretation. Since close reading reveals much ambiguity in the Biblical text, this implies the necessity of a certain measure of doctrinal latitudinarianism. Because theology is a matter of group discussion and discovery, it is also an evolving field of study.

Although this view could suggest a potentially alarming degree of doctrinal instability, Campell's views in the *Philosophy* offers assurance on this point: the purpose of all investigations— whether of philosophy, science, or theology— is not knowledge for its own sake, but benefits to humanity. All knowledge is for the sake of *doing*, not just *seeing*, and although the Bible is unclear on many fine points of doctrine, it is at least sufficiently clear on what people ought to *do*. Thus, the task of the Protestant preacher— again, like that of the Baconian scientist— is to bring into *action* the benefits of knowledge. The scientist invents useful things and methods to be used for the benefit of the community; similarly, the preacher inculcates moral principles and habits for the benefit of the community. Thus for Campbell as a Baconian philosopher *and* as a Biblical scholar, religious study and pulpit oratory are primarily ordered to affecting good in the world, and only secondarily, and only in so far as necessary, are ordered to imparting particular religious dogmas. Thus, Campbell's rhetorical theory supports the latitudinarianism of Moderate theology as well as Moderate emphasis on encouraging morality over teaching doctrine.

Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* do not reward philosophical or theological study to the same degree as Campbell's *Philosophy*, but here also analyzing the influence of religion yields important insights into the meaning and purpose of rhetorical theory.

Blair's *Lectures* were in many ways a synthesis of commonly held views. One of those views was that the primary goal of education is to inculcate virtue in the young. In this, Blair was also influenced by the Scottish moral philosophy of his day; thus, he held that beauty is consonant with the good; that moral behavior is in large part a matter of taking pleasure in the good and finding what is evil and wrong painful; that the moral sense for the good (i.e., the beautiful) can be trained through refining one's ability to identify and take pleasure in the beautiful (i.e., the good).

Although Blair has been seen as taking a secular view of both beauty and morality, Blair's moral views should not be confused with a strictly neo-Platonist or Stoic ethics. As a Christian, Blair's moral views were at least partly shaped by the Scriptural dictate to love God and neighbor. The Gospel law of charity distinguishes Christian morality from Stoic ethics by adding the obligation to *love* others and posits the love of God and the hope of eternal reward as motivations to moral living. Moreover, in Calvin's *Institutes*, piety is closely linked to civic awareness, and the political dimensions of piety had a long and lively political history in Scotland dating back to the Reformation. Understanding this dimension in Blair's theory suggests ways to understand the civic consequences of Blair's intentions in writing the *Lectures*. In particular, Blair's Presbyterian view of morality and piety means that rhetoric must always consider the



common public good and cannot be ordered exclusively to a merely private and individualistic self-interest.

Overall, this dissertation demonstrates that religion is an important influence on the texts that did most to establish English studies. 1.) It shows that religion is an important *intellectual source* of Campbell's rhetorical theory in that the psychological and managerial elements in Campbell's theory are attributable not only to his empiricism, but also to his Protestantism. 2.) It shows important *logical consequences* of rhetorical theory *for* religion, as it argues that Campbell in the *Philosophy* begins to implicitly theorize liberal developments of Protestant theology that are grounded in theories of communication, knowledge, and community consensus. 3.) It shows the important *motivations* that religion provides for rhetorical study. The discussion of Blair's *Lectures* shows not only that Christianity is an important factor for a proper assessment of Blair's theory, but more broadly demonstrates the significance of religion for a teacher or institution's larger purposes for providing rhetorical and aesthetic education. Putting to one side for a moment considerations of the historical development of English studies, the best methods and practices of teaching rhetoric, the cultural and social uses of rhetorical skills, the political and philosophical meaning of rhetorical theory and rhetoric education: What *is* the *ultimate* purpose of teaching rhetoric and criticism? The question is not unimportant as twenty-first century schools of higher education look to explain and sustain themselves over the next several decades, and it calls for a consideration of many of the same issues that concerned Campbell and Blair— issues that could not be resolved

by rhetorical theory alone, but only by means of philosophical, scientific and religious inquiry.

### **Contribution**

This study addresses significant scholarly lacunae on the subject of religion in the Scottish formation of English Studies and has yielded a number of contributions to the body of scholarship on eighteenth-century rhetoric. No other study to date has identified that pulpit oratory operates in Campbell's theory as the paradigmatic form of rhetoric. No other study has noted the way in which Campbell's theory reveals similarities between Calvin's view of faith and Hume's view of reason. No other study has considered that Scottish rhetorical theory has important implications for Protestant theology. No other study has considered the theoretical or practical consequences of Blair's Christianity for his rhetoric theory.

This investigation, moreover, has provided a number of insights that help mediate among various interpretations and analyses of Scottish rhetoric. It suggests a new perspective on Campbell's controversial reception of Hume's philosophy in a way that suggests at least one plausible resolution to conflicting views on this element in Campbell's work (see Bitzer, Bormann, Walzer). It also suggests new ways to appreciate the tension between individualist and hegemonic dimensions of Blair's rhetorical theory.

### **Areas for Further Research**

In the course of this inquiry into the relationship between religious ideas and rhetoric theory in the eighteenth-century Scottish formation of English Studies, a number of issues have been uncovered that were too large or tangential to be addressed in this

study, yet invite further exploration, research, and analysis. Campbell's synthesis of Hume's epistemology and Calvin's theology of faith was noted in chapter 3, but a full exploration of that relationship is beyond the scope of this dissertation. A deeper and more thorough analysis of the subject is warranted. The Calvinist emphasis on original sin was only slightly touched upon in chapter 4; how the Calvinist theology of original sin and the discrepancies between reason and will might have led to a more psychologically aware, managerial-minded rhetoric would be worth closer study. This study also suggests the need to consider other rhetoric texts of the period in light of religious practices and beliefs for a more full and correct understanding of eighteenth-century British and American rhetorical theory. Richard Whately's *Elements of Rhetoric* has been called an "ecclesiastical rhetoric;"<sup>1</sup> understanding its reception of religious ideas would be useful. Also, the rhetoric texts of John Witherspoon, Joseph Priestley, and Adam Smith invite similar explorations of religious influences. Along these lines, it would also be interesting to consider whether differences between British and French rhetorical theories reflect differences between Protestantism and Catholicism. In general, this dissertation by its fruitful analysis of the intersections between eighteenth-century Scottish religion and eighteenth-century Scottish rhetoric invites closer attention to the interactions between religious principles and rhetorical theories in other eras as well, and invites not so much analysis of how religions use rhetoric as the less commonly explored ways that rhetoric and English studies manifest religious foundations and dimensions.

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<sup>1</sup> See Maxfield Parrish Wayland. *Richard Whately's Elements of Rhetoric* (Abstract of Cornell Thesis, 1929) unpagged. Cited by Ehninger. "Campbell, Blair and Whately: Old Friends in a New Light," 26

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